

THE MAKING OF A HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN HENRY COUNTY, INDIANA:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 1887-1950

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## Acknowledgements

As I entered the Public History Graduate Program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, I was given a valuable piece of advice from Dr. Philip V. Scarpino that helped guide me through the selection of a thesis topic: “Choose a topic meaningful to you, which can be supported with an abundance of primary source material.” A case study on the Henry County Historical Society served me well in both regards.

As a native of Henry County, Indiana, my association and appreciation for the Henry County Historical Society dates back many years. The organization’s rich history inspired me to learn more about not only the historical society movement in Indiana but also the movement at the national and regional levels as well. Few organizational histories exist for local historical societies in Indiana. I was motivated to tell the story and document the significant history of an institution with a past intermingled with my own.

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## Introduction

Despite damaging storms of the previous night, a large group of history enthusiasts gathered in New Castle on the morning of April 26, 1902, for the dedicatory services of the county's first historical building—the former residence of Civil War general William Grose.<sup>1</sup> Excitement for the day's activities—planned to coincide with the Henry County Historical Society's (HCHS) annual spring meeting—was not dampened even though inclement weather required the dedication exercises and historical pageant to be moved indoors.<sup>2</sup> For the members and local community, the first meeting within the walls of the Society's own building was “a great event...the most propitious meeting since its organization” in 1887.<sup>3</sup> “It seemed that everyone present felt the incentive of new strength and new resolve to make the institution one of the finest in the State,” wrote long-time Society Secretary John Thornburgh.<sup>4</sup>

Thornburgh's statement concerning the institution's ambition was reasonably modest in an era of excessive local boosterism, for in 1902 only a very small number of Indiana counties could boast of an active historical society. Attempts, only three years later, “to gather information concerning the origin, history and accomplishment of [historical] societies [in Indiana] resulted with most of them, in nothing,” the editor of

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<sup>1</sup> The event was covered by the *Indianapolis Star* with a large article and several images. See “Elegant New Home is Soon to be Dedicated by the Henry County Historical Society,” *Indianapolis Star* [by “Star's Special Service”] found in Scrapbook 58, Henry County Historical Society Archives Collection, Clarence H. Smith Genealogy and Local History Library, 94.

<sup>2</sup> The *Daily Courier* reported, “No doubt the stormy weather prevented many from attending the services, but others, even those of advanced years, braved the inconvenience of the weather with the fortitude of pioneer days and drove [in wagons and carriages] from Spiceland, Greensboro, and other points, and many of the older citizens of New Castle, as well as the younger ones, attended with appreciative interest.” “Serious Storms,” *Daily Courier*, April 26, 1902, p.1, c.5.

<sup>3</sup> “An Enjoyable Occasion,” *Daily Courier*, April, 28, 1902, p.2, cols.2-4.

<sup>4</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 88.



the newly established *Indiana Magazine of History* reported. Possible historical societies were identified in only eleven of ninety-two counties (including Henry).<sup>5</sup> Most of these organizations were either defunct by 1905, or would experience periods of inactivity in their first few decades of existence. Henry County's purchase of a spacious, historically significant local mansion for the permanent home of its Society consolidated local aspirations for the high attainment of its historical organization.

The acquisition of the General William Grose mansion resulted from a decade of persistence by a core group of local members and through the expression of public will that translated into the appropriation of public expenditures by the county government. Acquiring the Grose mansion, perhaps more so than any other single act in the history of the HCHS, specifically exemplified the culmination of the county's historical consciousness, and the influence of collective memory, which evolved over the course of the nineteenth century. Its newly acquired historical building would quickly become the tangible cornerstone for the organization and a growing symbol of Henry County's dedication to preserving local history (see Figure A).

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<sup>5</sup> "Local Historical Societies," *Indiana Magazine of History* 1, no. 2 (2nd Quarter 1905), 98. The *Indiana Magazine of History*, the first historical journal published in the state, was established in 1905. The journal's survey was the first known attempt to gather information on the state's historical societies. Further inquiries by the author into the early histories of county historical societies in Indiana revealed that each of the counties listed, excluding Henry, experienced at least one extended period of inactivity before 1910.



Figure A: The Henry County Historical Society Museum, 1919. The museum was the former residence of Gen. William Grose (1812–1900), Civil War veteran and community leader of Henry County, Indiana. The property, purchased by the County in 1901, was dedicated as the Henry County Historical Society Building, April 26, 1902, at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting. Photograph taken by Hebert L. Heller in 1919. Heller Scrapbook 101, Henry County Historical Society Collection.

The historical pageant, immediately following the dinner hour, served as the crowning event of the elaborate dedication exercises in 1902. It was carried out with classical symbolism by the “Herald,” “Daughter of Peace,” and “Muse of History and her attendants.”<sup>6</sup> During the pageant, the “noble purposes” that this new “house of history” were dedicated to were verbally expressed in a very theatrical manner by a cast of symbolic characters—“all in appropriate costumes and bearing appropriate emblems, accompanied by children with flags and flowers.”<sup>7</sup> The cast of character-types were

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<sup>6</sup> Henry County Historical Society Dedication, Saturday, April 26, 1902, booklet, in Henry County Historical Society Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 82.

<sup>7</sup> The Herald bore “staff, sword, and spear”; the Muse of History bore the “torch [of knowledge] or the lamp and book;” the Daughter of Peace was crowned with “myrtle wreath and white roses;” the Indian, “in costume,” bore “implements of the chase or war;” the Son of Industry entered in “working shirt and bearing a sheaf and hammer;” and the young Student appeared “in cap and gown, a book in one hand, flowers and shells in the other.” Ibid.

meant to represent all the various peoples from the county's past: Youthful Soldier, Pioneer Father, Pioneer Mother, the Indian, the African American, Son of Industry, Daughter of Art, and Student. Each character type was presented before the president of the Society and the Muse of History and asked the question "to what noble purpose should this temple be dedicated to?"<sup>8</sup>

Although many groups were represented, in reality, each character type expressed the collective memory and historical consciousness of the exceedingly white homogenous county as the pageant was written and the past interpreted by the Society's elderly, white American founder Benjamin S. Parker. The characters replied in exactly the fashion and attitude the audience expected, as the audience had been taught to expect, and thus in the prevailing interpretation of the local past recounted numerous times in numerous formats: by school text books, July Fourth and old settlers' society commemoration addresses, county histories, and in various speeches and presentations at HCHS meetings. The characters' responses were a distorted version of the past that expressed the sentiments of the historical character types according to a common mythology, or folklore, constructed early in the preceding century.

The dedication pageant is an isolated local example that partially answers the questions posed by David Glassberg in his article "Public History and the Study of Memory." "With all the possible versions of the past that circulate in society, how do particular accounts of the past get established and disseminated as the public one? How do these public histories change over time?"<sup>9</sup> Henry County's collective memory—

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1996), 11.

“elements of a past remembered in common as well as elements forgotten in common”—was well expressed during this public expression of the county’s historical consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Glassberg succinctly defined the making of historical consciousness as “how ideas about history are created, institutionalized, disseminated, understood, and change over time.”<sup>11</sup> But consciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual or group that act, are aware, and remember.<sup>12</sup> According to these assertions, the founding of the HCHS, its decade-long process that secured a historical building for the organization, and the dedication pageant as the crowning event of this achievement are foundational building blocks in the making of historical consciousness aimed toward the development and sustainability of the organization.

The residents of Henry County, through the evolving practices of collecting and preserving local history, organized and developed a sustainable local historical society. The 1902 dedication ceremony, which signaled the beginning of the “museum” chapter of the HCHS, was only one of many steps in the institutionalization of local history in Henry County. The foundation of a sustainable local historical society is constructed upon permanent quarters and a historical collection. Additional requisite building blocks include wide public support, adequate and consistent funding, and a paid individual to facilitate and manage the museum, its collections, and various other day-to-day operations and activities. In Henry County, this blueprint for sustainability was greatly facilitated by the county’s territorial beginnings and its cultural development before the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>12</sup> Amos Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness,” *History and Memory* 1, no. 1 (Spring–Summer, 1989), 6.

Civil War, as well as the county's old settlers' society movement and local history writing during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

With this said, historical societies were “not created in a vacuum” but rather amid a complex historical framework encompassing local, regional, and national contexts.<sup>13</sup> For Henry County, this framework consisted of many varied but constituent parts. The American Centennial in 1876, industrialization, Quakerism, the popularity of Civil War history and commemoration in Indiana that peaked around 1900, and a state historical movement and the simultaneous development of other historical organizations following the Indiana Centennial in 1916 were also instrumental in the county's evolving dedication to preserving local history and the organization's course toward sustainability.

The history of the HCHS is unique in a few significant ways from other local historical societies in Indiana. At its founding in 1887, the HCHS was among perhaps only four active county societies; and the organization remains the oldest continuous local historical society in the state, as all others experienced extended periods of inactivity or disbandment—a scenario common to the historical society movement, at the state and local levels, in the United States. In 1901, following the enactment of House Bill No. 397 by the Indiana General Assembly, the Society was the first to secure an appropriation from its county government for the acquisition of a permanent home, as well as the only known society to receive consistent annual appropriations from its county government to care for its museum building and grounds. Following the passage of a state law in 1921—to further encourage the growth of county historical societies—

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<sup>13</sup> Alfred E. Lemmon, “Trans-Mississippi States: Arkansas, California, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, and Tennessee,” 206.

the Henry County organization was the first to hire a museum curator, an annual expense also paid for by county funds.<sup>14</sup>

The organization's history also followed many nineteenth-century trends of the historical society movement in the United States. Ill-defined collection and exhibition practices, difficulty in maintaining an enthusiastic following in the communities it served, financial difficulties, questionable scholarship, and resistance to changing historical trends initiated by professional historians were all shared elements between the HCHS and the national movement. Yet through all the triumphs and struggles experienced by the Society, the importance of preserving and institutionalizing local history remained strong. This fact is perhaps best exemplified and expressed by the determined efforts of Henry County residents to subsidize a local historical society through public support and the workings of its county government, which granted annual appropriations from tax revenues to not only acquire a permanent home for the organization and hire a museum curator, but for continuous financial backing from 1901 until the present. Such broad-based support is evidence of a general and popular sentiment that the county's past has great value and should be preserved for present and future generations through the use of public monies.

Chapter One begins with a brief history of the historical society movement in the United States and explores the institutionalization and rise of an American historical consciousness through a national and regional perspective. This brief history sets a contextual basis and historical framework for the founding period of the HCHS. The chapter then examines the construction of a regional identity and historical

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<sup>14</sup> *Journal of the Indiana State Senate during the Seventy-Second Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1921), 342.

consciousness in the Old Northwest that prompted traditions of local history writing and the development of early state historical organizations in Midwestern states, including Indiana. The patterns of cultural development of Henry County's settlement period are also covered in Chapter One. The cultural background of the early settlers of East Central Indiana, and specifically Henry County, is essential to the identification and understanding of the influences and characteristics of the founders and early members of the HCHS, as well as the actions of the local government officials and the county's general population. All these parties were a product of the local culture and all played a role in the evolving history of Henry County's historical organizations and the HCHS's sustained existence.

Chapter Two delves deeper within Henry County's cultural development and argues that Quakerism, with its heritage, practices, and traditions of historical consciousness and preservation, significantly influenced the rise of a historical movement in Henry County and the surrounding counties of East Central Indiana. The majority of the HCHS's early members and its four chief founders all resided in and around the Quaker communities in the southern half of the county; and were products of a local culture heavily influenced by Quakerism. The lives and backgrounds of the four founders are provided as typical examples of the organization's early members. Each founder's connections to Quakerism epitomizes the varied degrees of intimate involvement with, and relation to, a Quaker heritage that is collectively typical of the diverse experiences found among the HCHS's early members in respect to Quakerism. While the founders are conspicuous and noteworthy examples in their efforts to preserve local history in Henry County, their actions in this regard amply illustrates the general

traits and activities of a majority of the early HCHS members who shared similar backgrounds influenced by Quakerism. The chapter then concludes with accounts of the role of women and African Americans within the early historical society. It argues that the strong Quaker heritage so prevalent among the HCHS's membership shaped these roles.

Chapter Three begins with an examination of the old settlers' society movement in Indiana and the western historical trends of the United States during the nineteenth century, including mythmaking and methods of historical writing. The chapter then argues that the rituals and traditions of the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County served as an intermediary, or essential bridge, to the establishment and continued early success of the HCHS. The chapter then examines the relationship between the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County and the HCHS, which coexisted for more than two decades, and how this cooperative existence positively impacted the latter organization. Chapter Three continues with an exploration of local history writing in Henry County; how it preserved an interpretation of the local past, operated in conjunction with the local historical organizations in popularizing local history, and was a clear reflection of the county's historical consciousness. The chapter concludes with an examination of the 1876 American Centennial: its significant popularizing of local history and specific influences on historical trends in Henry County.

The final chapter begins with a detailed account of the founding of the HCHS, 1887 to 1902. A major initiative during the 1890s was the acquisition of a permanent home for the struggling organization. This decade-long process, which resulted in the preservation of the Grose home as the new HCHS Museum, dovetailed with other major



events that influenced the local historical society movement in Henry County: a period of rapid industrialization in New Castle (the county seat), 1899 to 1910; and the historical movement in Indiana that followed the 1916 state centennial celebrations. These events were essential to the organization's long-term sustainability and the continued evolution of a local history in the county. Chapter Four concludes by documenting the early museum phase of the HCHS through the hiring of custodians, 1902 to 1921, and the first museum curator, 1921 to 1952. These latter sections examine the imprint made by the custodians and first Society curator on the creation of a county historical museum—its proceedings, policies, leadership roles, and collecting and exhibition practices—within the framework of the historical movement in Indiana that occurred during these decades.

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Finally, it is important to explain the research strategies, methods, and timeframe selected for this thesis. The case study research strategy, as referenced by David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty in *Nearby History*, can serve as a method “for understanding national patterns” built on “analytical generalizations” of a “careful study of one locality’s history. ...The individual experiences of ordinary people [like the members of the HCHS] were most accessible through the study of their immediate social institutions, families, and communities.”<sup>15</sup> This work investigates Henry County’s early historical organizations, the organizations’ members and members’ families, the communities

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<sup>15</sup> David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past around You* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2000), 220.

where they lived, and the religious heritage, practices, and traditions of the majority the HCHS's members.

This study attempts to answer the underlying questions: Why did a sustainable early local historical society develop in Henry County when this accomplishment occurred nowhere else in Indiana? And who were the founders and early members and what did they hope to accomplish by establishing a historical society? It was important to discern in the HCHS's early years what role the organization played in the community and how this role evolved over time. To accomplish this, I collected evidence from primary sources to answer the following: types and goals of programming, meetings, and events; who were the stakeholders and who was left out; what were the revenue sources and where did they come from; forms of community outreach; governing style; types of collections; conservation and acquisition practices; and the nature of the Society's housing for collections, library, museum, and meeting space.

A single case study of a local historical society, even when based on empirical inquiry and quantitative evidence within its real-life context, is reliant on a broader scope of analysis within the larger historical society movement to help bring out its comprehensive significance. This thesis attempts to provide ample and meaningful historical background for its arguments in each chapter. Chapter Two required additional original quantitative evidence, as the influences of Quakerism had not been previously applied to the preservation of local history in the context of the historical society movement. Discussions and advice from Quaker historians, Dr. Thomas D. Hamm and Gregory Hinshaw, were instrumental in the advancement of this argument.

The timeframe selected for this work ends at 1950, although the history of the HCHS spans, unbroken, from 1887 to the present. The organizational archives of the HCHS, although seldom used, are extensive. The preservation practices of the Society have remained strong since its founding in 1887. And its continuous operation (more than 100 years in the same historical building) enabled the organization to compile an unbroken record of the Society's proceedings—an accomplishment unprecedented for a county historical society in Indiana. The massive volume of archives that include detailed minute books, extensive newspaper accounts carried by local and state newspapers, a scrapbook that dates back to 1888 and contains newspaper clippings and printed programs from the organization's semiannual meetings up to the 1940s, and other assorted materials related to the Society's leaders, membership, collections, exhibitions, and charters is beyond the limit of this case study.

During World War II, participation in the HCHS waned for a time (although regular meetings and other activities continued). It was not until the approach of the American Bicentennial in 1976 that a resurgence in local history and the activities of the HCHS occurred. In the mid-1970s, membership grew rapidly and for a time exceeded 1,000.<sup>16</sup> A careful and thorough examination and analysis of archival materials during this period of rapid expansion was not feasible under the limits of this project. I make some references throughout the thesis that reach beyond 1950 to add depth and breadth to selected issues of particular relevance to the paper. Although this thesis was not able

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert L. Heller, "Founders of the Historical Society," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3 (New Castle, IN: Courier-Times, Inc., 1982), 372. Henry County Historian and chairman of the HCHS board of trustees during the 1970s and 1980s, Richard P. Ratcliff (who was credited, along with other Society leaders, by Heller for the resurgence) corroborates the excess of 1,000 members. Total membership was estimated at 1,400 in April 1977. See "Minutes—90th Annual Meeting—Henry County Historical Society," 1977 HCHS Meeting Folder, HCHS, Smith Library.

to bring the case study full circle, I hope that the arguments and issues raised concerning the local historical society movement in Indiana will make this work a relevant tool for future researchers in this much neglected area in the field of local and public history.

## Chapter One: Local History and the Historical Society Movement in America

### A National Perspective

The historical society has served as the primary institution for the practice of local history in America since the country's founding era.<sup>17</sup> The first historical societies in America were founded in New England and Middle Atlantic states beginning in 1791, and the movement spread and multiplied with the growing population as the country expanded westward. Although a national association for the historical society movement—the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)—was not formed until 1940, historical societies have from the first shared a basic common mission: to collect, preserve and make available documentary and artifactual materials for the history of the United States or a section of it.<sup>18</sup>

Local history and the idea for historical societies was brought over to America from the Old World. It dates back as far as sixteenth-century England and France. “It is a history that is sometimes clouded in myth, colored by forms of ancestor worship, or confused with ideas of patriotism or boosterism,” as Carol Kammen describes it in *On Doing Local History*.<sup>19</sup> From the colonial period until after the Civil War, history was a regional and community practice as the vision of a united America was still far from

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<sup>17</sup> Julian S. Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies in the United States.” *American Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (October 1934), 11.

<sup>18</sup> American Association of State and Local History, accessed July 23, 2015, <http://about.aaslh.org/the-story-of-us/>. For general histories of the historical society movement, see Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1962); Leslie W. Dunlap, *American Historical Societies, 1790-1860* (Madison, WI: Cantwell Printing Company, 1944); H. G. Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic: The Origins of State Historical Societies, and Collections, 1791-1861* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Society, Inc., 1995); and Boyd, “State and local historical Societies,” 10-37.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 11.

whole. The Western tradition of local history writing, including the Spanish, English, and French dating back to the earliest European contact with the New World, constituted the primary practice of documenting local history prior to the American Revolution.<sup>20</sup> Many of the earliest accounts were politically motivated, or utilitarian and promotional in nature, used to attract new settlers and investors as well as answer the demand for information concerning the New World.<sup>21</sup> Others writings were providential in nature, aimed as validations of God's will and America's unique mission. Immediately following the American Revolution, "history writing tended to justify the actions of Americans in the recent war, and it attempted to create a national myth."<sup>22</sup>

The providential view of history was especially prevalent in the New England region where the influence of Puritanism (ca. 1630–ca. 1730) was significant. "The Puritan heritage placed a transcendent value on the study of human history," and many early local historians were ministers from the Puritan tradition.<sup>23</sup> This tradition was passed on through the clergy via the spoken and printed word and by parents to their offspring reinforcing the Puritan belief in a unique historical mission created by God.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For more information about the Western tradition of documenting local history in the American Colonial era, see Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed., eds. Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 546-547; Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 11-12; and David D. Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America 1607-1884* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 1-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 12. For information on the creation of a national myth following the American Revolution, see Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 43-59; Louis Leonard Tucker, "Massachusetts," in *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*, ed. H. G. Jones (Chapel Hill: North Caroliniana Society, Inc., 1995), 1-28; and Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 62-69.

<sup>23</sup> Louis Leonard Tucker, *The Massachusetts Historical Society: A Bicentennial History 1791-1991* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 2. "Transcendent" in the context of Puritanism is not to be confused with the American philosophy of transcendentalism followed by some nineteenth-century figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Other scholars also identify Puritanism as an important influence on local history and the early historical society movement. See Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 10-11; Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 11-12; Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 14-16; and David J. Russo,

During the antebellum period, historians in the United States, and their writings, were understandably self-centered, “focused on long-established leading citizens and community successes.”<sup>25</sup> These nineteenth-century historians, patrician historians as they are sometimes labeled, turned a blind eye to intolerance, community conflict and failure, and ignored those who were racially, culturally, or religiously different from themselves. Early local historians tended to be white upper-class gentlemen who practiced history as an absorbing pastime. Their social position usually provided them with a measure of education and a profession that allowed them the leisure time to engage in the collection, preservation, study, and writing of history. Patrician historians were often lawyers, doctors, ministers, or—following the Civil War—newspaper editors and journalists who were also cultural and political leaders in their respective communities. As was the case with the HCHS, such men served as the impetus behind the founding of historical societies that were formed to provide a safe and stable repository for public records and private collections of documents, artifacts, and writings they wished to see preserved for present and future generations.<sup>26</sup>

Historical societies in northern states—Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania—were the first to emerge and were soon followed by Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. State historical societies in these areas were

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*Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 45-49.

<sup>25</sup> Kyvig and Marty, *Nearby History*, 218.

<sup>26</sup> For more information on early local historians (also called patrician historians, early antiquarians or amateur local historians), see Clement M. Silvestro, “Other New England States,” in *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*, ed. H. G. Jones (Chapel Hill: North Caroliniana Society, Inc., 1995), 29-30; Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 12-13; Alea Henle, “Preserving the Past, Making History: Historical Societies in the Early United States” (PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 2012), 1-2; and Russo, *Keepers of Our Past*, xii-xiii and 9-76.

presently joined by smaller county and municipal societies.<sup>27</sup> During the subsequent westward migration of Anglo-Americans, this pattern was many times repeated. Only in the South were historical societies slow to develop.<sup>28</sup> In this founding stage of the American historical society movement failure was an ever-present reality. Many state historical societies were ill-prepared for a sustained and active existence.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the antebellum historical societies became inactive only to be reorganized later in the century as local history, and the formation of new historical organizations, seemed to explode nationwide during the American centennial era of the 1870s and 1880s. This process was spurred on by a call from President Ulysses S. Grant in 1876 for Americans to write the histories of their localities.<sup>30</sup> These published local histories often were the first step toward the formation of county or municipal historical societies (often simply labeled as *local* historical societies), which were generally complete with a small research library and cabinet of curiosities. The ubiquitous patriotic fervor inflamed by the landmark 100th year anniversary of the signing of the

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<sup>27</sup> Carol Kammen briefly discussed local historical societies in the antebellum period (citing Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*). See Carol Kammen, "Local History in the U.S.," in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 1st ed., eds. Carol Kammen and Norma Prendergast (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 298.

<sup>28</sup> Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 15-16.

<sup>29</sup> For information concerning the difficulties and failures of nineteenth-century historical societies, see essays from Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*: Susan Stitt, "Pennsylvania," 59-78; Charles F. Bryan, Jr., "Virginia," 84-86; Richard J. Cox, "Other Atlantic States: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina," 107-108; Philip P. Mason, "Trans-Mountain States: Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee," 131-37; and Alfred E. Lemmon, "Trans-Mississippi States," 189-206. See also Lana Ruegamer, *A History of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1980* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1980), 21; Terry A. Barnhart, "'A Common Feeling': Regional Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Old Northwest, 1820-1860," *Michigan Historical Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 52-63; and Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," 548. For a state by state analysis of American historical societies, see Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, 137-219; and Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies*. For a state by analysis of local history, see Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson, eds., *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 17. For more information on the effects of the American Centennial on local history, see Russo, *Keepers of Our Past*, 79-80; Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," 548; and Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 25-26.



Declaration of Independence in 1776 generated a lasting interest in local history that was manifest in local parades, founders plays and pageants, and a desire to save, compile, and publish community and family histories through the formation of historical societies to serve as official guardians in this capacity.<sup>31</sup>

The historical society movement and local history's general appeal changed little from its origins to the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> The middle class remained the primary audience; collecting and preserving artifacts and information remained its primary purpose and mission.<sup>33</sup> One change of marked importance was the increased role taken by women in the first decades of the twentieth century. Women more frequently filled the roles of local historians, curators, and officers for local historical organizations. And, for many states located west of the Mississippi, government support and close relationships with state universities replaced sole reliance on funds from private members for the support of state historical societies. Most trans-Mississippian states, still in their early stages of development, lacked the basic requirements routinely necessary for organizing and sustaining state historical societies: a large urban center, large and stable populations, and established cultural institutions.

The 1960s brought a dramatic shift in the practice of local history in America. The New Social History—adopted from historical practices first instituted in Western Europe—changed local history and academic history alike. It was labeled *new* “because it stressed the history of society in a holistic way: the history of social structure and

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<sup>31</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 548; and David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 549.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

class, the history of mobility (social and physical), the history of intergroup relations, ethnicity, race, gender, and religion”—often described as analyzing history “‘from the bottom up’ in order to promote a more just and democratic social order.”<sup>34</sup> This shift did not come without considerable resistance from historians favoring the consensus model made popular following WWII.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless many positive relationships between local historians, academic historians, and historical societies were forged. Academic historians and their graduate students descended upon communities in search of new sources of historical evidence and with new techniques for looking at traditional sources. Following a half century of world conflicts, American historians began to shift away from the dominating nationalistic perspective to make room for the burgeoning new local point of view.

Historians often characterize the first half of the twentieth century as a decline or shift away from local history.<sup>36</sup> The founding of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1884, which professionalized the history field, and the subsequent rise of academic history in the following decades, are also cited by historians as contributing to this decline.<sup>37</sup> The split between professional (or academic) historians, whose writings were national in scope, and the amateur (or local) historians widened during the dramatic world events of the 1930s and 1940s. Social history, to a degree, helped mend

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Kammen, “New Social History,” in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd edition, ed. Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 407-408. Gary J. Kornblith and Carol Lasser, “More than Great White Men: A Century of Scholarship on American Social History,” *OAH Magazine of History* 21, no. 2 (April 2007), 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 and 12. Stiff resistance to social history (not viewed as “new” anymore) was again in the public eye in 2005 during the confrontations over National History Standards. See *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Clifford L. Lord, “By Way of Background,” in *Keepers of the Past*, ed., Clifford L. Lord (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 4; and Carol Kammen, “Local History in the U.S.,” in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, ed. Carol Kammen and Norma Prendergast (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 299-301.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*; and Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 175-179.

some of the animosity between the two factions and brought local history back as a field of serious academic study.<sup>38</sup>

During the early 1970s, an unprecedented interest in local history emerged with the approaching bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976. Preparations for local celebrations across the country spurred a popular excitement and involvement in local history for Americans both young and old. This soaring interest was reflected in American popular culture, the historic preservation movement, the rise in cultural heritage tourism, and the dramatic increase in the creation of new historical organizations.<sup>39</sup> The 1970s also witnessed the rise of the public history movement, which “sent trained graduates into state and local historical societies, into industry, and to positions with the government.”<sup>40</sup> The public history movement was born partially out of necessity as teaching positions in academia could no longer field the growing number of graduates pouring forth from university history departments in the United States.<sup>41</sup> This infusion of trained professionals aided the further implementation of changes first introduced a decade earlier by social historians, especially pertaining to the enlarged

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<sup>38</sup> For a more critical interpretation of the split between academic and local historians, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also John Higham, “Herbert Baxter Adams and the Study of Local History,” *American Historical Review* 89, no. 5 (December 1984), 1225-1239; Arthur S. Link, “The American Historical Association, 1884-1984: Retrospect and Prospect,” *American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (February 1985), 1-17; and other sources listed at “A Brief History of the AHA,” American Historical Association, accessed July 24, 2015, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/brief-history-of-the-aha>.

<sup>39</sup> For more information on this time period and data exemplifying the dramatic increase in historical organizations in America, see Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 549-551. The increased interest in local history produced a more active AASLH in its functions of education, publishing, annual conferences, and connecting historians from various fields and locations.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 550.

<sup>41</sup> G. Wesley Johnson, “The Origins of ‘The Public Historian’ and the National Council on Public History,” *Public Historian* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 167-168.

scope of subject matter. Improved techniques in exhibitions, local history writing, and public relations were also needed advancements.

In the decades since then, history and especially local history, has never been more popular. There has been an unprecedented growth in historical organizations and the historical society is chief among them. Such rapid growth has become a real concern for local historians and preservationists in view of declining economic conditions. Carol Kammen, speaking for many in the field in 2013, asked the question, “Can we afford all the organizations we currently have?”<sup>42</sup> This question, as well as others concerning diversity and representation, is now at the forefront for many historical societies and local historians as we move through the second decade of the twenty-first century.

### **Fundamental Role of the Historical Society Movement**

The importance of the historical society movement is often lost or forgotten among today’s growing variety of historic sites, museums, libraries, and other historic venues. The fundamental role of the nineteenth-century historical society was as a library and repository.<sup>43</sup> Building museum collections, portrait galleries, and natural history rooms were activities present from the beginning of the movement, yet were subservient to the library function until the twentieth century. The historical society was originally meant to serve historians in their research, writing, and publishing of state and local histories. This role was viewed by historically conscious individuals as the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 552.

<sup>43</sup> Edward, P. Alexander, *The Museum in America: Innovators and Pioneers* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 85-86.

organized solution to an imminent problem with dire consequences. The material evidence of the past was being destroyed and lost forever at an alarming rate.

There had long been historians researching and writing local histories of one description or another since the Western tradition of documenting local history was brought to North America by the early European immigrants. America's lack of research libraries affected early local historians who were often forced to collect and gather historical materials before any writing project could be commenced.<sup>44</sup> Following the American Revolution, such men were greatly stimulated by the historic events they had recently lived through and, in some instances, were still witnessing. These individuals represent a portion of the population cognizant of America's place in history and the value of collecting and preserving material evidence to accurately record and justify their past and present. The American Revolution created a powerful nationalistic surge of patriotism that accelerated the population's already developing historical consciousness. The American historical consciousness, which increased gradually during the colonial period, now verged on organized action. Their plan was to establish a widespread and sustainable historical society movement to collect and preserve the ever-growing volume of historical materials in America.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The situation for historians was much different in Europe where university libraries held rich repositories of primary historical materials. For more information on the difficulties faced by early local historians due to the absence of research libraries, which contributed to the rise of the historical society movement, see Tucker, "Massachusetts," 2-3; Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, Chapter 1; and essays from Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*: Cox, "Other Atlantic States," 102-106; Mason, "Trans-Mountain States," 141-151; and Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "Wisconsin," 162-187.

<sup>45</sup> Jeremy Belknap, the founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, drafted a "Plan of an Antiquarian Society" in 1790, deemed by Julian Boyd as the "charter of the historical society movement in the United States." The plan called for a coordinated network of historical societies throughout the thirteen states that focused on collecting documentary materials, but also included a museum component. The plan was never fully enacted on a national scale, but it gives historians a window into the minds of a group of important figures in the early historical society movement. See Tucker, *Massachusetts Historical Society*, 13-14; and Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 16.

The genesis of the historical society movement in the early republic is a subject touched upon by a number of twentieth and twenty-first-century authors. When speaking about the historical society movement in the United States, Carol Kammen—a leading authority on local history—said:

It is difficult ... in this very federated nation to write of one tradition, of one way of doing things. There are regional differences and there are differences in time, for some places developed a political and historical consciousness earlier than others. Some mirrored those already established, some differed. And all changed over time, pushed by events and even historical fashions, many constrained by tradition or financial condition. From all of this, interesting patterns emerge.<sup>46</sup>

The movement's diversity was such that a profusion of factors are given by scholars as being responsible for the movement's origins and evolution. Historians have made a number of legitimate arguments in answer to this question, often attributing a combination of factors as the cause with evidence cited from among the hundreds of historical societies organized in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>47</sup>

Regardless of the specific causes, individual historical societies were unsustainable without a measure of public support. Public support was manifest in private historical societies through membership fees and active participation, monetary and material donations, and a general acceptance of the historical society's authority on historical matters by the general public. Beginning in states west of the Mississippi, public support often came in the form of appropriations from state and local governments, in combination with the sources stated previously for private societies. Public support for the historical society movement is directly correlated with the rise of

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<sup>46</sup> Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," 547.

<sup>47</sup> For a good modern analysis of the early era of the historical society movement in the United States by region, see Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*.

an American historical consciousness. A historical consciousness was not present everywhere at the same time nor to the same degree. But evidence exists to suggest that the establishment and sustainability of historical societies are reliable indicators of the existence of a historical consciousness in America's states and counties.

### **The Historical Society Movement: a Regional Perspective**

Beginning with the rapid rise in popularity of state and local history during the American centennial era of the 1870s and 1880s, the historical society movement began to change, expand, and evolve. New state historical societies were formed in states west of the Mississippi, while in the Midwest and South (primarily in the Gulf States) many organizations, which had struggled or failed, found new life and new direction. The growth and diversification of the historical society movement took another giant leap following World War II. Local historical societies began to multiply in states where the movement had previously been limited (e.g., Mississippi, Washington, and Delaware).<sup>48</sup> The coming of the American Bicentennial in 1976 triggered a tremendous surge in local history and the growth of related organizations; a growth pattern that continues in many respects unabated to the present time.

The historical society movement now spans well over two-hundred years and encompasses more than 17,000 historical societies that range from town/ area, municipal, township, county, regional, state, and national societies, not to mention the various religious, ethnic, specific site, and other topical organizations that fit the defined

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<sup>48</sup> See individual essays on the states in Kammen and Wilson, eds., *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed.

parameters of a historical society.<sup>49</sup> The heterogeneity that now exists in the movement makes broad historical analysis more complex and difficult. The strategy employed by some historians is to take a regional approach by dividing the movement according to previously established geographical areas or groups of states. Artificial historical time periods, intended to neatly divide the movement for discussion's sake, are also employed. However, few authors have ventured outside of the early period, 1790 to 1860. And, until recently, comparative analysis has been all but absent from the available scholarship.<sup>50</sup> Local historical societies are covered in only a small portion of the literature written about the movement, which is dominated by the study of state societies.

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<sup>49</sup> The defined parameters technically required to qualify a historical organization as a historical society are: the organization must possess a collection historical in nature (with the advent of the Internet this can even be a digital collection), this collection must be used for research of some type (not necessarily open to the public), and there must be an access point or physical place where the collection can be visited. Dunlap discusses the definition and offers examples of what constitutes an American historical society (and what does not) and how it is different from patriot, pioneer, and memorial associations that often use the historical society designation. See Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, vii. Historical organizations are defined by their mission and the basic mission of historical societies in the United States has long remained the same: to collect, preserve, and share materials for the history of a specified entity.

The most accurate and up-to-date count for historical societies in the U.S. was issued by the Institute of Museum and Library Services in December 2014. While the total count surpassed 35,000 and included many museum classification types, "HSC" code represented all historical societies and historic preservation organizations and totaled 17,049. Of the 620 Indiana "museums" included in the count, 372 are designated "Historical Societies, Historic Preservation" (HSC). "Museum Universe Data File Documentation, December 2014," Institute of Museum and Library Services, accessed August 11, 2015, [http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/MUDF\\_Documentation\\_2015q1.pdf](http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/MUDF_Documentation_2015q1.pdf).

Ray Boomhower, editor of the Indiana Historical Society Press, wrote: "As of 2010, there were more than two hundred groups in Indiana calling themselves historical societies, with a majority of them operating museums open to the public." Ray Boomhower, "Local History in Indiana, in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed., Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson, eds. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 285.

In 1986, AASLH estimated the total number of historical societies in the U.S. at between 7,000 and 8,000. See Louis Leonard Tucker, *Clio's Consort: Jeremy Belknap and the Founding of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 142. This is a good indicator of the rapid growth of historical societies in the U.S. in the last three decades.

<sup>50</sup> For discussions on the lack and deficiencies of previous scholarship, see Cox, "Other Atlantic States," 116-118; and Henle, "Preserving the Past," 3-4.



The historical society movement in the United States is based on a very loose organizational structure. Governing bodies of any kind did not exist until the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> Each historical society is generally free to act as an independent organization. Local historical societies frequently follow and are affected by the practices and traditions of other historical societies in their geographic region. This can be especially true in relationships between a local historical society and its state society or neighboring county societies, or both. In some cases, a local historical society is the direct product of the efforts of an older and better established state or regional society, acting in the capacity of the “mother society.” In view of such relationships, comparative analysis involving a local historical society tends to be more effective when limited to a regional discussion and set in a specific period of the overall movement.

A general survey of the historical society movement’s national scope is presented in section one. To try and understand the movement in a more intimate fashion and identify where the HCHS fits into the movement’s historical framework, a regional focus is necessary. Indiana, which reached statehood in 1816 as a product of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, is counted among the trans-mountain states (located west of the Appalachian Mountains and east of the Mississippi River) and more specifically in the region of the Old Northwest. Seven of the nine trans-mountain states were received into the Union between 1792 and 1819. Michigan and Wisconsin soon followed in 1837 and 1848 respectively.

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<sup>51</sup> AASLH (1940), a highly respected and influential organization, sets professional standards and ethics for the field of local history. American Alliance of Museums (AAM) is influential over many historical societies that are also historical museums, like the HCHS. Although founded in 1906, the AAM lacked significant power until the 1960s.

Beginning with Tennessee in 1820, all the trans-mountain states (also called the over-mountain states) formed state historical societies before 1861.<sup>52</sup> State historical societies during the antebellum period followed many of the basic founding traditions established by their eastern counterparts. Established examples, like the relatively successful Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania societies, were often mimicked by other early organizations. Emulation was a natural and understandable progression. Many of the charter members of historical societies in trans-mountain states immigrated from the East: some even previously belonged to eastern historical societies before moving westward.<sup>53</sup> Little significant variation existed in the procedural and administrative structures of these club-like organizations populated primarily by white male elites.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, in contrast to the East, the trans-mountain states exhibited several key differences that affected the development of a historical consciousness and the sustainability of the early historical society movement. The population of trans-mountain states remained relatively small prior to the Civil War, with very few urban centers; and the number of wealthy citizens who could devote their leisure time and financial resources to historical activities was also relatively low. Another important

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<sup>52</sup> Out of the thirty-four states in the Union prior to the Civil War, only Texas, Oregon, Delaware, and Kansas failed to establish a state historical society. Many state societies were discontinued due to the Civil War or for other reasons. For more information on the founding period of the historical society movement, see Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*; and Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*.

<sup>53</sup> For a list of leaders from New England, see Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 15. See also Mason, "Trans-Mountain States," 129-137; and Fishel "Wisconsin," 162-187.

<sup>54</sup> For detailed examples of the structural, procedural, and administrative similarities among the historical societies in the antebellum period, see Mason, "Trans-Mountain State," 125-127. Despite these similarities and the similarity of the backgrounds of historical society members and officers, Alea Henle points out that differences in "the nature of the societies, their objectives, and how to carry out their objectives resulted in a multiplicity of initiatives. ... The proliferation of historical societies reflected and helped realize nested layers of national, regional, state, local, and denominational identities." Henle "Preserving the Past," 2.

difference between the two regions was the primary historical focus. In the East, before 1861, the focus was the “American Revolution, its patriots, and the experiment in democratic institutions which the Revolution fostered.”<sup>55</sup> In the West (although several trans-mountain states could also lay claim to minor roles in the Revolution) the historical focus was “centered upon the frontier, its settlement, military leaders, and Indian warfare.”<sup>56</sup>

Trans-mountain historical societies during the movement’s founding period were generally short-lived. They “tended to leap prematurely into the world” only to be “rewarded for their impertinence by widespread neglect and indifference,” which led in almost all cases to failure.<sup>57</sup> This failure usually took the form of a brief period of involved action, often stimulated by a charismatic leader, followed by extended periods of apathy and inactivity interspersed by reorganization efforts or disbandment.<sup>58</sup>

The trans-mountain states had many reasons for organizing historical societies in the decades immediately following statehood. Some were attempting to “create an established culture where little yet existed.”<sup>59</sup> Cultural institutions, like the historical society, were critical elements used to achieve such designs. Historical societies in the antebellum period were symbols of culture and learning, even used as selling points for

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<sup>55</sup> Mason, “Trans-Mountain States,” 125.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. For further discussions on the difference in historical focus between the frontier and American Revolution, see Terry A. Barnhart, “‘Elegant and Useful Learning’: The Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois, 1827-1829,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 95, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 11-12; and Van Hassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 43-59.

<sup>57</sup> Ruegamer, *History of the Indiana Historical Society*, 5. For brief accounts of these organizations, see Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*; Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*, and Kammen and Wilson, eds., *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed.

<sup>58</sup> Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 22. See also Mason, “Trans-Mountain States,” 137; and Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 548. Many times these failures opened opportunities for change as state historical societies were reorganized later in the century, often during the heightened focus on state and local history that accompanied the American centennial era.

<sup>59</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 548.

attracting new settlers to an area.<sup>60</sup> Trans-mountain states also felt the pressure to keep pace culturally with the East and attempted to prove (perhaps more to themselves) that they stood on equal footing in such areas.<sup>61</sup> And many early settlers in the trans-mountain region emigrated from states where historical societies were already established, and were attempting to transfer a historical consciousness to the frontier.

### **Regional Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Old Northwest**

Among the trans-mountain states, “a distinct regional identity and historical consciousness emerged in the literature” of the area north and west of the Ohio River known as the Northwest Territory “between roughly 1820 and 1860.”<sup>62</sup> Often simply dubbed the Old Northwest, the region consisted of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 51.

<sup>61</sup> Barnhart explored this East-West literary dynamic in some depth. See *ibid.*, 43-48. For an anecdotal example of the East-West dynamic in Indiana that took place before, and in the years immediately following, the Civil War, see Meredith Nicholson, “An Indiana Poet Passes,” *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.3, col.2 (written for the *Indianapolis Star* and reprinted in *New Castle Courier*). Although this account speaks of literary figures in Indiana and does not directly reference the historical society movement, most early societies were founded by local history writers who were, at the time, considered a part of the literary movement in America. The poem “Tis Morning and the Days are Long,” by Benjamin S. Parker—a founder of the HCHS and important literary figure in Indiana—is a central element of Nicholson’s account. Nicholson (1866–1947) recalled from his boyhood a “trifling matter” but one that “made an inefaceable impression” on him. Nicholson recalled an address printed in the *Indianapolis Journal* by Maurice Thompson, of Wabash College, in defense of western “provincials to write and dabble as much as we liked in literature, there being, in those days, an impression abroad that we Western people were not entitled to express ourselves without the sanction of the gods who sat in magazine offices in New York.”

<sup>62</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 40. This process occurred primarily in the southern portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, which were the areas first populated by white settlers, and “found frequent expression in the transactions of state historical societies and in the writings of poets, novelists, and historians.” *Ibid.*, 41. See also Andrew R. L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), xii and 6.

<sup>63</sup> The extreme eastern portion of the area that became Minnesota in 1858 was also included in the Northwest Territory, but Minnesota is often excluded from discussions of the Old Northwest.

The process began as the western-most frontier region of the United States—the Northwest Territory—was gradually populated by waves of migrating Anglo-American settlers from the original thirteen states beginning in the final decade of the eighteenth century. Frontiers, like Indiana in the period leading up to statehood, are not areas “where one expects to find individuals with the leisure time to read, write, and collect historical materials.”<sup>64</sup> A frontier—“the outer edge of advancing settlement, the meeting point of savagery and civilization, the zone where civilization entered the wilderness, the ‘region whose social conditions resulted from the application of older institutions and ideas to the transforming influences of new land’”—is a place where one generally considers history to lie in the future and not in the past.<sup>65</sup> Yet, as Lana Ruegamer points out in her history of the Indiana Historical Society, the American frontier was “populated in large part by persons from older and established communities, some of whom brought with them a sense of responsibility for history, an historical consciousness.”<sup>66</sup>

It mattered little to the persons from a frontier community that the area’s settlement history offered only a brief period to record. What mattered was that what little history existed seemed in danger of being lost forever. “Fear of loss” served as a significant source of motivation for the founders of the first historical societies in the United States and continues as such to the present time.<sup>67</sup> Regardless of a frontier’s brief

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<sup>64</sup> Ruegamer, *History of the Indiana Historical Society*, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Co., 1974), 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ruegamer, *History of the Indiana Historical Society*, 8.

<sup>67</sup> The vast majority of writings on the historical society movement cite the “fear of loss” as a primary motivation for the establishment of historical societies, as well as it being a clear indicator of historical consciousness. See Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, 10-11; Tucker, “Massachusetts,” 3; Silvestro, “Other New England States,” 30-31; Cox, “Other Atlantic States,” 108-109; and Mason,

duration, its recent history offered a sense of identity that was greatly valued by its population: “To them history, even if it was of the recent past, was something that mattered.”<sup>68</sup>

The Northwest Territory, “the first great national frontier, in the development of America’s civilization”, was a product of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787—the piece of landmark legislation that brought the new territory into existence.<sup>69</sup> The ordinance established a two-stage plan of government and a historic “compact between the people in the original thirteen states and those who would immigrate to the new territory.”<sup>70</sup> It played a significant, though unintentional, role in creating a special regional ethos and identity in the Old Northwest for the people who now branded themselves Westerners. Traces of this regional identity were evident well into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>71</sup> The prohibition of slavery; the Natural Rights provisions (freedom of religious belief and worship, right to trial by jury, benefits of habeas corpus, and the sanctity of private contracts), freedom of navigable waterways, and a highly successful colonial policy that set the precedent by which new and equal states entered the Union

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“Trans-Mountain States,” 138-141. It is a theme often repeated during the proceedings of historical organizations in Henry County. See, e.g., *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2.

<sup>68</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in the U.S.,” 298. For more on historical consciousness in frontier states, see *ibid.*, 297-298. For sources on historical consciousness in early America, see Ruegamer, *History of the Indiana Historical Society*, 8-9; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley, trans. Henry Reeve (2 vols.; New York: Knopf, 1945), I, 141-142, 408, II, 275-76; and Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World: American Culture: the Formative Years* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), 312-350.

<sup>69</sup> Cayton and Onuf, *Midwest and the Nation*, xv-xvi.

<sup>70</sup> John, D. Barnhart and Dorothy L. Riker, *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period: The History of Indiana*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1971), 267.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., Milo M. Quaife, “Significance of the Ordinance of 1787,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 30, no. 4 (January 1938), 424. George Hazzard and other local history writers in Henry County continued to apply “the West” to describe the states of the former Northwest Territory after 1900. See George Hazzard, *Hazzard’s History of Henry County Indiana; 1822-1906 Military Edition*, vol. 2 (New Castle, IN: self-published, 1906), 1029, 1159, and 1201. *Westerner* was a self-defining term commonly used in Henry County by the generation of early settlers. By about 1910, after the majority of first-generation county-born residents were dead, the term was discontinued and only used occasionally to describe the pioneer generation in a historical context.

within a democratic government were innovative developments pre-dating the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights.<sup>72</sup> “Men leaving their mother country to colonize elsewhere would not lose their full rights as citizens but that these rights and those of self-government would be put in trust for them, was a new concept in the history of government,” according to the interpretation of John D. Barnhart in *Indiana to 1816*.<sup>73</sup> Along with the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, the Northwest Ordinance stands “as one of the great bulwarks of constitutional liberty” and significantly affected the future course of the new nation.<sup>74</sup> More specifically, its provisions came to have long lasting effects on the people of this emerging Western territory. The ordinance helped cultivate the “concept of the West as a sanctuary of freedom” (however flawed and segregated): a concept that forged the region’s identity, character, and spirit.<sup>75</sup>

Education, another marked addition to the Northwest Ordinance and staple of the regional identity constructed in the Old Northwest, made its appearance in article three:

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<sup>72</sup> The guarantees of civil rights were far in advance of their time. The sanctity of private contracts had never before in history appeared in a charter of government. See Barnhart and Riker, *Indiana to 1816*, 266-271. The Northwest Ordinance also worked hand-in-hand with the Land Ordinance of 1785, which established the basis for the Public Land Survey System and provided mechanisms for selling and settling the land and for funding public education. See *ibid.*, 251-252. For the original text of the ordinance, see “A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774 – 1875,” Library of Congress, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=lljc&fileName=028/lljc028.db&recNum=386>. See also Cayton and Onuf, Chapter 1, “Significance of the Northwest Ordinance,” in *Midwest and the Nation*, 1-24.

<sup>73</sup> Barnhart and Riker, *Indiana to 1816*, 270. See also Cayton and Onuf, *Midwest and the Nation*, 4-5.

<sup>74</sup> Barnhart and Riker, *Indiana to 1816*, 270.

<sup>75</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 48. The concept was flawed due to the fact that blacks, American Indians, and women were excluded from the majority of the natural rights provisions and other benefits of a democratic government during this period. The freedom trumpeted by Western writers applied primarily to white males, yet more freedom typically existed in the Northwest Territory than elsewhere. Such freedoms also paved the way for social progress, first exhibited in the state constitutions and then through the social movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. “Clearly there was more social progress for some than for others in the Old Northwest, notwithstanding the democratic rhetoric that glossed over deep-seated racial prejudice and ignored blatant discrimination against the region’s free-black communities.” *Ibid.*, 49.

“Religion, Morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, Schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”<sup>76</sup> This phrase embedded the cause of education as a basic principle of democratic government, not only in the Old Northwest but in the expanding territories and states established in the next century. In Indiana, as elsewhere, public education expanded slowly. The majority of the population lived in sparsely settled areas until the late 1830s. Few parents were willing or able to finance a school of any sort. The Indiana Constitution of 1816 established, for its time, a high standard for education following the example set by the Northwest Ordinance: “a general system of education ascending in a regular gradation from township schools to a state university, wherein tuition shall be gratis, and equally open to all.”<sup>77</sup> The provisions for public education made in 1816 proved insufficient to fulfill the ideal of free education for all and little actual progress was achieved before mid-century.<sup>78</sup> No tax mandates to support public education were established until the Indiana Constitution of 1851. Although a highly controversial issue, education served as an important traditional tenet of the moral and civil sentiment of the idealized Westerner, as did the prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Territory.<sup>79</sup>

The Northwest Territory was officially dissolved after its southeastern portion was admitted to the Union as the state of Ohio in 1803 and the massive remaining area

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<sup>76</sup> “Northwest Ordinance (1787),” [Article 3] Our Documents, accessed August 12, 2015, [http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc\\_large\\_image.php?flash=true&doc=8](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc_large_image.php?flash=true&doc=8).

<sup>77</sup> William D. Owen (Secretary of State), Constitution of 1816, Article IX, Sec. 2, *Constitutions of 1816 and 1851 of the State of Indiana and Amendments* (Indianapolis: William B. Burford, State Printer, 1895), 22.

<sup>78</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 461.

<sup>79</sup> Although the institution of slavery was banned by the Northwest Ordinance, slaves and indentured servants were still present in Indiana for several decades. See *ibid.*, 13. See also Cayton and Onuf, *Midwest and the Nation*, 12 and 15-17.



was designated as the Indiana Territory.<sup>80</sup> Yet the spirit of the Old Northwest lived on far past the territory's official life span. According to Dr. Terry Barnhart, beginning around 1820, a distinct regional identity and historical consciousness developed in the Old Northwest, emerging through the region's literature and the historical society movement. "The common political origins" of the five states eventually carved from the coveted territory surrendered by the British in peace negotiations following the American Revolution "imparted a sense of regional identity among their residents...[This] fostered a common set of cultural aspirations among the region's intelligentsia, and encouraged the search for a sustaining mythology about their origins."<sup>81</sup>

This regional ethos and place consciousness remained palpable until the close of the Civil War, "after which time the Old Northwest geographically and culturally became part of the larger and more amorphous Midwest."<sup>82</sup> Although the attention and loyalty of the region's inhabitants shifted from regional to the state and local levels in the area of the Old Northwest, the basic tenets of freedom, education, and rugged individualism were carried forward into the second half of the nineteenth century. Resurgence in the interest of history triggered by the American centennial witnessed a surge in local history writing and the organization of historical societies. Together with historical society proceedings, state and local history writing kept alive the traditional western themes and echoed the frontier rhetoric concerning the region's often

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<sup>80</sup> The Indiana Territory was subsequently reduced in 1805 by the creation of the Michigan Territory, in 1809 by the creation of the Illinois Territory, and again in 1836 by the creation of the Wisconsin Territory. For excellent early descriptions of the Old Northwest, see Jervis Cutler, *A Topographical Description of the State of Ohio, Indiana Territory, and Louisiana* (Boston: Charles Williams, 1812).

<sup>81</sup> Barnhart, "Common Feeling," 40. See also Cayton and Onuf, *Midwest and the Nation*, xii.

<sup>82</sup> Barnhart, "Common Feeling," 40.

mythicized settlement history that endorsed a collective memory carried over from the frontier period.

The historical society movement, set in the context of the Old Northwest, differed in significant ways from the movement that was occurring in the eastern United States before the Civil War. In Indiana, following the American centennial, the early beginnings of the county historical society movement began to surface, with little or no connection with the state society, in the extreme northern counties and East Central Indiana, as well as in a few other isolated locations.<sup>83</sup> The HCHS was the only local society that survived without interruption, while all others experienced periods of inactivity and disbandment very reminiscent of the state historical societies of the trans-mountain states before the Civil War. An analysis of the patterns of cultural development of East Central Indiana may provide some clues to this anomaly.

### **Patterns of Cultural Development of East Central Indiana**

The regional identity constructed in the Old Northwest was common to all the young states formerly of the Northwest Territory, yet county historical societies were uncommon in this region until the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>84</sup> So what

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<sup>83</sup> The author compiled a list of the founding and reorganization dates for many of the county historical societies in Indiana through contact with existing organizations, websites, and information gleaned from newspapers, the *Indiana Magazine of History*, and the *Bulletin* issued by the Indiana Historical Commission (later the Indiana Historical Bureau) beginning in 1916. See also "Local Historical Societies," (2nd Quarter 1905), 98.

<sup>84</sup> For a comparison in the neighboring state of Illinois, see Christopher B. Coleman, "Editorial," *Indiana Magazine of History* 4, no. 4 (December 1908), 201-202. According to Coleman, the Illinois State Library reported that, in 1908, out of 102 counties, twenty had historical societies. Four other organizations were also doing the work of county historical societies: some were active and others exhibited less activity.

specific influences and characteristics made the sustained existence of the HCHS possible during the final decades of the nineteenth century?

The cultural background of the early settlers of East Central Indiana and, specifically, Henry County, can help us begin to answer this question. By examining the patterns of cultural development for this sub-region of Indiana, we can better identify and understand the influences and characteristics of the founders and early members of the HCHS, as well as the actions of the local government officials and the county's general population. All these parties were a product of the local culture and all played a role in the HCHS's evolving history.<sup>85</sup>

Many studies, which date back as far as the early 1900s, have examined questions related to cultural development in Indiana. The long-held assumption was that a strong southern influence held sway over the bottom two-thirds of the state, while northern Indiana was more a product of the Great Lakes Region and the cultures of the Northeastern United States. Since the 1980s, studies reveal a more complex depiction. From among these studies, Dr. James M. Bergquist, asserts, "Cultural evidence...seems to support the idea that central Indiana can be regarded as a fairly distinct cultural subarea, different in a number of respects from the northernmost part of the state and also from the hilly region near the Ohio."<sup>86</sup>

Indiana poses many difficulties for researchers attempting to qualify its patterns of cultural development. The state was settled from south to north between the years

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<sup>85</sup> *Culture*, as discussed in this work, is used in the broader sociological sense and does not mean literary or artistic high culture. *Culture* is "a highly patterned, cohesive, and coherent set of representations (or beliefs) that constitute people's perception of reality and that get reproduced relatively intact over generations through enculturation." Richard G. Fox, "Culture—A Second Chance?" *Current Anthropology* 40, no. S1 (February 1999), si.

<sup>86</sup> James M. Bergquist, "Tracing the Origins of a Midwestern Culture: The Case of Central Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 77, no. 1 (March 1981), 14.

1800 and 1850. Migrants from the upland South generally dominated this period as the state was transformed from “wilderness to established society.”<sup>87</sup> In the absence of roads and railways, settlers utilized the Ohio River and its many tributaries as transportation routes. Along these routes small communities developed.

The south to north settlement pattern (similar to what transpired in Ohio and Illinois) was also largely influenced by the presence of Native Americans and the timeline dictated by constant conflicts and struggles over numerous treaties and other contrived methods by the United States Government to acquire Indian lands. Unlike Ohio and Illinois, southerners in Indiana moved further north along three primary river valleys—the Whitewater, White River, and Wabash—preempting many migrants from Middle and New England states from settling there.<sup>88</sup> According to this pattern of diffusion, it is natural to assume Central Indiana’s culture would be a comprehensive reflection of upland South life styles. But to understand the distinctive Indiana culture that emerged during its settlement period it is essential to include not only the range of influences that composed the culture but also the historical conditions in which these influences amalgamated.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 2. For a detailed explanation of the upland South region and how it differs from the lowland South regions, including regional maps, see Gregory S. Rose, “Upland Southerners: The County Origins of Southern Migrants to Indiana by 1850,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 82, no. 3 (September 1986), 249-251. See also Elfrieda Lang, “Southern Migration to Northern Indiana before 1850,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 50, no. 4 (December 1954), 349-356.

<sup>88</sup> Bergquist, “Tracing the Origins,” 2. The settlement of the Whitewater Valley was particularly significant to the cultural development of central Indiana and Henry County. A series of articles published in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (1947) by Chelsea L. Lawlis cover the settlement period of the valley. Wayne County, established in 1810 at the head of the valley, is closely tied to Henry County, especially during the nineteenth century.

<sup>89</sup> Bergquist, “Tracing the Origins,” 3. Bergquist noted, “It is not difficult to identify the various sources from which the population and the culture of the early Midwest were drawn, but to do so does not necessarily account for the product that resulted. The question remains as to why one cultural trait brought into the wilderness survived and another did not. Some scholars have described the process as one of conflict and competition between cultures, but the cultural scene that resulted is much too complex for such oversimplification. Accommodation as well as conflict seems to have played a role.”

The hybrid Ohio Valley culture, the basis for what later was dubbed the “Corn Belt” culture in Henry and other central Indiana counties, was developed with “surprising rapidity by the forces of change” in southwestern Ohio following the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.<sup>90</sup> Beginning around 1800, a cultural evolution took shape. It combined two distinct migration streams: northern merchants and artisans from Middle Atlantic States who settled in Cincinnati; and independent farmers of the upland South representing portions of North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia.<sup>91</sup> Migrants from the upland South were subsistence farmers who settled largely in the newly formed counties in the Great Miami Valley, sometimes called the *Miami Country*.<sup>92</sup> The region encompassed the river town of Cincinnati—the focal point and economic hub of the region.<sup>93</sup> Before moving north of the Ohio River, upland South farmers had few economic opportunities in commercial agriculture until the northern businessmen of Cincinnati introduced them to a market economy.<sup>94</sup>

Between 1800 and 1830, the changing economic times offered a climate of mutually beneficial economic opportunity for the new settlers who came from seemingly contrasting economic ways of life. The independent farmer and northern merchants

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<sup>90</sup> The Corn Belt region, beginning around 1860, included the northern halves of Indiana and Illinois, Iowa, western Ohio, and parts of several other states, although “no written use prior to 1882” was reported of the term *Corn Belt*, according to Richard Lyle Power. He added that the defined bounds of the Corn Belt (“never long fixed”) “as that area where corn is the major crop.” Richard Lyle Power, *Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerner and Yankee in the Old Northwest* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1953), 160.

The Treaty of Greenville in 1795 opened the southern half of Ohio and a small sliver of present-day Indiana, which included the eastern half of what later became Wayne County, for government survey and settlement. It paved the way for Ohio’s statehood and was the first major land acquisition by way of a United States military victory over the Native American tribes in the Old Northwest. See John Sugden, *Blue Jacket: Warrior of the Shawnee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 200-204.

<sup>91</sup> The merchants from Middle Atlantic States hailed primarily from Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey.

<sup>92</sup> Bergquist, “Tracing the Origins,” 21.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

found common cause and collaboration, which led to cultural accommodation. Bergquist stresses, “The ways in which the two interacted...were greatly significant to the future development of [M]idwestern culture.”<sup>95</sup> In the years before the War of 1812 the population of the Miami Country continued to increase, pushing squatters into Indian lands or federal lands yet to be surveyed. As populations increased, cheap land became scarce. The thirst for lower priced lands fueled the westward migration into the newly formed counties of East Central Indiana and on across the middle third of the state. In the succeeding decades, this push continued on through central Illinois and into portions of the trans-Mississippi West.

The depression of the early 1820s ruined for a time all possibility of exporting agricultural surpluses. Nevertheless, long-term economic forces were working to develop in central Indiana a way of life based upon a market economy such as had been developed in the Miami Country a few years before. The fruitful union of Middle States commerce and upland southern agriculture would be strengthened in Indiana in the next two decades and would set the pattern for the future evolution of the Middle West.<sup>96</sup>

“In the critical period from 1815 to 1830, growing markets, the technology of transportation, and past traditions of agriculture all combined to create the fundamental relationship of middle western agriculture, the corn-hog economy,” which dominated economic life in Henry County throughout the century.<sup>97</sup> The historical conditions following the War of 1812 “favored both the rapid diffusion and the reinforcement of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 26. Bergquist added: “This is, of course, an oversimplification, for people of southern origin did involve themselves in commerce, especially in the smaller towns, and there were people of many backgrounds involved in agriculture; but these generalizations can nonetheless be accepted as characteristic of the two ways of life.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 27. “Corn” represents all grains and not maize alone.

the new culture.”<sup>98</sup> Several factors advanced the expansion of Ohio Valley culture in the 1820s through the 1850s. Indiana was unable to develop a commercial center before the Civil War, so ties with Cincinnati remained essential for economic interests.<sup>99</sup> And the National Road did not open through Indiana until the 1830s; and even then it remained slow and inefficient as a reliable outlet to economic markets. By the time railroads altered this pattern in the 1880s much of the region's social-cultural pattern was set. Certain elements of the culture in East Central Indiana, like the influx of Quakerism, would exert a more concentrated and immediate influence, while others, like the introduction of a market economy, would evolve over the course of the next century exercising a more enduring effect.

The “doctrine of first effective settlement,” first introduced by Wilbur Zelinsky in his book *The Cultural Geography of the United States*, and utilized by Bergquist for the regions of southwestern Ohio and, more particularly, East Central Indiana placed a great emphasis on the first settlers to an area who “get to call the cultural tune.”<sup>100</sup> Quoting from Zelinsky, “whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> The Whitewater Canal, built between 1836 and 1847, funneled agricultural surplus from East Central Indiana south toward Cincinnati during the antebellum period. The canal was constructed through Cambridge City and ended at Hagerstown. Both towns are located in Wayne County but are actually closer to New Castle, the county seat of Henry County, than they are to Richmond, the county seat of Wayne. However, the canal was soon made ineffectual by the railroads and was a major failure shared by both counties and the state at large. See Chelsea L. Lawlis, “Changes in the Whitewater Valley, 1840-1850,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 44, no. 1 (March 1948), 74.

<sup>100</sup> Bergquist, “Tracing the Origins,” 15.

been."<sup>101</sup> Other significant cultural geographers and folklorists also support the importance of "initial occupance." Fred Kniffen (a mentor to folklorist Henri H. Glassie III, Professor of Folklore at Indiana University Bloomington) wrote in his enduring 1965 work entitled "Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion," that "The concept is important because it recognizes the initial impact as long lasting, surviving even where a new ethnic stock has succeeded the original settlers. ...Further, initial occupance is the base of reference for all subsequent change."<sup>102</sup>

As documented by Dr. Thomas D. Hamm, Henry County experienced three major migration streams between 1820 and 1920.<sup>103</sup> The first, as described in this section, remained the dominant and lasting culture based on studies of linguistics, agriculture, religion, and material culture (folk-architectural types). These elements aided historians in classifying central Indiana as unique from the northern and southern regions of the state and helped determine where the first settlers came from, as the first settlers often set the standard for the cultural development of an area. The migration of Quakers to East Central Indiana before the Civil War well exemplifies the theories on cultural development by Zelinsky, Kniffen, and Bergquist.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, "Henry County's Three Migrations," *Henry County Historicalog* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1990), no page numbers.



## **Chapter Two: Quaker Influence on the Cultural Development and the Making of a Historical Consciousness in Henry County**

Similar in some respects to the influence of Puritanism on the making of a historical consciousness that aided the beginnings of the historical society movement in New England, the Society of Friends (or Quakers) carried traditions that naturally bent its followers toward collection and preservation of local history.<sup>1</sup> There is compelling evidence to suggest that these traditions—this Quaker heritage—played a significant role in the making of a historical consciousness in Henry County, which aided the organization and early development of the HCHS.<sup>2</sup> Other factors were relevant in this process, but during the settlement period, the relatively high number of Friends who lived in East Central Indiana sets it apart from the rest of the state. When attempting to account for reasons why historical organizations in the counties of Wayne, Henry, and Randolph developed earlier than most other Indiana counties, the strong influence of Quakerism emerges as a prevailing theme.

To understand how Quakerism might have influenced the preservation of local history in Henry County, one must first gain a firm understanding of the early practices and traditions of the Friends church and its followers. The historical value of Quaker

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<sup>1</sup> According Barbour and Frost, “Much of Quakerism,” which developed during the seventeenth century in England, “can best be understood as growing out of Puritanism.” Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>2</sup> The author discussed this theory with several Indiana Quaker historians: Dr. Thomas D. Hamm (of Earlham College and one of the foremost experts on Quakerism in America), Greg P. Hinshaw, Ed.D. (Superintendent of Schools of the Randolph Central School Corporation, Winchester, Indiana, Randolph County Historian, and author of a number of articles and books on Quakers in Randolph County), Richard P. Ratcliff (Henry County Historian and author of a number of books on Friends in Indiana), and Bill Munn (Grant County Historian). All agreed that, although Quaker influence had not been applied in this way in relation to the historical society movement in Indiana, it was an intriguing and very plausible argument.

records is well known to many as fundamental to genealogical and local history research in areas of the United States where Friends meetings were established. But the evidence goes far beyond recordkeeping practices and traditions. Quaker discipline and the lifestyle of its early members; its close recording of church histories; tradition of education; and Friends' historical societies, archives, and museums, collectively, paint a clear portrait of Quakers as having developed a keen historical consciousness—a process which began in the seventeenth century and affected the lives of those associated with the Quaker lifestyle through the pervasive, often uncompromising Quaker discipline. Quaker ways and Quaker discipline were a lifestyle—a life choice that “shaped virtually every aspect of a consistent Friend’s life”—uncommon to most other faiths.<sup>3</sup> Either one accepted this lifestyle, with its strict, sometimes harsh, accountability, or membership was withdrawn by the monthly meeting. The pressure on an individual living in a close-knit Quaker community to conform was often great. It was a force utilized and encouraged by the monthly meetings as a way to mete out discipline and maximize church authority. Under this “highly structured but somewhat decentralized” authoritarian style of organizational governance, which dominated American Friends communities by the nineteenth century, a Quaker solidarity developed as its members were forced to conform according to dictates—rules, disciplines, and official stances passed down by the Society’s governing bodies (i.e., yearly meetings, quarterly meetings, and monthly meetings)—or surrender membership.<sup>4</sup> Under such a

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. Hamm describes in some detail the “highly structured and somewhat decentralized system of church government” that Orthodox Quakers in America were living under in the nineteenth century. This system contributed to the traditions of collecting and preserving local history through its standardized and methodical procedures of recordkeeping.

discipline, practices, traditions, and beliefs were uncommonly lasting, even as individuals left behind their memberships in Quaker meetings and joined other church denominations.

From 1800 to 1850, a “massive influx” of Quakers established a series of small, close-knit communities on the newly opened frontier of the Old Northwest.<sup>5</sup> This influx significantly contributed to patterns of cultural development in southwestern Ohio and East Central Indiana. “The Great Migration,” as it is termed by Quakers, was a major part of the migration stream from the upland South—primarily from the Piedmont region of North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> Motivated to move westward by moral and economic reasons, there were more Quakers living in Indiana by 1845 than anywhere else in North America.<sup>7</sup> Of the roughly 30,000 Quakers living in the Hoosier state, almost 10,000 lived in Wayne, Henry, and Randolph counties—the heart of East Central Indiana. Friends established sixty-six meetings in the three counties before the Civil War, and the total climbed to ninety-three before century’s end.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> According to Hamm, “accurate statistics are scarce, but they suggest a massive influx of Friends” whose “main destinations...before 1850 were Indiana and Ohio. ...By 1843, a majority of Orthodox Friends lived west of the Appalachians: 30,000 in Indiana Yearly Meeting and 8,000 in Ohio, compared with about 35,000 in the yearly meetings along the eastern seaboard.” Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, 13. For a succinct account of Quakerism in America from 1800 to 1907, see *ibid.*, xv-xvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-15; and Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 38. The “Great Migration” of Friends from the Carolinas was also often mentioned in papers presented before the HCHS. For two examples, see John W. Macy, “Hopewell Neighborhood” in Scrapbook 58, 1889 – 1954, [originally Scrap Book No. 1] from scrapbook collection, HCHS, Smith Library, 122; and Adolph Rogers, “North Carolina and Indiana: A Tie That Binds,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 5, no. 2 (June 1909), 50.

<sup>7</sup> See Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, Appendix 1, “Membership Statistics for Orthodox/Gurneyite Friends, 1845-1908,” 175. See also Barbour and Frost, *Quakers*, 234.

<sup>8</sup> A Quaker *meeting* is the rough equivalent to a local church in other Christian denominations. For a more detailed explanation of Friends meetings, see Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 10. East Central Indiana, specifically Richmond, has long been the center for Quakerism in the Midwest and perhaps ranks behind only Philadelphia in its importance. Historically, the counties of Wayne (37), Randolph (34), and Henry (27), have had, respectively, the most Friends meetings in Indiana (not all were active at the same time). Grant (24) is the only other antebellum Indiana county that comes close to these totals. (These figures include the meetings created during the Hicksite and antislavery separations before the Civil War.) Present day meeting totals are significantly lower: Wayne County (7),

Hamm and Hinshaw have noted that, historically, Quakers exerted an influence far exceeding their actual number.<sup>9</sup> In locations like Henry, Wayne, and Randolph counties during the frontier period where Quaker population figures were proportionally high, their influence increased likewise.<sup>10</sup> In 1832, eleven percent of Henry County's population was Quaker.<sup>11</sup> In Wayne and Randolph counties the percentages were even

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Randolph (11), Henry (9), and Grant (10). These latter figures—restricted to those under Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) in 1996—are calculated from information found in Gregory P. Hinshaw, *Indiana Friends Heritage, 1821-1996* (Richmond, IN: Indiana Yearly Meeting, 1996), 39-140; and map inside the back cover. See also Gregory P. Hinshaw, "Southern Friends in the Organization and Settlement of Randolph County, Indiana, 1814-1830," *Quaker History* 98, no. 2 (Fall 2009), 39 and endnote 65.

<sup>9</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 33; and Hinshaw, "Southern Friends," 26.

<sup>10</sup> Through the use of Quaker meeting records, census data, and other sources, Hinshaw retraces the often complicated genealogies of Randolph County's earliest settlers back to their states of origin to reveal an overwhelming majority of Quakers and those with intimate family connections to Friends. Hinshaw quantifies the Quaker presence and exemplifies their influence through positions of authority in local government. See Hinshaw, "Southern Friends." Henry County's early local government was *not* likewise dominated by Friends, as most were reluctant to participate in political matters according to Quaker traditions of the period, which attempted to keep members separate and distinct from the surrounding communities. Although Wayne, Henry, and Randolph counties all contained significant Quaker settlements, each developed in somewhat different ways. Few Quakers originally settled at the county seat of New Castle, Henry County, preferring more isolated locations where Friends were the majority instead of the minority. New Castle Friends Meeting was not established until 1870 as the railroads brought industry and new employment opportunities to the county seat.

<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to gain a representative numerical picture of the Quaker population in Henry County from the 1832 monthly meeting membership census. It had only been ten years since Henry County was officially established as an Indiana county. Only four Friends meetings were established before 1832. Five more were organized by 1837. A portion of the newer meeting's membership attended Duck Creek, the only monthly meeting by 1832, but many had yet to arrive. Following the Civil War, six new meetings were established between 1868 and 1875. Between 1886 and 1892, four more meetings were organized (three in newly formed villages founded along railroad lines). See Gregory P. Hinshaw, *Indiana Friends Heritage*, "Part Three: Our Meetings Past and Present" (Muncie, IN: Indiana Yearly Meeting, 1996), 39-140.

The percentage for Henry County is not truly representative of the peak of its Quaker influence. Wayne and Randolph counties are older counties than Henry, eleven and three years respectively. According to conversations with Dr. Hamm at Earlham College, as well as my own investigations, the period between 1840 and 1860 is the peak of Quaker population and influence in Henry County when the county's overall population rose at a slower rate than later in the century. Unfortunately only one membership survey, in 1832, was completed before the Civil War. The next such survey was not done until 1888. In the decades between the first two membership surveys, Henry's non-Quaker population rose at a higher rate than in the antebellum period. In 1890 Henry County's population had elevated to 23,879 but the Quaker population was ten percent—a little below what it was in 1832. Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), Meetings for Sufferings Minutes, 10th Mo. 8, 1834, 10th Mo. 5, 1835, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College; and Minutes of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in Richmond, IN, 1888 (Richmond, IN: T. E. De Yarmon, 1888), 28.

higher: twenty-two percent and thirty-one percent respectively.<sup>12</sup> There is compelling evidence that suggests the presence of a proportionately large Quaker population significantly influenced the rise of the historical society movement in East Central Indiana. Wayne, Henry, and Randolph counties all established historical societies by 1901 and were among the earliest Indiana counties to do so—Wayne even earlier than Henry.<sup>13</sup> However, only the HCHS survived without interruption during that early period; it remains the oldest continuous county historical society in Indiana.

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<sup>12</sup> See Hinshaw, “Southern Friends,” 26; and Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), Meetings for Sufferings Minutes, 10th Mo. 8, 1834, 10th Mo. 5, 1835, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College.

Calculating Quaker populations according to county is problematic. Friends meetings paid no heed to county lines and membership surveys were routinely done by the monthly meetings. Monthly meetings consisted of several preparative meetings, often from different counties. Hamm was able, from his long years of research with the monthly meeting records of the three counties, to estimate percentages of overlap (e.g., approximately twenty-five percent of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting in Henry County lived in Rush and Hancock counties). See Appendix A: Indiana Yearly Meeting Membership Totals 1834 and 1888.

It should be noted that former Quaker members (not included in such counts) still often exerted a strong influence on the local communities and patterns of cultural development. A similar conclusion is drawn in a recent work by Shaun Dingwerth, *The Richmond Group Artists*—a volume on the development of a group of late nineteenth-century artists in Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana. The author points out that the radiating effects of Quakerism exerted a significant influence in and around Richmond through the arts, history, moral reform movements, and other visible disciplines. Julia May, Introduction to *The Richmond Group Artists* by Shaun Thomas Dingwerth, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 7-8. Hinshaw reinforced this point with examples of “some of the non-Quaker settlers” with “Quaker connections” that settled along the West Brach of the Whitewater River in Randolph County who exerted influence as early government officials. Hinshaw, “Southern Friends,” 29.

<sup>13</sup> Randolph and Wayne counties experienced a series of reorganizations of their county historical societies during the first half of the twentieth century. See Carolyn Lafever, *A Pictorial History of Wayne County, Indiana* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 1998), 185; and Gregory P. Hinshaw, “Randolph County Historical Society: A Semi-Centennial History 1953-2003,” Randolph County Historical Society Collection, 2. Grant County, established in 1831, also contained a proportionately large nineteenth-century Quaker population. The Grant County Historical Society organized in 1905. Several of the county’s early local history writers also were Friends or were from Quaker families (e.g., Baldwin and Whitson). Edgar M. Baldwin, *The Making of a Township: Fairmount Township, Grant County, Indiana, 1829 to 1917*, vol. 1 (Fairmount, IN: Edwin Baldwin Printing Co., 1917), 182. Rolland Lewis Whitson, *Centennial History of Grant County, Indiana, 1812 to 1912*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1914), 653-658. Whitson also included a section on the founding of the Grant County Historical Society, *ibid.*, 385.

## Quakers and Traditions of Historical Consciousness

The seeds of a historical consciousness were developed in the Society of Friends as early as 1680 beginning with London Yearly Meeting.<sup>14</sup> Its stubborn insistence to collect a systematic history of the origins of Quakerism over a span of forty years set a precedent and their example has continued, not only in Great Britain but, in North America until the present time. This trend has been carried forward by Friends' historical societies and associations, research libraries at Quaker colleges, and special archives in yearly meetings dating back to the mid-nineteenth century in America. All of these institutions are strong examples of a pervading historical consciousness exhibited by the Society of Friends.<sup>15</sup>

In rural and urban communities, volunteer associations of various kinds became a staple of nineteenth-century life in the United States. This trend was evidenced in Henry County beginning in the 1840s by a broad assortment of associations including religious, agricultural, social reform (or humanitarian causes), and cultural societies. Friends in the county shunned many such "worldly" enticements, but were instrumental

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<sup>14</sup> In 1907, the *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* published a series of primary evidence dating back to 1680 documenting the attempt by London Yearly Meeting to collect a systematic history of the origins of Quakerism. A second effort was made in 1704, but not until 1720 was the venture "accomplished" and responses recorded from all the various meetings. "The First Publishers of Truth," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, supplements 1-5 (London: Friends House, 1907).

Note: In all Quaker writing, even modern scholarly writing, "the" never precedes the proper name of a meeting.

<sup>15</sup> Specific examples in East Central Indiana include Indiana Yearly Meeting, established at Richmond in 1821, and Earlham College, established in 1859, also located in Richmond. By the 1870s at Earlham a research library and a natural history museum were both opened rivaling the earliest such facilities in the state. See Thomas D. Hamm, *Earlham College: a History, 1847-1997* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). A number of Quaker colleges were established near significant Quaker population centers in the United States after 1850. See Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakers*, 40.

in organizing and leading antislavery societies, temperance societies, and historical organizations.<sup>16</sup>

Quaker doctrines and belief systems were spread through another essential pillar of Quakerism: education. Friends, who had always stressed the importance of primary education, played a major role in secondary education in Henry County during the academy movement beginning in the 1850s. In Indiana, “private academies dominated secondary education during a large part of the second half of the nineteenth century, the time between the closing of the county seminaries and through the establishment of the public high schools.”<sup>17</sup> Approximately one-third of these private academies were controlled by religious denominations. According to one author, no denomination “excelled the Friends in organization or administration of their schools.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For more information on the variety of volunteer associations formed in Henry County in the 1840s, see Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 1, 140-170. The names of the HCHS’s early members are found among the leaders and participants of the many early nineteenth-century volunteer associations. (A number of these individuals had been “disowned” by the Friends for a violation of the discipline or were influenced by Quaker traditions through close family ties to other Quaker members.) The first antislavery societies in Indiana were formed in 1836. Several antislavery societies were organized in Wayne County in 1838, including the state organization and the first female society. Henry County followed suit in 1841 with two societies, including a female antislavery society. The temperance movement was a much broader movement than the antislavery movement and attracted individuals from a wider range of religious denominations. The antislavery movement was not exclusive to Friends, but in Wayne and Henry counties, it was dominated by them. For more information on the Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society, see Kendra Clauser-Roemer, “‘Tho’ We are Deprived of the Privilege of Suffrage’: The Henry County Female Anti-Slavery Society Records, 1841-1849” (master’s thesis: Indiana University, 2009), 33; Thomas D. Hamm, *The Antislavery Movement in Henry County, Indiana* (New Castle, IN: Henry County Historical Society, 1987); and Stacey M Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

For a discussion of volunteer organizations in the U.S. at the same time, see Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley, trans. Henry Reeve, 2 vols.

<sup>17</sup> Sadie Bacon Hatcher, *A History of the Spiceland Academy* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1934), 103.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 104. Before 1850, Indiana had the highest rate of illiteracy of any northern state. See Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 461. Literacy rates were much higher in the Quaker communities of Henry County due to its early emphasis on primary education during the settlement period.

Through the educational system, Friends not only reinforced their teachings to Quaker children, but also spread their influence to the many non-Quaker students attending academies and boarding schools owned and operated by monthly meetings.<sup>19</sup> Spiceland Academy, established in the 1860s, and, to a lesser degree, Rich Square Academy, established in the 1850s, were Henry County institutions renowned for the exceptional quality of secondary education.<sup>20</sup> Spiceland Academy remained influential until 1922 and attracted students from numerous other states, territories, and neighboring counties.<sup>21</sup>

### **Decline in Quaker Influence and the Process of Evangelical Acculturation**

A local historian, writing about Henry County in 1906, said, “Most of the peculiarities that distinguished them [Quakers] in those early times have been discarded by the Friends of the present day.”<sup>22</sup> Quaker unity that had once served Friends so well as a source of influence in East Central Indiana was badly fractured by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A slow decline in total membership, due in part to a set of internalizing mid-eighteenth-century reforms on membership and marriage restrictions, was coupled by a series of nineteenth-century doctrinal separations that splintered the

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<sup>19</sup> Records were compiled by education committees appointed by monthly meetings that provide accurate data (e.g., student enrollments for the various schools under a monthly meeting, the number of Quaker and non-Quaker students each term, and names of instructors). Education committee records for Spiceland Monthly Meeting are found at Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College.

<sup>20</sup> A school was opened in Spiceland in 1826, which later became the Spiceland Academy. Some historians date the institution from 1826 to 1921. Spiceland Academy became a township high school in 1923. Rich Square Academy closed in 1879 and became Franklin Township High School.

<sup>21</sup> For information on Quaker operated secondary schools in Indiana, see Richard P. Ratcliff, *Our Special Heritage: the Sesquicentennial of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1821-1971* (New Castle, IN: Community Printing Company, 1970), 43-50; Hatcher, *History of the Spiceland Academy*; and records compiled by education committees appointed by monthly meetings held at Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College.

<sup>22</sup> *Hazzard's History*, 1055.



religious sect's influence in many Quaker strongholds.<sup>23</sup> Indiana was largely spared the effects of the separations until the Orthodox split that came to a head in the years immediately following the Civil War.<sup>24</sup> Hamm wrote: "During the mid-nineteenth century a combination of internal tensions, socioeconomic change, and influence of non-Quaker religious thought, especially evangelicalism, subtly and gradually laid the groundwork for a near-revolution that during the 1870s would sweep away nearly all of the marks of Quaker distinctiveness. By 1900 the overwhelming majority of American Friends were no longer part of a sect but, instead, were part of a religious movement that had achieved denominational status."<sup>25</sup>

During the Orthodox split, the process of "evangelical acculturation" began in places like Henry County. According to Richard Wood, the majority of Quakers "from Ohio to Kansas, numbering perhaps 30,000 in the 1850s, had followed the lead of English Quaker Joseph John Gurney in building stronger ties with other Christians

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<sup>23</sup> Wayne and Randolph counties showed marginal declines by 1888 and 1870 respectively. Henry County actually increased from approximately 1,000 in 1832 to about 1,200 by 1888. However, in proportion to the counties growing total populations, the stagnation was more significant. See Appendix A: Indiana Yearly Meeting Membership Totals 1834 and 1888; and Hinshaw, "Southern Friends," 39. For more information on the mid-eighteenth-century membership and marriage reforms, see Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 30-31 and 194-199.

<sup>24</sup> The major Quaker separations spanned much of the nineteenth century beginning in 1827 with the Hicksite separation, the radical anti-slavery movement, 1842 to 1857, and the Orthodox split between Gurneyites and Wilburites, 1850s to 1900. For more information on Quaker separations, see Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 37-63. Hamm's, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, goes into much greater depth on the subject. The three counties in East Central Indiana dominated the radical antislavery schisms for Indiana and Ohio: Randolph had six, Henry five, and Wayne five (almost all were welcomed back by 1857). See Hinshaw, *Indiana Yearly Meeting*, 136-139.

<sup>25</sup> Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, xiv. In a brief biographical sketch of Walter Edgerton—a Spiceland Friend with national status in the antislavery movement—Hamm offers a telling local example of how complete these changes were by 1876 in Spiceland—the largest and most conservative Quaker community in Henry County. Spiceland's strong stance toward conservatism and orthodoxy can be viewed as more resistant to change than other less conservative communities. Edgerton's wife, son, and daughter-in-law were all members of the HCHS. Hamm, *Anti-Slavery Movement in Henry County*, 39. Religious revivals (as well as "Base Ball") had hit in Spiceland as early as 1867. "Notes From Spiceland" (dated November 5, 1867 and signed "Quaker"), *New Castle Courier*, November 12, 1867, p.2, c.3.

who...were endeavoring to re-shape American society in accordance with their ideals.”<sup>26</sup> Gurney’s lead involved an acculturation process—a gradual transition from Quaker isolationism to an accommodation and acceptance of the religious strategies and traditions of predominate evangelical denominations in the Midwest. Quaker attitudes on worship, education, politics, and economics merged with those of “revivalistic Protestants”—the religious mainstream—while staying relatively true to the traditions of organizational structure, recordkeeping, and humanitarian efforts.<sup>27</sup> The tradition of deliberately living distinctive lives (often called “the plain life”) separate from the rest of the world was now disappearing.<sup>28</sup>

In Henry County, the decline of Quaker influence is visible by the number of Friends who resigned or were disowned by monthly meetings in East Central Indiana in the decades before the Civil War compared to the decades after.<sup>29</sup> Many of these former Quakers in Henry County joined other Christian denominations, especially the Methodist Episcopal, Christian (or Disciples), and Wesleyan Methodist (sometimes labeled “Christian Friends” because they combined the religious practices of Methodists and Quakers).<sup>30</sup> Others remained inclined toward certain Quaker traditions, but due to

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<sup>26</sup> Richard E. Wood, “Evangelical Quaker Acculturation in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1850-1875,” *Quaker History* 76, no. 2 (Fall 1987), 128.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g., “Close of the Church Revivals,” *New Castle Courier*, June 2, 1893, p.5, c.4. Hinshaw offers other possible reasons for decline during the middle decades of the nineteenth century—diluted populations with greater influx of non-Quaker settlers, out-migration of Quakers further westward, and the continued practice of disownment. See Hinshaw, “Southern Friends,” 38-39.

<sup>28</sup> The strict adherence to Quaker traditions became diluted and ineffectual with the passing generations leaving only traces of the once zealous positions taken on issues such as race and gender. Yet, through the early decades of the twentieth century, Quaker influence was apparent in the proceedings of the HCHS in both these important areas. The processes of evangelical acculturation of the 1870s and America’s rapid industrialization played key roles in this transformation. For more information, see Hamm, *Transformation of American Quakerism*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> For charts of “Disciplinary Trends in Four Monthly Meetings in Indiana Yearly Meetings” (Wayne, Randolph, Henry, and Rush counties), see *ibid.*, 53-57

<sup>30</sup> Two Wesleyan Methodist Churches existed in Henry County: Duck Creek, in Greensboro Township, and Smyrna, in Liberty Township. See Hamm, *Anti-Slavery Movement*, 14-16, and 18.

restrictions on marriage or other regulations remained free of any permanent religious affiliation. Yet, in East Central Indiana, the long tradition of a strong historical consciousness exhibited tangible results in early efforts of organizing historical organizations—first in the form of old settlers’ associations, then followed by local historical societies.

### **Quaker Heritage of the HCHS Founders**

The first generation of HCHS leaders were reared in a frontier environment heavily influenced by Quaker traditions and Quaker heritage. In many cases this heritage dated back to late seventeenth-century Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Early members of the HCHS credited four men as the chief founders of the organization: Martin L. Bundy, Elwood Pleas, Benjamin S. Parker, and Thomas B. Redding.<sup>31</sup> All were significant contributors as nineteenth-century local history writers in Henry County and as participants in the county’s first historical organization, the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County (discussed in depth in Chapter Three).<sup>32</sup> Each founder exemplifies a different degree, or level, of intimate involvement with, and relation to, a Quaker heritage that, collectively, typifies the diversity found among the HCHS’s early members in respect to Quakerism. While the founders are uncommon examples in regard to their devotion to preserving local history in Henry County, their activities in

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<sup>31</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1104-1105. See also dedicatory address presented by Martin L. Bundy in “An Enjoyable Occasion,” *Daily Courier* [New Castle], April 28, 1902. Ten names appear on the HCHS founders’ plaque (dedicated in 1938), but as early as 1902, these four men were singled out as the organization’s chief founders.

<sup>32</sup> A chapter entitled, “The Literature of the County,” in the first Henry County history, published in 1871 by Elwood Pleas, listed Martin L. Bundy and Benjamin S. Parker among the county’s authors. See Elwood Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present, 1821–1871* (New Castle, IN: Pleas Brothers, 1871), 110 and 113. The known writings by Redding are dated from the 1880s and 1890s.

this regard amply display the general traits and activities of a high percentage of the early HCHS members of similar backgrounds influenced by Quakerism.

Active participants in the HCHS have historically resided in the central and southern township tiers of the county where Quaker settlements and meetings were primarily established in the early nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> (Some overlap from Friends meetings in Randolph County occurred along Henry's northeastern border).<sup>34</sup> The southern two-thirds of Henry County was surveyed and opened for settlement prior to its northern-most townships.<sup>35</sup> Migrants from the Carolinas traditionally settled in the southern half of the new county entering through the gateway of Dudley Township from Wayne County and the Whitewater Valley, which was settled nearly two decades beforehand.<sup>36</sup> The northern townships tended to consist of settlers from Virginia (and counties from what later became West Virginia) and Kentucky who tended to be descended from the religious traditions of Baptists and German Lutherans.<sup>37</sup> (Only two

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<sup>33</sup> I tabulated a list of 173 names of individuals who participated in the proceedings of the organization from the HCHS Minute Books 1-5 (1887–1950), newspaper accounts, and meeting programs. I divided this list into five subsequent lists: important early male leaders; women participants; black participants; officers, lesser officers and committee members; and custodians and curators. Through the application of many primary and secondary sources (e.g., Quaker meeting records, census records, county histories, newspapers, HCHS genealogical or family files, and various other sources found in the HCHS library, New Castle-Henry County Public Library, and state institutions) I prepared biographies of the main participants to determine their place of residence in Henry County, family origins, religious and political affiliations, family connections with other HCHS members, occupations, social and economic status, and other available information. Although only a select few of the leaders of the HCHS are included in some detail in this work, I needed to set a foundation for the organization's history based on the lives of its participants. The lists mentioned above, as well as the entirety of my research for this project, can be found in the HCHS archives.

<sup>34</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 39. Hamm asserted, "In Henry County Quakers concentrated in the southern half of the county, although at one time there were Friends in every township." Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present*, 3-4; and William H. Boor, *History of Henry County, Indiana* (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1884), 249-205.

<sup>36</sup> Rerick Brothers Topographers & Publishers, *The County of Henry, Indiana; topography, history, art folio; plus a new index to all landowners and names on historical and genealogical pages, including chronological chart of general, national, state, and county history* (Richmond, IN: Rerick Brothers, 1893), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, "Henry County's Three Migrations," 6.

of the thirty-six individuals who served in the office of president of the HCHS before 1950 resided in the northern third of the county.)<sup>38</sup>

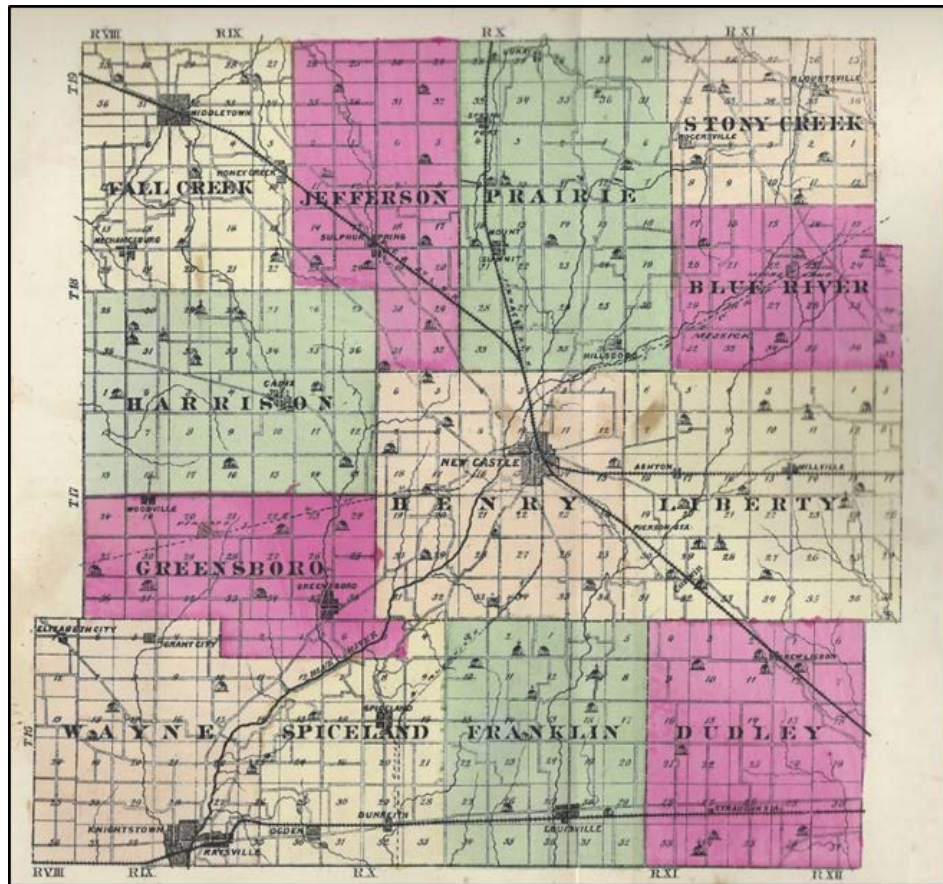


Figure A: Township map of Henry County, 1884.  
Boor, *History of Henry County*, 245.

By no means were all residents with a Quaker heritage prone to leadership or even participation in the historical organizations in Henry County. However, those residents (both men and women) who did participate tended to have strong connections to the Society of Friends. An example of this trend is well illustrated by the leaders from the county's first historical organization. From 1871 to 1896, of the ten known

<sup>38</sup> See fn. 33.

presidents of the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County, eight were Quaker or were "non-Quaker with Quaker connections."<sup>39</sup>

As argued elsewhere in this thesis, other factors were relevant to the construction of a historical consciousness and the process of preserving and institutionalizing local history in Henry County. But the institutionalization of local history, by means of the establishment of old settlers' associations and historical societies, tended to occur earlier and on a more widespread basis (over a larger geographic area) in East Central Indiana than elsewhere in the state. The pattern of cultural development created during the settlement period in the tri-county area of Wayne, Henry, and Randolph counties was greatly influenced by the Society of Friends and sets "the heavily Quaker district of eastern Indiana" apart from the rest of the state.<sup>40</sup> The evidence presented here strongly suggests that the Quaker heritage and traditions passed down from the settlement period in this tri-county area significantly influenced the early construction of a historical consciousness and early institutionalization of local history in Wayne, Henry, and Randolph counties.

Quaker influence on the cultural development in Henry County, which waxed strongest at around 1850, began a slow decline as the century wore on. At the organization of the HCHS, Quakers, and non-Quakers with Quaker connections, played

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<sup>39</sup> I collected newspaper accounts of the old settlers' meetings in Henry County from the *New Castle Courier*, *New Castle Democrat*, *Evening News* [New Castle], and *New Castle Daily Press*, as well as from various local histories, to compile a list of officers, participants, and general activities and traditions of the organization. Eight of ten were also early members of the HCHS. Hinshaw's qualification, "non-Quaker with Quaker connections," although not strictly defined, required that an individual was either a former member, or had immediate family members who were Quakers. Hinshaw, "Southern Friends," 29. To clarify further in regards to this work, to qualify an individual as having a "Quaker connection" he or she was either a member, a former member, had parental and/or spouse membership, and/or from a family with a strong Quaker tradition (i.e., multiple extended family members who were Friends and reared in a Quaker community).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

a significant role in the institution's formation. In addition to the four founding members, many other local individuals played significant roles in the early success of the HCHS and many had strong ties to Quakerism. From 1887 to 1910, of the fourteen men who served in the office of president, eleven were Quakers or were non-Quakers with Quaker connections. The trend continued through 1950 as more than half of the presidents were strongly connected to Quakerism.<sup>41</sup>

The HCHS formed thirteen township committees from the organization's members in 1887 to 1889 in an attempt to establish broad interest in the new organization throughout the county. These committees represented a wider, more diverse spectrum of HCHS members than the core group of leaders who resided almost extensively in the southern half of the county. Of the fifty-nine township committee members, thirty-three (or fifty-six percent) were found to be Friends or non-Quakers with Quaker connections.<sup>42</sup> Even this number may be skewed. Several individuals who lived in northern Henry County and appear on the township committees are found nowhere else in the organization's proceedings. They may have offered support at the Society's inception but had little connection thereafter.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See fn. 33.

<sup>42</sup> For names of township committee members, see Heller, "County Historical Society Takes Shape," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 66 (quoted from *New Castle Courier*, November 25, 1887).

<sup>43</sup> Other figures that quantify a strong Quaker connection with the HCHS: Sixty-four percent of the known officers elected between 1887 and 1889 (eighteen of twenty-eight) were "Quakers." (For officers' names, see HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 10-15.) Seven of ten names on HCHS founders' plaque (dedicated in 1938) were also of a strong Quaker heritage (nine were from the southern half of Henry County and eight with direct links to the upland South through their parents). See fn. 33.

## **Four Founders of the Henry County Historical Society**

The lives and backgrounds of the four founders of the HCHS, in many ways, were typical of the organization's early members. Whether Quaker "members in good standing" or not, many Quaker traditions were carried forward by those born into Quaker communities, reared in Quaker families, and educated in Quaker schools, who traced their ancestry back several generations to North Carolina and other areas of the upland South. Quakers, and those of a Quaker heritage, are abundantly recorded as outspoken activists in social and humanitarian reforms including "opposition to slavery, fair treatment of Native Americans, equality for women," prison reform, temperance, and education.<sup>44</sup> Specific evidence suggests that, at least in Henry County, the movement to organize and sustain historical organizations be added to this list. cursory research into neighboring Wayne and Randolph counties (and perhaps even Grant County) that had substantial Quaker populations reveals similar patterns. But in Henry County, the evidence suggesting a Quaker influence is substantial.

Martin Lex Bundy (1817–1910), the elder statesman of HCHS's founding group, was born in Randolph County, North Carolina, and was brought to Indiana in 1818 as an infant by his grandfather. The sequence of Bundy's migration story conforms closely to that used to describe so many other Quaker families that participated in the "Great Migration" to the Old Northwest between 1800 and 1850. Christopher Bundy (1758–1835), although definitely not a model Quaker (he was disowned while still living in North Carolina for bearing arms in the American Revolution and, later, in Wayne County, Indiana, for "trading in spirituous liquors"), acted in place of a father to his

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<sup>44</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 200, 187, and 109-119.



illegitimate grandson, Martin, and remained closely attached to Friends' communities.<sup>45</sup>

In these communities, and among a large Quaker contingent of Bundy family members, Martin was exposed to Quaker values and traditions representing a heritage dating back at least to the late seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup>

In the spring of 1821, after living for a short time in Salisbury, Wayne County, Christopher Bundy—described as a “rugged soldier-Quaker”—purchased a tract of land in Henry County, adjoining what later became New Castle, at the first land sale in Henry Township.<sup>47</sup> Martin, age four, arrived in Henry County in time to witness almost the entire first century of the county's history. This, as well as his long service in the county's public life—as lawyer, judge, state and county official, and paymaster during the Civil War, placed him in a revered position in East Central Indiana and as a leader of the local historical organizations in Henry County.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas D. Hamm and Wilma L. Kern, *A Centennial Landmark: The History of the New Castle Friends Meeting, 1881-1981* (Hagerstown, IN: Exponent Publishers, 1981), 4. The Quaker heritage of the Bundy family—including Christopher Bundy—is recorded in an article and subsequent family genealogy. See Alice Ann Bundy, “Some of the Bundy Family as Pioneers in America,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 42, no. 3 (September 1946), 289-302 (294-295 concerning East Central Indiana); and V. Mayo Bundy, *The Descendants of William and Elizabeth Bundy of Rhode Island and North Carolina* (Charlotte, NC: Herb Eaton Historical Publications, 1986). See also Hamm, “Henry County's Three Migrations,” 6. Martin Bundy's illegitimacy was a guarded secret by Henry County's early local historians.

<sup>46</sup> Bundy, “Some of the Bundy Family,” 291.

<sup>47</sup> Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present*, 10; and Clarence H. Smith, “Martin Lex Bundy,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 22, no. 1 (March 1926), 82. Christopher Bundy, along with six other men, purchased land on August 15, 1821, the first day land was for sale in Henry Township.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Bundy was honored as “Henry County's ‘grand old man’” at the Twentieth Semi-Annual Meeting of the HCHS, October 31, 1907. HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 38-47. For biographical accounts of Martin Bundy, see Clarence Smith, “Martin Lex Bundy,” 78-82; *Hazzard's History*, vol. 1, 142-146; Boor, *History of Henry County*, 360-362; and *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County, Indiana: To which is Appended a Comprehensive Compendium of National Biography--memoirs of Eminent Men and Women in the United States, Whose Deeds of Valor Or Works of Merit Have Made Their Names Imperishable* (Logansport, IN: B. F. Bowen, 1902), 221-226. The latter three histories were written during Bundy's lifetime; Hazzard's with his known assistance. See also Clarence H. Smith “Letters of Martin L. Bundy, 1848-49,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 22, no. 1 (March 1926), 83-95.

Although Martin Bundy (see Figure B) was not known to be a Quaker member during his long life, “his was a Quaker heritage” and “religiously, his early inclinations were toward the Society of Friends.”<sup>49</sup> Bundy’s core beliefs were most probably shaped in numerous ways by the Quaker traditions that surrounded him during boyhood, yet his heritage did not specifically define his later actions.<sup>50</sup> His keen sense toward the importance of preserving and institutionalizing local history can be compared in a similar way to his later views and actions taken in regard to racial issues.

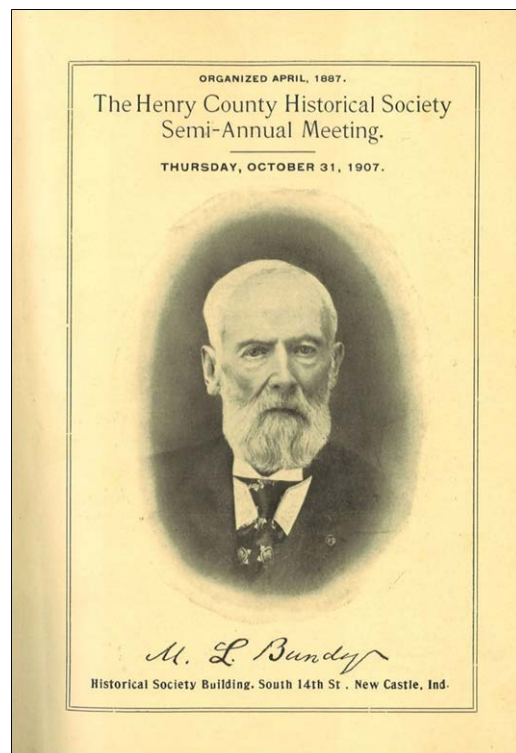


Figure B: HCHS program for the Twentieth Semi-Annual Meeting honoring founder Martin L. Bundy on his ninetieth birthday, October 31, 1907. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, “Martin Lex Bundy,” 78; and *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, 145. Bundy married into the Elliott family, also from North Carolina with strong Quaker roots.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, “Martin Lex Bundy,” 79.

Bundy's Quaker heritage did in no way automatically associate him with the antislavery movement or the Underground Railroad that made some headway in Henry County during the 1830s and 1840s as Bundy situated himself as a future political hopeful in the Whig Party. As Hamm makes clear in several of his writings, only a small minority of Friends—"the few vocal and radical abolitionists"—actually took any activist part in the antislavery movement in Indiana.<sup>51</sup> The majority of Quaker members, and the large number of Henry County residents who were non-Quaker with Quaker connections, or with a "Quaker heritage," abstained from such fringe activities even though "Quakerism had a long antislavery heritage," and an official stance issued by the Society of Friends condemned slavery as early as 1750.<sup>52</sup>

The slavery issue and basic belief by Friends that slavery was a great evil is used here as a way to demonstrate how Quaker beliefs were commonly retained and passed on by even non-Quaker members who had close family ties to that religious group and lifestyle. In a similar way, a strong historical consciousness—created by the practice and value placed on recordkeeping and preservation of local history—was central to the Quaker way of life and Quaker traditions. As such, it also seemed to be retained and passed on by those of a Quaker heritage, even as it took on different outward manifestations and resulted in varied actions, based on a set of underlying beliefs central

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, David Dittmer, Chenda Fruchter, Ann Giordano, Janice Mathews and Ellen Swain, "Moral Choices: Two Quaker Communities and the Abolitionist Movement," *Indiana Magazine of History* 87, no. 2 (June 1991), 119. See also Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*. Emma Lou Thornbrough noted that the most conspicuous group to oppose the Black Laws of Indiana and who "tried in other ways to improve the condition" of the black population were the Quakers, "especially those in the eastern counties—Wayne, Randolph, and Henry." Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Hamm and others, "Moral Choices," 118; and Hamm, *Quakerism in America*, 34. Although "by 1820 vestiges of slavery had virtually disappeared" in Indiana. . . "It is probably more accurate to describe the dominant attitude in Indiana as neither proslavery nor antislavery but as anti-Negro." Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 13. Similar anti-black attitudes were not foreign to Quaker communities in Henry County, although were often far less severe than in most of Indiana.

to the Quaker lifestyle during the nineteenth century. The slavery issue, due to its historical importance and controversial nature before the Civil War, is well documented by primary and secondary writings, thus making it a convenient comparison. Other beliefs—on gender and other racial issues—also reinforce this argument.

Speaking directly to the influence Quaker inhabitants had over the issue of slavery (perhaps the most pressing and controversial public issue in Indiana in the decades leading up to the Civil War) an 1893 Henry County history stated that “the immigration of Friends from North Carolina was so great that from the beginning Henry county was anti-slavery in sentiment, and in later years, became a line on the Underground Railway.”<sup>53</sup> According to this history, Quaker influence overcame the “noticeable fact that the early settlers from Virginia and Kentucky were generally pro-slavery in sentiment.”<sup>54</sup>

In an analogous way, only a few selected individuals pushed the movement for a historical society in Henry County. Most county residents did not agree initially to the proposals Bundy, Parker, Pleas, and Redding put forward, which began as early as 1867.<sup>55</sup> However—as was true in the antislavery movement—the general sentiment existed that the preservation of history was important. It was left up to those who felt most strongly about the issue to sway public opinion in their direction. This process of persuasion in connection to the historical society movement took nearly two decades and was influenced by other forces, like the American centennial and, later, a period of rapid

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<sup>53</sup> Rerick Brothers, *County of Henry*, 8. Although not a scholarly source (essentially an expanded county atlas that included a brief county history), all my research—including both primary and secondary sources—confirms its accuracy on these statements concerning the antislavery sentiment in Henry County.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> See e.g., “Old Folks,” *New Castle Courier*, March 14, 1867, no page numbers.

economic development in New Castle, 1899 to 1910. But what is important to understand is that the basis, the foundation, of a historically conscious people existed in Henry County and other isolated areas in Indiana. But only in East Central Indiana did there exist three contiguous counties with local historical societies by 1901. The only other comparable situation occurred in the northern Indiana counties of St. Joseph and Elkhart, where each organized historical societies before 1900. But these organizations were largely stimulated by a rich past dating back to the 1600s connected to the earliest European explorations of the area, as well as a significant Native American history (both prehistory and historic), and not the nineteenth-century settlement history of the counties.<sup>56</sup>

At no time was the dichotomy of interests over the issue of slavery better characterized in Henry County than at what was labeled an “Abolition Meeting at New Castle” held at the Henry County Courthouse on Saturday, December 5, 1850. The Fugitive Slave Law was recently passed by Congress and opposition surfaced among a small but vocal portion of Henry County’s residents, many of whom had for nearly a decade formed and supported state and local antislavery societies. A meeting was called to pass local resolutions based on the majority stance taken by the civic leaders in New Castle on this very controversial issue—the Fugitive Slave Law.<sup>57</sup>

Bundy, no friend of slavery, stood firm against public defiance to a law “however obnoxious” that “received the constitutional sanction of a majority of the

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<sup>56</sup> Timothy E. Howard, “The Northern Indiana Historical Society,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 5, no. 3 (September 1909), 115-116. Both counties were not founded until 1830—nearly a decade after Henry and two decades after Wayne.

<sup>57</sup> “Abolition Meeting at New Castle—Resolutions,” *Indiana Courier*, December 13, 1850 (copied in full) in Herbert L. Heller, ed., *Newspaper Readings in the History of New Castle, Indiana 1843 to 1859*, vol. 1 [Published in cooperation with Henry County Historical Society, City Schools of New Castle, and the Federal Writers Project of the W.P.A., 1941], no page numbers.

people's Representatives."<sup>58</sup> As a member of the meeting's resolution committee, Bundy believed it the "duty of all good citizens [to] peaceably acquiesce" and carry out all laws in "good faith."<sup>59</sup> Bundy, speaking to a reporter from the *Indiana Courier* concerning the resolutions passed in favor of upholding the Fugitive Slave Law by a majority vote at the meeting, said that he advocated the passage of the resolution[s] since the Constitution of the United States was clear concerning the issue of escaped slaves.<sup>60</sup> If "the principle was wrong," he said, "the Constitution, and not the law contained the error."<sup>61</sup> As a lawyer, state representative, and future political hopeful, Bundy held firm to the idea that the "Constitution of the United States, which, with all its imperfections...to be [he believed] the best government on Earth."<sup>62</sup> And to go against it, "might produce the most disastrous consequences to that great fabric of human wisdom."<sup>63</sup>

In March 1861 (in Bundy's second term as state representative for Henry County, but now as a Republican) he again stood up for his belief in the workings of the political system of the United States, but this time directly in favor of racial minorities. One historian writing about the event commented, "Although not noted for his strong convictions regarding slavery, in March 1861 he [Bundy] wrote and circulated a

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Bundy was joined by a number of other prominent political and civil leaders of the time that included Judge Joshua Mellett, first HCHS president, and Samuel Hoover, whose Great-Uncle Andrew and Uncle David Hoover were among the Quaker founders of Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. The article notes that one member of the resolutions committee spoke out against the resolutions passed at the meeting. Several other members, like Bundy, were of a Quaker heritage but sided on obedience to the Fugitive Slave Law.

<sup>60</sup> Bundy was referencing Article IV Section Two: "No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due."

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

political circular about the equal rights of Negroes to testify in courts.”<sup>64</sup> A bill was proposed, but defeated, in the Indiana General Assembly to allow Indians to testify in court (a practice unlawful since Indiana’s territorial beginnings).<sup>65</sup> Bundy had attempted to amend the proposed bill to allow blacks to also testify “against whites” in dealings between white and black individuals.<sup>66</sup> Bundy, who held a decidedly unpopular view on this issue among his fellow state representatives, reportedly said he was in favor of giving all persons having five senses the right to testify.<sup>67</sup> Although this was a far cry from equality between the races, it did fairly represent the basic stance of many in Henry County who were influenced by Quaker teachings concerning racial issues—not equal but more equal than the strong racial prejudices that ruled much of Indiana and the country at-large.<sup>68</sup>

Bundy’s stance on these issues offers a glimpse into the belief system of an individual reared in a local culture strongly influenced by Quakerism. Bundy also seemingly inherited the tradition of preservation, although he displayed this passion in

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<sup>64</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 120.

<sup>65</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 120.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* An attempt to amend this bill, originally passed in 1853, surfaced again in 1865, as House Bill No. 25, but was soundly voted down—19 aye and 70 nay. In this instance, the representative from Henry County, David W. Chambers (Bundy’s brother-in-law) opposed an amendment to overturn “an act to prohibit the evidence of Indians and persons having one-eighth or more of negro blood, in all cases where white persons are parties in interest.” *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana during the Called Session of the General Assembly Commencing Monday, November 13, 1865* (Indianapolis: W. R. Holloway, State Printer, 1865), 356-357.

<sup>68</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 170-173. For other examples of common racial prejudice involving Bundy, see *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana during the Forty-First Session of the General Assembly Commencing January 10, 1861* (Indianapolis: Berry R. Sulgrove, State Printer, 1861), 162 (involving interracial marriage). The *Journal of the House of Representatives* in the 1850s and 1860s clearly reveal the overwhelming racial prejudice, especially against blacks, that prevailed throughout most of Indiana. These views were tempered to a degree in areas like southern Henry County where Quakers were most populous. See also “Separation of the Races Just and Politic,” in *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana during the Thirty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly Commencing December 1, 1851* (Indianapolis: J. P. Chapman, State Printer, 1851), 1021-1033.

ways more noteworthy than were common among other residents of Henry County who were also products of a Quaker heritage.<sup>69</sup> Long before a county historical society was organized, Bundy preserved historical material in a private collection that was eventually added to the growing HCHS library collection.<sup>70</sup> By the 1840s, he was contributing historical accounts, letters, and other writings to local newspapers, in a similar nature to the history of the “Legal Profession in Henry County” written for a promotional magazine for New Castle in 1907.<sup>71</sup> Bundy led the effort to reorganize the old settlers’ meetings in 1871 and served as the organization’s president for nearly a decade, as well as its historian.<sup>72</sup> And for many years, he worked in cooperation with the other men listed here to establish a historical society to collect and preserve the documentary and artifactual evidence of Henry County’s past.<sup>73</sup>

Bundy was representative of the many HCHS members who were non-Quaker, reared in and around Quaker communities and traditions, and exhibited the more common local perspective on racial issues in, at least, the southern half of Henry County. In contrast, Elwood Pleas represents the birthright Quakers who adhered to the

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<sup>69</sup> Bundy was also an outspoken proponent on educational issues like tax levies for “free” schools. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 136.

<sup>70</sup> “Henry County Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, March 1, 1889, p.1, col. 5. At the Fortieth Annual HCHS Meeting, April 22, 1926, the curator reported that the Martin L. Bundy library, which contained the Pennsylvania Archives, bound congressional records from 1912-1926, and many other works and papers dating back to pre-Civil War days, had been donated since the previous meeting. Henry County Historical Society Minute Book 4 (Nov. 1918-April 1940), HCHS, Smith Library, 93. The early collection records for the HCHS are incomplete, but it is very probable that Bundy donated many items of local relevance before his death in 1910.

<sup>71</sup> “The Legal Profession,” in “New Castle—The Rose City,” *New Castle Daily Times* [Special Edition], April 28, 1907, 6. See also Clarence H. Smith “Letters of Martin L. Bundy,” 83-95.

<sup>72</sup> “The State Pioneer Association,” *New Castle Courier*, September 19, 1879, 1; and “Old Settlers’ Reunion: Successful and Interesting Meeting of Henry County Pioneers,” *New Castle Courier*, October 4, 1889.

<sup>73</sup> Bundy presented nine papers before the HCHS (many available at the HCHS and printed in the local newspapers) between 1887 and his death in 1910. His son, Eugene Bundy, and sister, Emma (Bundy) Chambers, as well as several grandchildren, also presented a number of papers and addresses before the HCHS.



less popular stance concerning slavery but left the Society of Friends, as did many others HCHS members, later in life during a period of evangelical acculturation that left some Quaker members disillusioned by the new direction taken by their meetings' leaders.

Pleas (1831–1897), born in Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana, the son of Aaron L. and Lydia (Gilbert) Pleas, was descended from a long family line of Friends who immigrated to Indiana during its early years of statehood.<sup>74</sup> The Pleas and Gilbert families both had roots in Pasquotank County, North Carolina, before settling in Dudley Township, Henry County, in the old Hopewell neighborhood.<sup>75</sup> At the time Henry County was organized, Dudley Township, located in the southeast corner directly across the county line from Wayne, was the “gateway leading from the Whitewater Valley in to the new county.”<sup>76</sup> In 1823 or 1824, Hopewell—near present-day New Lisbon—was home to the first Quaker meetinghouse, and by most accounts, the first church building of any kind constructed in Henry County.<sup>77</sup> A large contingent of Gilbert family members lived in and around Hopewell, while the Pleas family remained tied to the nearby Richmond area. According to one account, the Gilbert family owned a large portion of Dudley Township and were “very prominent in the Friends’ meetings in Eastern Indiana.”<sup>78</sup>

Around 1840, Pleas, age nine, and his three younger siblings moved with their father from the Hopewell area two townships west to Spiceland following the death of Lydia Pleas. Spiceland Township, home to the largest Friends meeting in Henry County

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<sup>74</sup> Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 52.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; and Eastern Quarter, Symons Creek Monthly Meeting [Pasquotank County, North Carolina], Records vol. 2, Births, Deaths, Marriages, vol. 2, [1715-1866], 245.

<sup>76</sup> Rerick Brothers, *County of Henry*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present*, 16; and Hinshaw, *Indiana Friends Heritage*, 131.

<sup>78</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1094.

and a fine Quaker run school, became his primary home until his death fifty-seven years later. Pleas attended Earlham College, 1847–1851 (then the Friends Boarding School in Richmond, Wayne County), as did his soon-to-be bride, Sarah Ann Griffin (1835–1928), who attended in 1851–1852.<sup>79</sup> The Griffin family, another “old North Carolina Quaker family,” migrated to Henry County before 1831.<sup>80</sup> The couple, both birthright Quakers, married in 1854 under the authority of the Spiceland Monthly Meeting.<sup>81</sup>

According to his close friend and fellow newspaperman, Benjamin S. Parker, Pleas became “convinced of [the] great evils of slavery early in life and made war upon it.”<sup>82</sup> As a young man, Pleas practiced carpentry, cabinet-making, and farming, but soon became a “forceful writer and entertaining speaker;” what Hamm later labeled an “intellectual abolitionist, editing and distributing anti-slavery literature.”<sup>83</sup> In 1862, as the Civil War entered its second year of hostilities, Pleas, with the aid of several Union stalwarts that included his politically minded brother-in-law, John W. Griffin, and several radical abolitionists from Greensboro, purchased the *New Castle Courier* for \$752.50.<sup>84</sup> (Greensboro, a township and village in Henry County named after the North Carolina town from which many of the early settlers originated, was characterized as

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<sup>79</sup> “Who’s Who among Earlhamites,” *The Earlham College Bulletin*, new series 10, no. 3 (July 1928), 194.  
“Who’s Who among Earlhamites,” *The Earlham College Bulletin*, new series 5, no. 2 (June 1916), 177.

<sup>80</sup> Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 42.

<sup>81</sup> Spiceland Monthly Meeting, Women’s Minutes 4<sup>th</sup> mo. 19 1854 [page 1], Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College.

<sup>82</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1095.

<sup>83</sup> Hamm, *Anti-Slavery Movement in Henry County*, 52

<sup>84</sup> “Pleas Tells Why He Purchased the Courier” *New Castle Courier-Times* [Centennial Edition], August 6, 1941. [“Editor: This article is reprinted from the Fiftieth anniversary edition of *The Courier*” written by Elwood Pleas.] John W. Griffin (1831–1918), who was the leader of Republican politics in Henry County during the 1860s, resigned from Society of Friends in 1871 due to a conflict with Quaker pacifist beliefs. Griffin, also labeled an “intellectual abolitionist,” was involved with the HCHS at least by 1899. See HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 60.

being home to “an unusually cankerous and quarrelsome group.”<sup>85</sup> Pleas used his position as editor of the weekly newspaper to support the war and oppose slavery.<sup>86</sup>

A cerebral and conscientious man, Pleas “understood very well that he could do the country more effective service with his newspaper than he could hope to do in the ranks of war, but he felt the editor who so strongly upheld the war for the Union should share its dangers with those whom his words, probably helped to lead into service, and thus establish the truth of his convictions by his courage.”<sup>87</sup> Pleas, along with his half-brother Joseph Pleas, mustered in the 139th Indiana Infantry as “One Hundred Days Men” in June 1864.<sup>88</sup> The 139th Indiana, and seven other regiments, relieved “a large number of veterans from garrison and guard duty, and allow[ed] them to join their companions in arms, then about to enter upon one of the most active and important campaigns of the war”—the Atlanta Campaign.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Boor, *History of Henry County*, 640; and Hamm & Kern, *Centennial Landmark*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 52; and “Elwood Pleas: The Man and his Labors. A Brief Sketch of a Busy Life,” Box 2, Folder 12, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, Manuscript Division, Indiana State Library.

<sup>87</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1095.

According to Jacquelyn S. Nelson, “Quaker military service in the Civil War is perhaps the most glaring oversight by scholars of that great conflict. Nearly 1200 Friends (1198 documented cases out of approximately 4000-5000 Quaker men aged 15-49) took up arms [in Indiana]. While more Friends chose not to bear arms, the percentage of Quakers who decided to fight, between twenty-one and twenty-seven percent, is much higher than the previous estimate of 6 to 7.5 percent.” Jacquelyn S. Nelson, “Military and Civilian Support of the Civil War by the Society of Friends in Indiana,” *Quaker History* 76, no. 1 (September 1987), 52-53. Thomas Clarkson Gordon—president of the HCHS, 1905-1906—and his brother Sergeant Robert Gordon are only two examples of Friends in Henry County (and leaders of the HCHS) to serve during the Civil War (both volunteered in August 1861). Both Gordons served in Co. A, 36th Indiana Infantry Regiment (commonly known as the “Quaker Company”) under Colonel William Grose. Robert composed an interesting account entitled “The 36th Indiana Volunteers at Shiloh: a War Reminiscences from Memory.” Robert, in his humorous storytelling, made numerous references to the paradoxical situation of Quakers, raised as pacifists, fighting in one of the bloodiest battles in the Civil War. Robert Gordon, “The 36th Indiana Volunteers at Shiloh: A War Reminiscences from Memory,” [contributed as a thirteen page printed booklet to the HCHS on October 6, 1915], Gordon Family File, HCHS, Smith Library.

<sup>88</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol. 1, 494 and 498-499. Jacob and Lemuel Redding, younger brothers of Thomas B., served with Elwood Pleas in the 139<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteer Regiment. See *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 821.

<sup>89</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol. 1, 498-499.

Following the Civil War, Pleas (see Figure C) used his position as editor to publish a series of local historical accounts in the *Courier and Henry County Republican*: the genesis of the first county history of Henry County that he published in 1871.<sup>90</sup> Like Bundy, Pleas held a private collection of historical material that awaited only the establishment of a safe and stable historical society for its donation.<sup>91</sup> Pleas, who died at the age of sixty-six, lived only to see the first decade of the HCHS, an organization he strove so hard to establish. (His wife, Sarah Ann, served as a prominent female officer of the HCHS for two more decades.) During that time, he presented papers at five of the first six meetings and served several terms as trustee, vice-president, and nearly every year on the all-important executive committee. Pleas remained a member of the Society of Friends until 1875, resigning from the Spiceland Monthly Meeting, for an undisclosed reason, not long following the resignation of his brother-in-law and friend, John W. Griffin, also an early leader in the HCHS.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 319. Pleas' series of articles appeared in 1867.

<sup>91</sup> "Henry County Historical Society," *New Castle Courier*, March 1, 1889, p.1, col. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Spiceland Monthly Meeting, Men's Minutes, 2nd mo. 6 1875 [p.382], Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College; Hamm, *Anti-Slavery Movement*, 43; and Heller, "Griffin Resigns from Quaker Church," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 300-301.



Figure C: Elwood Pleas, undated.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.

The third common Quaker connection typical of the early members of the HCHS was as a birthright Quaker and life-long Friends' member that is represented by Founder Benjamin Strattan Parker (1833–1911). Parker—“who in the last twenty-five years of his life gave as much if not more of his time and means than anyone else in perfecting the plans” of the HCHS—was a birthright Quaker and remained a member “in good standing” until his death at the age of seventy-eight.<sup>93</sup> Although deeply moved to fight for the preservation of local history, he was less outspoken on issues, like slavery, traditionally connected with the Society of Friends. He often embraced the middle ground in his public references to Native Americans. Parker’s paternalistic views on the

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<sup>93</sup> So described by HCHS president, Adolph Rogers. “Preservers of County History,” *New Castle Courier*, April 27, 1911. For Parker’s Friends membership history, see Hopewell Monthly Meeting, Birth and Death Book 2, no page numbers, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College; and New Castle Monthly Meeting, Membership, 1886-1918, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College, 9.

“Afro-American” and the “Indian” are well characterized by the historical pageant he authored for the dedication ceremonies of the newly acquired HCHS building in 1902.<sup>94</sup>

Native to Henry County, Parker was born (as writers about his life so fondly recalled) in a “Cabin in the Clearing” in the rural Friends community of Rich Square, Franklin Township.<sup>95</sup> Many of his close relatives came westward from North Carolina during the “Great Migration” of Friends and settled first in Wayne County before founding the new community of Rich Square situated along Flat Rock River on recently opened lands in Henry County. (Rich Square was so named in about 1830 by Parker’s grandfather after the Friends monthly meeting of which the family belonged in North Carolina.)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 82, see inserted “Henry County Historical Society Dedication” booklet. It was also reported that at least one former slave lived in his father’s household in Franklin Township as late as 1860. See *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1197.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1197. The phraseology is used repeatedly in biographical accounts of Parker. *The Cabin in the Clearing and Other Poems* (1905) was Parker’s most popular book of poetry, and the poem “The Cabin in the Clearing” tells the story of his family through the eyes of his father, Isaac Parker, who build a “cabin in the clearing” in Franklin Township in 1831. The poem-story tells of pioneer life, its hardships (e.g., death of Benjamin’s infant brother, Robert) and joys, and of progress (using images like “palpitating engines,” “smoky village,” and “rows of factories cluster grimly on my fertile land”), which erased all tangible vestiges of cherished frontier times. “Progress” leaves the narrator as an old man, alone, with “a memory only” but he counts “the memory a blessing.” The poem encapsulates the importance Parker placed on the past and his attachment to Henry County’s settlement history, which was his and his family’s history. Many of Parker’s other poems focus on historical subject matter or nature; most are set in his native county. These poems are littered with hints of his Quaker faith and heritage. Benjamin Strattan Parker, *The Cabin in the Clearing and Other Poems* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Co., 1887), 13-16. It is worth noting that Benjamin Parker was the eldest of eleven children, nine of whom died before the age of ten: seven as infants; and two near age ten of diphtheria. Only Edwin E. (1840–1903) lived to adulthood, but he too was disabled by his bout with diphtheria. Parker’s mother was also an “invalid” for much of her shortened life. *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1200.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1197. *Rich Square* place name is commonly written as one word, *Richsquare*, perhaps to differentiate it from its North Carolina namesake, which is still in existence. For a brief discussion of the different spellings, see Thomas D. Hamm, “Editor’s Note,” *HCHS Historicalog* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 1. The before mentioned rural Quaker community of Hopewell, in neighboring Dudley Township, was also settled by many of Parker’s relations. Parker taught at the Hopewell meeting school between 1850 and 1860. His father taught for many years at the Rich Square meeting school. See John W. Macy, “Hopewell Neighborhood” in *Scrapbook* 58, 122, presented before the Society on April 27, 1916, at the 30th Annual Meeting; and Daniel Newby, “Early Schools of Henry County,” in *Memoranda of Old Richsquare*, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers.

Parker was educated at Rich Square Academy, and attended church at Rich Square Meetinghouse where he married Huldah (often spelled “Hulda”) Wickersham (1846–1922) (see Figure D). The Wickersham family arrived under similar circumstances in Henry County, as did so many other North Carolina Friends. The Wickersham family was widely known for its outspoken stance as abolitionists and are commonly connected to activities of the Underground Railroad in the southeastern corner of Henry County.<sup>97</sup> Parker, not associated with the antislavery movement, strongly supported the Union and President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, but refrained from vehemently speaking out against slavery as did his friend Elwood Pleas.

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<sup>97</sup> For more on Underground Railroad activities in Henry County, as well as the Wickersham’s participation in such related activities, see Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 60-66. White, Parker, Newby, and Wickersham—interrelated Quaker family names prominently associated with Rich Square and neighboring Hopewell communities—show up repeatedly in connection with the historical organizations in Henry County. Huldah’s aunt and namesake is described as “one of the most active abolitionists in Indiana, male or female.” *Ibid.*, 62.



Figure D: Benjamin S. and Huldah (Wickersham) Parker, probably taken in 1869 for their wedding. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

As far back as the late 1850s, Parker was widely known as Henry County's poet; and is sometimes included in the exclusive company of golden age authors of Indiana literature.<sup>98</sup> "The greater volume of his writing was in prose," which many believed far

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<sup>98</sup> For Parker's pre-Civil War poetry, see William T. Coggeshall, *The Poets and Poetry of the West: With Biographical and Critical Notices* (Columbus, OH: Follett, Foster and Company, 1860), 643-44; and Barnhart, "Common Feeling," 65. For Parker's importance and inclusion as one of the golden age authors, see Arthur W. Shumaker, *A History of Indiana Literature* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1962), 198-201; and "Over 4,000 Children in Pageant in Spencer Park Today," *Logansport Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1916, p.5, c.5.



surpassed his often sentimental and nostalgia-laden verse.<sup>99</sup> Most of his prose “was devoted to local themes” and thus never achieved a wide circulation.<sup>100</sup> Parker’s skill as an author, journalist, and local historian—primarily through the medium of articles in local newspapers and journals—continually pushed the mission and purpose of, not only the HCHS but, the general study and preservation of local history in Indiana.<sup>101</sup>

Following Parker’s death in 1911, George Cottman—editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*—candidly described the qualities that made Parker an effective poet and historian: “He lived in close touch with people, with nature, with places. . . . He retained a vivid recollection of manners and customs as well as of people [and] was vitally interested in everything about him. It was this that made his poetry, though perhaps not great, absolutely genuine and well worth reading. It was this same quality that made him in taste and in influence an historian.”<sup>102</sup>

In his writings connected with the promotion of a historical society in Henry County, Parker continually challenged his readers to actively take up the cause of preserving the artifactual and documentary records of their past in a permanent and organized way. He not only explained and plotted out the course that needed to be taken, but offered the logic and reasoning for preservation that seemed so close to his heart.<sup>103</sup>

His passion and enthusiasm for the preservation and institutionalization of Henry

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<sup>99</sup> “Benj. S. Parker Died Tuesday,” *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.1, c.1. See also Robert E. Mansfield, “Tribute to Late Benj. S. Parker and Appreciation of New Castle Artists,” *New Castle Courier*, March 1, 1922, p.1, c. 4-5.

<sup>100</sup> “Benj. S. Parker Died Tuesday,” *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.1, c.1.

<sup>101</sup> George S. Cottman, “Benjamin S. Parker,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 7, no. 1 (March 1911), 32.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> See Benjamin S. Parker, “Pencil Touches” *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1888 (reprinted in Heller, “Parker Proposes Historical Collection,” *Historic Henry County*, vol.3, 95-96); Benjamin S. Parker, “Preserve for Reference: The Wants of the Henry County Historical Society” in HCHS Minute Book 1, 107 [printed in local newspapers]; and “Local Historical Societies,” *Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History* 1, no. 2 (Second Quarter 1905), 100-102.

County's local history was apparent, and his reputation and style of prose seemed to move the local residents to action.<sup>104</sup> This passion and "indefatigable" dedication was vividly expressed in many tributes following his death.<sup>105</sup> Meredith Nicholson, writing about his experiences with Parker while the two worked as newspapermen, said, "In personal contact his simplicity and modestly were always impressive. There was something appealing and winning about him—one wished to be doing something for him."<sup>106</sup> Perhaps these qualities, combined with his well-documented dedication to the success of the HCHS, helped elevate Parker's efforts in both word and deed to a level that aided in swaying public opinion toward support for institutionalizing local history. Even on his death bed only weeks before the HCHS's twenty-fifth anniversary meeting in 1911, his thoughts and words were in regard to the Society, asking close friend and co-laborer John Thornburgh "that nothing should be left undone that would at all tend to strengthen and more fully support the institution."<sup>107</sup>

Like Elwood Pleas, Parker long collected news items from the *New Castle Courier*, which, along with official county records, was an indispensable early source for local historians in Henry County. Parker's collection, which ranged from 1840 to 1894, was passed on to Clarence H. Smith—the first HCHS curator—and is now held by

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<sup>104</sup> Kate Milner Rabb, "A Hoosier Listening Post," *Indianapolis Star*, November 4, 1921, 6.

<sup>105</sup> For examples written by those who knew Parker personally, see Cottman, "Benjamin S. Parker," 32-33; John Thornburgh, "A Tribute to Benjamin S. Parker," in HCHS Minute Book 2, 151-154, presented before the HCHS April 27, 1911; Amos W. Butler, "Hon. Amos W. Butler on 'The Life and Character of B. S. Parker,'" *Daily Times* [New Castle], April 29, 1911 and in HCHS Minute Book 2, 148-49; and "Benj. S. Parker Died Tuesday," *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.1, c.1.

<sup>106</sup> Meredith Nicholson, "An Indiana Poet Passes," *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.3, c.2 [written for the *Indianapolis Star* and reprinted in *New Castle Courier*]. In a tribute written immediately following Parker's death, Nicholson reflected on how Parker's poetry and character affected Nicholson personally. Nicholson is counted among the top five golden age authors in Indiana literature. For a definitive biography, see Ralph D. Gray, *Meredith Nicholson: A Writing Life* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2007).

<sup>107</sup> Thornburgh, "A Tribute to Benjamin S. Parker," in HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 152.

the Indiana Historical Society.<sup>108</sup> A collection containing 804 items of Parker's writings, poetry, papers, and correspondence are held at the Indiana State Library.<sup>109</sup> Between 1889 and 1910, Parker presented at least thirteen papers before the HCHS. Many of these efforts were biographical in nature or were concerned with specific local history topics: a number of his historically themed poems were recited or put to music by local members. But some of his most memorable and impactful presentations hinged on the importance and purposes of local history and the furtherance of the HCHS. The titles of Parker's papers reveal much about their intended functions: "The Beginnings of History" (April 1892); "The Historical Society, Its Hopes, Present Purposes and Future Possibilities" (April 1903); and "Historical Purposes" (October 1903). Such works, published in the local newspapers, were intended to help educate his reading public, as well as those attending the HCHS meetings, about specific actions they could take in assisting the organization to preserve Henry County's past.<sup>110</sup>

For his efforts, the residents of Henry County, and Parker's colleagues and admirers around the state, honored his life. In December 1907, Parker was named honorary member of the Indiana Historical Society.<sup>111</sup> "Parker Day" was celebrated at the HCHS's 1911 spring meeting and, later, as a county-wide holiday observed in all the schools each spring where his writings were recited and Parker's memory kept alive.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Series 6: Henry County History, *New Castle Courier*, 1840–94, Clarence H. Smith Papers, 1775–1955, Box 12, Folder 17, Special Collections and Archives, Indiana Historical Society. Smith used the collection for his *New Castle Courier* column, "Happenings of Other Days."

<sup>109</sup> The material was donated by Margaret Griffith, 23 June 1932; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bufkin (Parker's daughter and son-in-law), 1941; Henry County Historical Society, 1987. See Benjamin S. Parker Papers, 4 Boxes, Manuscript Division, Indiana State Library.

<sup>110</sup> "Historical Purposes" was presented again before the HCHS in April 1940; a custom rarely afforded other papers. HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 261.

<sup>111</sup> "Notes," *Indiana Magazine of History* 4, no. 1 (March 1908), 51.

<sup>112</sup> "Benj. S. Parker Died Tuesday," *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, 1.

In recognition for his writing and dedication in support of public education (as a young man Parker taught school for several years, as did his father), Parker Elementary, in New Castle, was named in his honor. Numerous encomiums, poems, and eulogies appeared in publications like *Indiana Magazine of History*, *Indianapolis Star*, and newspapers statewide that were written by literary figures such as James Whitcomb Riley, Meredith Nicholson, Amos W. Butler, and George S. Cottman.<sup>113</sup>

Thomas Burton Redding (1831–1895) represented a fourth example illustrating the varied paths of Quaker heritage among the HCHS’s early members—the non-Quaker with a partial Quaker family heritage and member of another religious denomination. Redding, the first of the founding group to pass away, was a devoted member of the New Castle Methodist Episcopal Church and graduate of the Methodist supported Asbury College (now DePauw University), in Greencastle, Indiana. Of the four founders, Redding (pictured below) was probably affected to a lesser degree by the influence of Quakerism than the others.

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<sup>113</sup> A poem from Riley appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* and was reprinted in the *New Castle Courier*. See James W. Riley, "To Benj. S. Parker," *New Castle Courier*, March 16, 1911, p.3, col. 3. Others are cited in fn. 104.



Figure E: Thomas B. Redding, undated.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.

A native of Henry County, Redding grew up on a farm in northern Franklin Township about six miles south of New Castle, the eldest son of Iredell and Anna (Nixon) Redding.<sup>114</sup> Before their migration to Henry County, Redding's family resided

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<sup>114</sup> The couple is buried at McDaniel's Methodist Episcopal Church Cemetery near the old family farm. See Ulysses E. Bush, *Cemeteries of Henry County, Indiana: a Pictorial* (New Castle, IN: Henry County Historical Society, 1998), 46; and R. Thomas Mayhill, *Land Entry Atlas of Henry County Indiana 1821-1849* (Knightstown, Indiana: The Bookmark, 1986), no page numbers, Map of Franklin Township, section 1. The Redding homestead was closer in proximity to the Quaker communities of Spiceland and

in Randolph County, North Carolina. (The namesake for Randolph County, Indiana, and a county historically known for its early Quaker population.) The family followed a pattern of migration within North Carolina—from Pasquotank to Randolph County before joining the stream of migration to the Old Northwest—that was common among its Quaker population.<sup>115</sup> Yet, only Redding’s mother is identified by local historians to be from “Quaker stock.”<sup>116</sup>

Redding’s parents died in quick succession between 1858 and 1863. He returned to Henry County by 1860, now living at the county seat.<sup>117</sup> Redding purchased a small farm (see Figure F) on the outskirts of New Castle directly east of the still undeveloped downtown business district. Here he raised a family and lived out his days practicing law and operating a small horticultural farm—performing experiments, research and writing, as well as carrying out commercial contracts for clients such as the Indiana State Board of Health.<sup>118</sup>

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Rich Square; about three and half miles away from each. “Iredell Redding and family” were briefly mentioned in the “memoranda” written by Daniel Newby concerning Rich Square settlement before the Civil War. See Hamm, ed. “Personalities,” *Henry County Historicalog* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 13.

<sup>115</sup> The birth and death counties of Redding’s ancestors in North Carolina are documented in an application for the Sons of the American Revolution. See The Illinois Society of the National Association Sons of the American Revolution (National # 92629) & (State # 5086) by Raymond Gregg Redding descendant of Joseph Redding, March 19, 1965. [Original data: *Sons of the American Revolution Membership Applications, 1889-1970*. Louisville, KY: National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Microfilm, 508 rolls.] “Quakers were some of the first settlers to move to North Carolina, because the colony had established religious freedom as early as 1672....Most Quaker communities flourished in the northeast corner of the colony [later Pasquotank and Perquimans counties], near the Dismal Swamp and the Virginia boarder. Later, in the mid-1700s, Quakers would migrate from Pennsylvania to the Piedmont.” A number of Quakers from these counties also crossed the mountains to settle among the growing population of Friends in the Piedmont counties of Randolph, Guilford, and Chatham. This area is part of the upland South (as referenced in Chapter One). L. Maren Wood, Learn NC, “Quakers,” accessed August 21, 2015, <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-colonial/1969>.

<sup>116</sup> Heller, “Tracing the Redding Family Lineage,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 195-197. This information was passed down through a family tree and series of letters written by Redding’s daughter, Rosa (Redding) Mikels, recorded by Dr. Herbert Heller.

<sup>117</sup> 1860 United States Census, s.v. “Thomas B. Redding,” Henry, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>118</sup> Heller, “Historic Henry County: T. B. Redding Eminent Scholar, Lawyer,” *New Castle Courier-Times*, March 20, 1976. Redding was a member of the American Microscopical Society, a fellow of the Royal

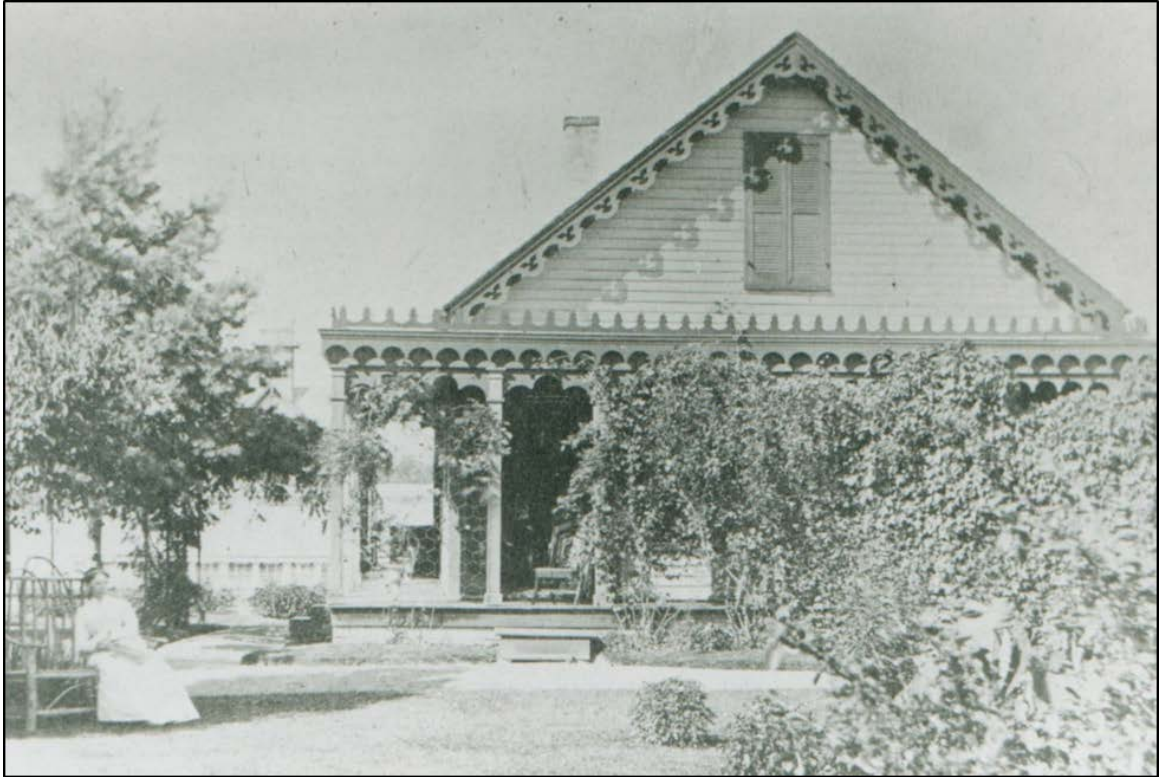


Figure F: The residence of Thomas B. Redding, located on East Broad Street, New Castle, 1869. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

Redding-family tradition holds that “both sides [Redding and Nixon] were antislavery people.”<sup>119</sup> Like Parker, Redding is not documented as a vocal opponent to slavery, but his views in connection with racial issues, particularly on Native Americans,

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Microscopical Society of England, a foreign associate member of the French Society of Hygiene of Paris, and an organizer of the Indiana Academy of Science. His work in the nascent field of microscopy led him, in 1885, to take on his first commercial contract with the Indiana State Board of Health. He inspected meat from various Indiana meat packing plants due to an outbreak of trichinosis—a type of roundworm infection common at the time. Redding authored a “pamphlet on *Trichina* and *Spiralis* and *Trichinosis*” as well as a “number of technical articles of interest to microscopists.”

<sup>119</sup> Heller, “Tracing the Redding Family Lineage,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 197.

A ninety-two page manuscript written by Aisle Hester Mikels in 1977 (at the age of eighty-nine) was loaned to Dr. Herbert Heller. Heller, in turn, published portions of the manuscript that pertained to Thomas B. Redding—Aisle’s grandfather—and his immediate family in New Castle for Heller’s column “Historic Henry County” in the *New Castle Courier-Times* in 1980. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 180-195. Rosa (Redding) Mikels (daughter of Thomas B. Redding and mother of Aisle Mikels) wrote a letter to her grandson telling of the Redding family lineage. Portions of this lengthy letter were also obtained and used by Heller for his column “Historic Henry County,” which were, in 1981–1982, edited and published in three volumes.

were far in advance of his day, and were likely influenced by the longstanding interest of Friends in “protecting the rights of American Indians” and pioneering “efforts in the crusade against slavery.”<sup>120</sup> An 1867 letter written by Redding in response to the then-editor of the *Courier*, Elwood Pleas, reveals the divergent views within Henry County on pro-Union issues. Redding represents the more moderate, often more logical and lawful stance (similar to Martin Bundy’s stance in some ways), while Pleas expressed the more hardline and principled viewpoints.<sup>121</sup>

Redding was universally—at least in Henry County—regarded as a brilliant man and was an active force in the movement to preserve and institutionalize Henry County’s history.<sup>122</sup> In 1886, he offered the main address at the annual reunion of the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County and, in 1889, was elected the organization’s treasurer.<sup>123</sup> Redding served as the HCHS president from 1889 to 1891 and hosted many executive committee meetings at his New Castle law offices near the courthouse. As a member of the executive committee from 1887 until his unexpected death in 1895, Redding’s

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<sup>120</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 33. For an example of Redding’s views on Native Americans, see Redding, “Our Early Settlers and Their Belief,” presented before the HCHS in April 1888 (discussed in Chapter Three), in Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 1, 9. Redding was also a strong temperance man. See Redding, “Prohibition and Local Option,” *New Castle Courier*, March 12, 1886; and Redding, “The Temperance Convention,” *New Castle Courier*, February 26, 1886, p.1, c.2-3. Like Martin Bundy, Redding argued for working within the political system against the radical viewpoints of some who represented a fringe element in Henry County. A series of letters between Redding and William Edgerton appeared in the following issues of the *Courier*. William (1827–1904) was the son of radical abolitionist leader and Quaker historian, Walter Edgerton. Walter, a leading member of the Anti-Slavery Friends, authored, *A History of the Separation in Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends* (Cincinnati, 1856), detailing his radical antislavery perspective of the 1842 schism. William, and his wife Caroline (Osborn) (1831–1917), were members of the early HCHS.

<sup>121</sup> “Communication from Redding,” *New Castle Courier*, April 16, 1867.

<sup>122</sup> Redding was posthumously honored many times by members of the HCHS in its proceedings and by articles published in the newspapers. In a time before specialization, individuals like Redding, Pleas, and Parker, who combined elements of the arts, sciences, and history together with civic and humanitarian activities were much revered locally as “universal” or “renaissance” men.

<sup>123</sup> “Old Settlers: A Grand Outpouring of Young and Old People,” *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2; and “Old Settlers’ Union: Successful and Interesting Meeting of Henry County Pioneers,” *New Castle Courier*, October 4, 1889.



influence on the decision making and direction of the young and often struggling organization was fundamental to its early progress. Redding also profoundly influenced later local Henry County historians George Hazzard and Clarence H. Smith.<sup>124</sup> A large collection of Redding's papers were passed down through Smith to Dr. Herbert L. Heller and are now held at the Indiana Historical Society.<sup>125</sup>

The founders' diverse experiences and connections to Quakerism are typical and, collectively, are representative of HCHS members with Quaker connections, which made up a majority of the early membership. Like the radical fringe element of Henry County Friends who publically advocated for the antislavery movement in an attempt to sway public opinion and public support toward their cause in a county commonly characterized as an area "anti-slavery in sentiment," the HCHS founders represented the radical fringe of the historical society movement in Henry County (albeit for an issue of a far less controversial nature). They too were forced to exert great effort to sway public opinion to achieve their goals. Just as antislavery leaders of the early 1840s viewed Henry County as fertile ground for their cause, the HCHS founders, following the Civil War, found a similarly fertile environment (if not more so) in which to spread their message and gain needed support.<sup>126</sup> Henry County's fertility for each cause seemed in many ways influenced by the presence of a proportionately large Quaker population

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<sup>124</sup> Heller, "Historic Henry County" *New Castle Courier-Times*, March 20, 1976. In 1867–1868, George Hazzard read law under Thomas B. Redding. Hazzard went on to publish a significant history of Henry County and credited Redding as being a major influence on his historical interests. Clarence H. Smith, longtime curator of the HCHS, lived near Redding's business block in New Castle. Smith assisted at the offices and also credited Redding as a major influence on his local history writing. Smith, in turn, assisted his young nephew, Dr. Herbert L. Heller, as Heller grew up in the same house in New Castle with Smith.

<sup>125</sup> Series 4: Henry County, Indiana Papers, 1806-1970, Thomas B. Redding Papers, 1855-1894, 7 Boxes, 17 folders, Special Collections and Archives, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>126</sup> Hamm, *Anti-Slavery Movement in Henry County*, 3-4; and Hamm, "Moral Choices," 120.

whose heritage carried with it strong traditions of organizing in support of issues on race and gender, and traditions that produced a natural tendency toward the preservation of local history.

### **Passing of the Torch: New Leadership Trends in the HCHS**

In the summer and early fall of 1910, the HCHS executive committee held a series of meetings, “each and every one having for its object the growth and prosperity of the Society.”<sup>127</sup> Such discussions were stimulated by the failing health of the Society’s last surviving founder, Benjamin Parker, as well as the advanced age of many others who were instrumental in its early work.<sup>128</sup> It was these critical periods of transition from an organization’s founding members to the following generation that regularly signaled extended periods of inactivity for most early county historical societies in Indiana. The meetings culminated at a gathering held at the historical building in the early evening of September 15. Invitations were sent to the cultural leaders of the county, as well as an open call, via newspaper notices, to the general public. Between thirty and forty county residents attended.<sup>129</sup>

Parker offered in a newspaper notice numerous specific topics for discussion. But the “momentous question,” posed by elderly leaders, including Parker, Eugene H. Bundy, Mattie E. S. Charles, and Henry L. Powell, was “Who will come forward and take the place of the older workers?”<sup>130</sup> Powell expressed the feelings of the aging

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<sup>127</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 109.

<sup>128</sup> Parker was thinking along these lines for some years as indicated by his writings. See Benjamin S. Parker to Charles Reagan, November 15, 1907, Charles M. Reagan Papers, 1851-1930, Box 1, Folder 1, Manuscript Division, Indiana State Library (letter reprinted in Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 369-370).

<sup>129</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 110-111.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

members in no uncertain terms: “Evidently those who have been in the harness for so many years feel that younger blood should come and take hold, and by their efforts lead the Society into greater things, making it the leading Historical Society in the State so far as County’s [sic] are concerned.”<sup>131</sup>

Parker was coming to the end of his life. He felt true concern for the future of the organization he had dedicated much of his life to establishing. Although no immediate solution was achieved during this series of meetings that concluded in the fall of 1910, a challenge had been offered. It was now the duty of the next generation to step into the void left by the early leaders as, one by one, they died or became too feeble to attend to the needs of the Society.

One member who participated in the meeting and commented on the “future policy of the Society with respect to the enlargement of its usefulness” was Clarence H. Smith.<sup>132</sup> Influenced by a strong Quaker heritage, Smith, thirty-five, soon shouldered the “harness” as the first Society curator and face of the organization—a task he carried on for three decades. In the meantime, it was up to members like Mattie Charles and other aging members to step forward during the first changing of the guard.

### **Women, Quakerism, and the Henry County Historical Society**

The four founders and other male leaders of the HCHS were not alone in their quest to organize a stable and sustainable county historical society. A small group of local women labored for the establishment and early advancement of the organization, labors which received far less recognition than did those of their male counterparts.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 109.

Between 1887 and 1920, the core group of women leaders (those who held elected office) consisted of thirty-four individuals. Only nine of the thirty-four were not of a strong Quaker heritage. And only three of the thirty-four resided in the northern townships of Henry County (i.e., Fall Creek, Jefferson, Prairie, Stony Creek, and Blue River).<sup>133</sup>

Quakerism in antebellum Indiana amplified tenets central to the regional identity of the Old Northwest: the importance of education and religious freedom.<sup>134</sup> But the Quaker lifestyle often contradicted other western tenets like individualism, democracy, and established traditions concerning race and gender. Sharp lines of distinction drawn by many Quakers in their decidedly unpopular views and subsequent actions on such issues became blurred, to an extent, by the “evangelical acculturation” movement common among Indiana Friends after 1870.<sup>135</sup> Former Quakers—those who were disowned or who freely resigned their memberships—and others with close connections to Quakerism, blurred these lines even more. Yet, persistent and lasting Quaker influences on issues of gender, race, and education were apparent well into the twentieth century in places like Henry County where a substantial portion of the area’s early settlers were Friends. Such influences were also visible in the policies and practices of Henry County’s early historical organizations, particularly in the better organized and Quaker dominated HCHS.

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<sup>133</sup> See fn. 33.

<sup>134</sup> Quaker ideals of religious freedom during the first half of the nineteenth century often surpassed the common notions of religion free from governmental intervention held by other Westerners. Quaker doctrines on marriage practices, opposition to oath taking, and especially their pacifist beliefs (opposition to “any kind of militia or military service” and capital punishment) brought Friends into greater antagonism with established laws that provided for freedom of religion in the United States. Quaker ideals of religious freedom during this period remained similar to those first established in Pennsylvania during the colonial period. See Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> Wood, “Evangelical Quaker Acculturation,” 128.

This phenomenon was most pronounced concerning the role of women within the organization. Little is known about the lives of the vast majority of women who lived in nineteenth-century Henry County. But women who actively participated in organizations like the HCHS and belonged to the Society of Friends left behind workable histories that reveal much about their roles within the local culture. Several women were mentioned, at least in some degree, in scattered fragments among the male dominated biographical accounts in the early county histories from both Henry and Wayne.<sup>136</sup> A few women left records and writings on their own account that are still available to researchers.<sup>137</sup> But it is primarily through detailed church and organizational records that such women come to life through their reported actions, and, in some cases, in their own words and by their own hand. The great emphasis placed on the preservation of such records by those with a Quaker heritage influenced the making of a historical consciousness in Henry County. Similar to the role women played within the Society of Friends, women in Henry County took an active and meaningful part in the preservation and institutionalization of local history. In the first decades of the twentieth century, this role within the HCHS grew in size and significance.

Quaker views on gender relations were generally far ahead of the larger American culture. Quaker progressive attitudes toward gender furthered its distinction or separation from the outside world. “In the early twentieth century, Quaker women continued” their nineteenth-century practice and filled “a disproportionate role in feminist causes,” while other Quaker women populated the peace movement and fought

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<sup>136</sup> See, e.g., “Mrs. Elizabeth (Rea) Gillies,” in *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1219.

<sup>137</sup> See, e.g., Bella C. Estes, Henry County, Henry Township Clippings File, Indiana Room, New Castle-Henry County Public Library; and Mattie Charles, *Poems, Papers, and Addresses of Clarkson Davis and Hannah E. Davis* (Richmond, IN: Nicholson Printing and Manufacturing Co., 1898).

for social change.<sup>138</sup> During the early years of the HCHS, many Quaker women actually lost authority within the Society of Friends. “By 1920, virtually all [Quaker churches] had united men’s and women’s business meetings” and the number of women ministers “steadily declined between 1900 and 1960.”<sup>139</sup>

In 1886, as the process of organizing the HCHS was underway, its organizers actively solicited participation from all the residents of the county, the “ladies equally with the gentlemen.”<sup>140</sup> The HCHS Constitution and By-Laws, drafted the following year by Quaker Founder Benjamin S. Parker, made the organization’s position very clear on the issue of gender: “women shall be alike eligible with men to any office or position in the society.”<sup>141</sup> Women may have been eligible for any office, but that did not necessarily equate to them being elected in proportion with their numbers or to a high office.<sup>142</sup>

Just as men within the church “handled matters of finance and property” and dominated its equivalent of an executive committee, so it was at the birth of the HCHS.<sup>143</sup> Women were nominated and elected to lesser offices and appointed to

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>140</sup> “As to a Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, December 3, 1886.

<sup>141</sup> Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society (Locally printed, 1887), by-law 8, in HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 9. This policy was reconfirmed in October 1901 in article two of the Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society, Constitution and By-Laws Folder, Henry County Historical Society Archives Collection, Clarence H. Smith Genealogy and Local History Library.

The inclusion of women was not a general practice in nineteenth-century historical societies in the United States. Most excluded women from membership. See Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*, Chapter 4, “Membership and Administration,” 35-47.

<sup>142</sup> Without figures to substantiate the proportion of men and women within the early HCHS, it is impossible to gauge precisely the percentage of either sex at any one time. It is clear that men outnumbered women before 1910, especially as officeholders and as active participants in Society meetings. The balance begins to shift under the influence of the Women’s Club movement during the teens and twenties. Women probably outnumbered the men after 1930, a trend that seems to still hold true into the twenty-first century.

<sup>143</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 185.

township committees beginning at the inaugural meeting in 1887, but the executive committee—the organization’s original decision-making body—and the nominating committee, initially remained free of women.<sup>144</sup>

At the 1890 annual spring meeting, women achieved their first measure of official authority within the HCHS. However, change came gradually. The process for selecting officers and an executive committee for the coming year began in the morning session of each annual spring meeting. A nominating committee, appointed by the president, selected candidates for all open positions.<sup>145</sup> The nominating committee met briefly during the dinner hour, and, during the afternoon session, its chair presented names that were then placed before the whole of the members present for a vote. (No instance was ever found where a nomination was voted down by the members.)

Two respected Quakers, Mary V. (Ballenger) Barnard (1850–1945) of Spiceland, and Margaret K. (Ratcliff) Wood (1825–1922) of Greensboro, were appointed to the nominating committee in 1890. The committee nominated Wood and Mary A. (White)

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<sup>144</sup> Five Quaker women, many of whom participated in the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County, were elected to nominal positions in 1887. Dr. Mary J. (Evans) Smith (1841–1898), elected as the first female vice president of the HCHS, was also appointed to a township committee instructed to organize meetings at the township level to heighten interest in the HCHS and enlist new members. Smith, reportedly the first female physician in the county, and Margaret K. (Ratcliff) Wood (1825–1922)—another HCHS township committee member—were Quakers from Greensboro and elected, respectively, to the executive committee and as vice president of the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County in August 1886. See “Old Settlers: A Grand Outpouring of Young and Old People,” *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2.

<sup>145</sup> Until 1912, it was a regular practice for the HCHS to create large executive and township committees. This was done in an attempt to include as many individuals in “official” positions as possible to increase interest and participation in the work. Article IV of the 1887 HCHS constitution required thirteen vice-presidents—one from each township—and twelve trustees for similar reasons. Regardless of the how many names appeared in such instances, the actual work was carried forward by a core group of members, despite their official titles. Success of such measures was questionable at best as interest in the Society was always lacking in the northern townships. Eventually the practice was overturned. See Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society, in HCHS Minute Book 1, 9.

White (1848–1941) of Rich Square to the executive committee.<sup>146</sup> Women now had two voices on an executive committee of six (that also included the all-male team of officers in an ex-officio capacity). From this point forward, women were elected each year to the executive committee, which varied in size from year to year, and as vice-presidents, which numbered thirteen in all—one representing each township. Women never comprised a majority of the executive committee before it was unofficially replaced in 1913, but they were generally well represented.<sup>147</sup>

After 1902, property and financial issues became more complicated. The HCHS was now housed and was responsible for the county-owned General Grose home. A more complex budgeting system was required. The Society made an annual request to the county commissioners, received an annual appropriation from the county council, and actively pushed ahead the process of constructing library and museum collections. Even as women made inroads in certain areas of organizational leadership, decision making on such financial and property matters remained reserved for men. Managing the HCHS's new responsibilities generally fell to the president, treasurer, and board of trustees. The latter body—comprised of three members until 1925 when it was expanded to five—replaced the executive committee as the main authoritative body of the Society, as property and finance now outweighed meeting plans.<sup>148</sup> Not until 1925 was the first

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<sup>146</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 17. All three women listed had close family ties with male officers of both historical organizations in the county, and all three were Quaker members.

<sup>147</sup> In 1902, the executive committee was officially changed to an “advisory committee” limited to five members. The new terminology and member limit never caught on. The executive committee remained largely responsible for planning the semiannual meetings but its number often ballooned to more than ten members. On two occasions more than twenty members were selected. Between 1902 and 1912, the executive committee (often referred to as the “program committee”) averaged fourteen members.

<sup>148</sup> From 1887 to 1891, trustees were elected by the HCHS. Without property or rooms of any kind to manage, the early trustees were basically nominal positions designed to include as many county residents as possible in the new organization. In April 1925, Clarence Smith, curator, “spoke about the difficulty in obtaining a quorum of trustees to look after the interests of the Society. After a good deal of discussion T. B. Deem moved to have a committee draft an amendment making it legal to have 5



woman elected to the board of trustees.<sup>149</sup> In 1929, women held three seats on this body and gained a majority on decision making over property and financial matters for the first time, as the Society treasurer was also a woman.<sup>150</sup>

Women had always involved themselves in the proceedings of the HCHS. Following the November 1887 inaugural meeting, selected female members regularly presented papers at Society meetings. Hannah E. (Brown) Davis (1840–1898), a literary minded Quaker educator and trustee at the Spiceland Academy, presented papers three consecutive years.<sup>151</sup> At the semiannual meetings in 1890, a total of four papers were presented by women Quaker members, one entitled “Pioneer Women of the County,” read by Louisa Wickersham (1849–1919).<sup>152</sup> (Louisa was the younger sister of Huldah Parker and sister-in-law to Benjamin Parker). Over the next six years, a noticeable decline in women’s involvement in meeting participation developed.<sup>153</sup>

Perhaps triggered by this recent decline, an event took place in April 1896 that helped open the way for women within the HCHS in both meeting participation and leadership positions. Late in the afternoon session, just before the nominating committee

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instead of 3 trustees—2 of which should be women.” HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 78. This amendment was passed in October. See *ibid.*, 85.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 79 and 85.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>151</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 11, and 13; and Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 24 [see December 1890 program]. Davis was a member of the Western Association of Writers and, later, a professor of English at the University of North Dakota. For more information on Davis, see Richard P. Ratcliff, *The Quakers of Spiceland, Henry County, Indiana* (New Castle, IN: Community Printing, 1968), 33 and 35; and *Henry County Historicalog* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1987), inside back cover.

<sup>152</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 17; and Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 24 [see December 1890 program].

<sup>153</sup> It must be noted that the minutes for five meetings during the tenure of Fassett A. Cotton, Society secretary 1892-1894, were never transferred into the logbook. Cotton (later Dr. F. A. Cotton) went on to a distinguished career as an educational administrator and even served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction for Indiana from 1903 to 1906. But he was lax as Society secretary. Newspaper accounts help replace the missing information, but records for this brief period are still incomplete. After this egregious error, a new policy was put in place restricting minute records from being separated from the logbook. Few occasions of missing pages occurred after this event.

presented its proposed candidates for a vote Margaret Wood (see Figure G), one of the thirteen sitting vice presidents, took the floor. At the age of seventy, Wood commanded the respect of the meeting as she called for an “equalization of women with the men in the operation of the society.”<sup>154</sup> A lively discussion commenced. The executive committee, comprised of three men and three women, claimed many women were asked to participate in the meeting but refused, and the committee was “unable to do better than the program shows.”<sup>155</sup> A record nine papers were presented at the April meeting, but only one by a woman. Wood, who lived long enough to cast a vote following the ratification of the nineteenth amendment in 1920 that guaranteed women’s suffrage, was known, as were many Hicksite Quaker women, for being “attracted to radical feminism and the early women’s rights movement.”<sup>156</sup> Whether Wood’s call for equality signaled a more careful recognition of gender issues or simply stimulated more women to become actively involved is difficult to determine. What is clear is that within two years following the Wood’s discourse, women were elected to offices previously reserved for males only, a trend that continued to grow with time.

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<sup>154</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 42.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 42. Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 185. “Hicksite women were founders of the women’s rights movements in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.” Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was central to the movement and was a Hicksite Friend. And “three of the five organizers at Seneca Falls were Hicksite women.” Ibid., 186-188. Hicksite Friends were followers of Elias Hicks (1748–1830), a controversial minister with opposing doctrinal views from traditional Quaker dogma. According to the Quaker Information Center: a Gateway to Quakerism (a service of the Earlham College School of Religion), “Friends were not impervious to the new ideas and schools of thought which abounded in the late eighteenth century, and individuals viewed what they saw as traditional Quakerism through the varying lenses of the Enlightenment, emerging liberalism and evangelical renewal. The ‘great separation’ of 1827–28 began in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Approximately two-thirds of members ranged themselves in the group that came to be called ‘Hicksite,’ and emphasized the role of the Inward Light in guiding individual faith and conscience, while the remaining third, eventually known as ‘Orthodox,’ espoused a more Protestant emphasis on Biblical authority and the atonement. Similar schisms rapidly followed in New York, Baltimore, and elsewhere.” “A Brief History of the Branches of Friends,” accessed August 12, 2015, <http://www.quakerinfo.org/quakerism/branches/history>.

A similar event, long remembered by those present, that involved Wood and the question of equality between men and women within the HCHS, occurred nearly a quarter century later. Then Society Curator Clarence H. Smith replayed the happening in a 1925 address in Richmond, Indiana, before the recently reorganized Wayne County Historical Society. Smith explained to his audience that member dues were originally set at one dollar. Before long, this became a rather unpopular policy and dues were reduced to fifty cents for men and twenty-five cents for women<sup>157</sup> (All members eighty and over were exempt from dues.)<sup>158</sup> At the spring meeting in 1922, Wood, now ninety-seven and the oldest member in the Society, arose and declared that she had worked all her life for women's equality and it was "insulting that women should not pay as much dues as the men."<sup>159</sup> Women had "secured the right of suffrage" and "should bear an equal burden with the men" and proposed that all dues be set at fifty cents.<sup>160</sup> Smith, also of an old Quaker family, added, "Her speech was one of the most refreshing things you ever heard, she was all full of fire and 'pep' and of course she carried her point."<sup>161</sup> Wood's 1896 defiant stance against what she perceived to be gender inequality within the HCHS sparked a movement that further opened new leadership opportunities for women.

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<sup>157</sup> See HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 40; Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, 9; and newspaper clipping, "Large Crowd at Annual Meeting: Historical Society Has Prominent Guests at Session," in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 45. Dues were first lowered in 1908; "the annual membership fee is only .50 for men and .25 for women and .15 for children under 15 years of age, and come prepared to pay it; for it is badly needed to carry forward the good work of the Society." HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 42 (see reverse side of meeting program).

<sup>158</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 48.

<sup>159</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, 9. See also HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 40; and "Large Crowd at Annual Meeting: Historical Society Has Prominent Guests at Session" [undated newspaper clipping] in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 45. Wood also spoke on women's suffrage before the HCHS at the annual spring meeting in 1920. See "Flag Presented History Society," *New Castle Courier*, April 30, 1920, p.1, c.1.

<sup>160</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, 9.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

Around this same time a general push to gain the support of Henry County's young people took off.<sup>162</sup>

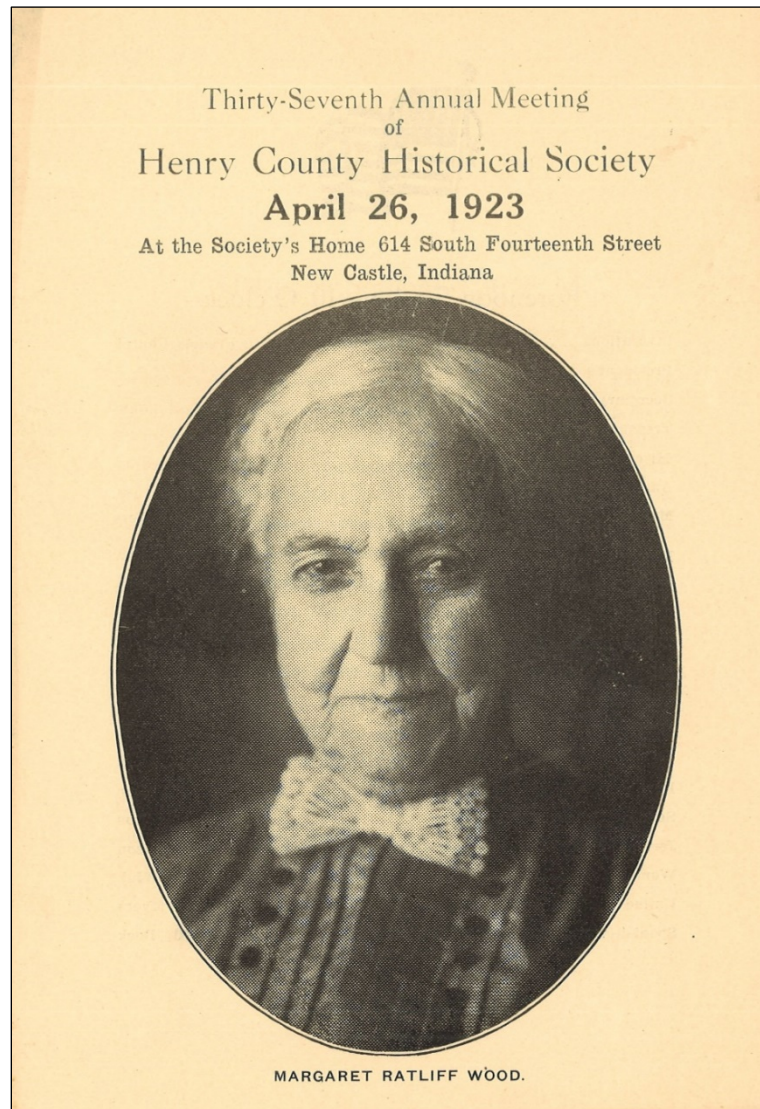


Figure G: HCHS program for the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting memorializing Margaret Wood on the cover, April 26, 1923. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

<sup>162</sup> See "Meritorious Association," *New Castle Courier*, April 19, 1900. The article summarized the HCHS's brief history before 1900. It described the early struggles and "varying success during its first ten years." It also explained how "young and active minds" became "enlisted in the work."

The HCHS faced many struggles during the early 1890s. Some were natural to historical societies, while others may have been connected to the Panic of 1893, which produced a spectacular financial crisis and economic recession—the worst such recession in American history up to that time. Women in, or newly graduated from, high school seemed more susceptible to the lure of historical society work than did men of a similar age. Musical performances, recitations, and the occasional presentation of an original paper were now slots on the semiannual programs regularly filled by the county’s young women.<sup>163</sup> This type of participation continued on through the first decade of the twentieth century, especially with musical performances like the ever-popular “Whistling Solos” by Agnes Beach and recitations by Lora Etta Butler who recited “A Cabin in the Clearing” on Parker Day in memory of Henry County’s poet.<sup>164</sup> Similar youth movements were revived periodically during the first half of the twentieth century with varied success.<sup>165</sup>

One definite sign that change was in the air came in 1899 and the election of twenty-one-year-old Eva Coffin to the office of Society secretary. Only one year earlier, Carrie (Goodwin) Jeffery (1861–1926), a graduate of Spiceland Academy and the

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<sup>163</sup> Original papers by high school graduates: “What Our Grandmothers Wore and How they Dressed their Children” by Nellie Rogers (April 1897), HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 49; “Society in New Castle Half a Century Ago” by Hannah Tos Elliott (May 1898), *ibid.*, 53; and “Presidents and Early Members of Henry County Historical Society” by Rose Kissel (April 1900), *ibid.*, 65. Violin, piano, and vocal solos were common musical performances given by young ladies in their teens and early twenties. Most young participants at this time were recent graduates of New Castle High School. See Herbert L. Heller, *Schools of New Castle: A Documentary History*, 185.

<sup>164</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 86 and 140.

<sup>165</sup> See, e.g., “Announcements and Notes” back page of printed program for the HCHS Twenty-Second Annual Meeting, April 30, 1908, in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 105, [Note: HCHS meeting programs were printed and distributed well before the date of the semiannual meetings to publicize the event]; “An Appeal to Young People on Behalf of the Historical Society,” by Dr. John W. White, at the HCHS Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting, April 24, 1913, in *ibid.*, [complete text], 116; and presidential address by Louise (Millikan) Stanley at the HCHS Forty-Ninth Annual Meeting, April 25, 1935, HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 193.

younger sister of well-known Indiana artists Frances and Helen Goodwin, was elected to the same office.<sup>166</sup> The selection made Jeffrey the first woman elected to a high office (i.e., president, secretary, or treasurer) within the Society.<sup>167</sup> In the early historical society movement, the office of secretary—responsible for recordkeeping and correspondences—was considered “the most demanding” and was generally filled by a very active member of the organization.<sup>168</sup> After 1912, women dominated the office of HCHS secretary.<sup>169</sup>

Carrie Jeffery represented another rising demographic among the women of the HCHS. Before 1896, only two women younger than forty-five served in elected positions. In the next eight years, nine women from the same age group served in elected positions, although the average age of such women lowered only slightly from fifty-one to forty-nine. Previous to Margaret Wood’s call for female equality in 1896, the core group of leading women participants were, like Wood, of the pioneer generation, or the spouses and daughters of the male leaders.<sup>170</sup>

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, women who did not live through the Civil War except perhaps as very young children and who did not witness frontier life as had those of the previous generations, helped bring significant changes to the HCHS. Women born between 1857 and 1867, as were nine women who served in office

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<sup>166</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 54; and Hatcher, *History of the Spiceland Academy*, 103.

<sup>167</sup> Until 1923, the position of vice-president was filled by multiple individuals and thus held little authority. A new tradition began in 1923 where the sitting vice-president was often elevated the following year to the office of president.

<sup>168</sup> Ruegamer, *History of the Indiana Historical Society*, 33.

<sup>169</sup> Although no list was completed up to the present time, according to my personal experience with the organization and conversations with Richard P. Ratcliff—Henry County Historian and a leader of the HCHS from the 1960s until the 1990s—no male has served in the office of secretary since at least the mid-1960s.

<sup>170</sup> Of the latter, Huldah Parker, Sarah Ann Pleas, Rosa (Redding) Mikels, Lida Saint, and Mary (Ballenger) Barnard were the most prolific.

between 1896 and 1904, were generally from Indiana or southwestern Ohio three generations removed from the South.<sup>171</sup> Most were not Quakers, although were reared and educated with a measure of Quaker influence. Pioneer times fascinated these women, as exhibited by the subject matter of their presentations, but more honor was bestowed on Civil War veterans—in many cases a family member—as a rising tide of popular interest in all things related to the Civil War swept the nation.<sup>172</sup> The experiences of those born after mid-century had changed substantially from those who reached maturity in the frontier era. The new industrial boom triggered by the Civil War, which reached Henry County after 1870, was less a marvel and wonder than it was to those who grew up before railroads, the telegraph, and the new brutality of war in the industrial age.

The year 1896 was a pivotal time for the HCHS in another significant way. This was the year the organization began its legislative process, which, after five years, resulted in the acquisition of a permanent home—an essential link in its continued success and sustainability. Leaders of the early state historical movement—men like John W. Oliver, director of the Indiana Historical Commission, Dr. Christopher Coleman, director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, and George S. Cottman, editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*—labeled the HCHS among the top two county historical societies in the state.<sup>173</sup> During the HCHS's transformation from a homeless and collection-less organization, one woman leader stood out from among the rest, Martha “Mattie” E. S. Charles (1847–1923).

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<sup>171</sup> See footnote 129.

<sup>172</sup> See Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 149-158.

<sup>173</sup> John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, October 24, 1921, Box 12, Folder 5, Clarence H. Smith Papers; HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 96; and Cottman, “Benjamin S. Parker,” 32.

Mattie Charles was elected the first woman president of the HCHS in 1912. Her connections within the organization trace back to 1898 when she was elected to the executive committee for the first of four consecutive terms.<sup>174</sup> Unlike most fellow members, Charles was not native to Henry County. Born Mattie E. Jones on August 17, 1847, in the small Quaker community of Westfield, Hamilton County, Indiana, the young woman moved to Spiceland at the age of twenty-three. A teacher by profession, Charles found employment at the Spiceland Academy under Superintendent Clarkson Davis and wife, Hannah, and was immediately received into the Spiceland Friends Monthly Meeting.<sup>175</sup> The young teacher boarded with the Driver Boone family—counted among the first pioneers of Spiceland—in a house on West Main Street just east of the Spiceland Friends Meetinghouse, cemetery, and frame academy building.<sup>176</sup>

Charles' time at the Spiceland Academy, where she acted as instructor and trustee, was a major influence on her life as a writer of local history. Following the death of her beloved mentors Clarkson and Hannah Davis, Charles edited a volume entitled, *Poems, Papers, and Addresses of Clarkson Davis and Hannah E. Davis*, published in Richmond, Indiana, in 1898.<sup>177</sup> At the 1900 HCHS spring meeting, Charles read "Life of William Dawson" before the Society. Dawson, who lived less than a block west of Spiceland Academy, constructed a telescope and an observatory atop his two-story home where, among other astronomical phenomena, he independently researched "periodicity

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<sup>174</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 54.

<sup>175</sup> Spiceland Monthly Meeting, Women's Minutes, 10<sup>th</sup> mo. 8 1870, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College; and Ratcliff, *Quakers of Spiceland*, 69.

<sup>176</sup> 1850 United States Census, s.v. "Martha E. Jones," Spiceland, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>177</sup> Charles, *Poems, Papers, and Addresses of Clarkson Davis and Hannah E. Davis*. Charles' occupation and industry in the 1910 United States Census is "writer" for "magazines." 1910 United States Census, s.v. "Martha E. Charles," Spiceland, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.



of the sun-spots” and the “general law of recurrences.”<sup>178</sup> Students from the academy utilized the close proximity of Dawson’s observatory, knowledge of weather and atmospheric happenings (as well his cobbler shop) to enrich their time at the Quaker run school.<sup>179</sup> Mattie’s paper on Dawson was published in the *Indiana Magazine of History* in March 1908.<sup>180</sup>

Increasingly, Charles was looked to as not only the women’s leader of the Society but gained an equal footing with the male leaders. After 1896, the number of women on the executive committee of the HCHS increased during the organization’s first vital transitional period—the quest for a permanent home. Yet, only Charles seemed to be included in the decision-making process in matters of any magnitude. At the October 1901 executive committee meeting, where the articles of association was ratified, eighteen signatures appeared on the document. Seventeen were men. Charles was the lone woman.<sup>181</sup>

In April 1902, at the ceremonies to dedicate the General Grose home as the new HCHS building, Charles was chosen to present a paper on this most special occasion that directly followed Founder Martin L. Bundy’s dedicatory oration.<sup>182</sup> Over the next twenty years, Charles presented ten papers before the Society, six of which directly

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<sup>178</sup> Mrs. M. E. (Martha) Charles, “William Dawson Life and Work,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 4, no. 1 (March 1908), 24 and 27. Dawson’s logbooks and telescope are held by Richard P. Ratcliff, president of Spiceland Preservation and Tourism Society and official Henry County Historian. See also Mrs. M. E. S. Charles, “William Dawson, Shoemaker—Astronomer,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 8, no. 1 (January 1912), 39-41 [reprinted from *Indianapolis News*, February 13, 1901].

<sup>179</sup> Charles, “William Dawson Life and Work,” 27.

<sup>180</sup> Other women presented papers before the HCHS that were published in magazines. See, e.g., Mrs. C. J. (Rose) Pickering, “Early History of Middletown,” *The Indianian* (May 1899), found in *The Indianian*, vols. 3-4, 327-333. Rose Pickering presented the paper before the HCHS, April 1, 1899, at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting. HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 63.

<sup>181</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 73. Henry W. Charles (1837–1920), Mattie’s husband, was also a signer.

<sup>182</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 86. Other women participated in the ceremonies, but not in such a position of honor.

related to women's history in Henry County. In October 1903, when an entire meeting was given over to women's control, Charles chaired the "women's committee" and acted in the presidential role by directing this first-of-its-kind semiannual meeting.<sup>183</sup> On a similar occasion four years later, the afternoon session was in the control of the woman-dominated Nature Study Club, and once again Charles "assumed charge of the meeting."<sup>184</sup>

Charles also made her mark on the HCHS as its president, in other ways than simply being the first woman to fill the office. Adolph Rogers, a very popular president who served eight terms between 1895 and 1912, fell gravely ill just weeks before the spring meeting in 1912. It was decided by the organization's leaders to appoint Charles as president pro tem for the April meeting where she was subsequently elected to serve a full term.<sup>185</sup> The fall meeting was a newly elected president's first opportunity to offer a presidential address and suggest changes for the whole of the membership for a vote. President Mattie Charles did not let this opportunity pass without "speaking of the mission of the local society" and advocating the importance of "gathering historical matter relative to the home life of the pioneers, in whatever form it may be found."<sup>186</sup>

Her remarks (reprinted in full in the local newspaper) were prescient in many ways and emblematic of changing historical philosophies expressed by many historians

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 132. The secretary was absent and Mattie was called upon to handle this duty as well. See Ibid., 111.

<sup>184</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 39-40.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>186</sup> Henry County Historical Society Minute Book 3, (April 1912-April 1915), HCHS, Smith Library, 15. Instead of naming an executive committee, acting president Mattie Charles decided to use the officers and to call on those as needed. This was often the unofficial practice, as records of executive committee meetings generally consisted of a core group of leaders and rarely included the often exuberant number of members named at the spring meeting. Ibid., 6.

later in the century.<sup>187</sup> In a sense, this was the passing of the baton to the next generation of HCHS leaders: a partial answering of the question, “Who will be next?” which was asked three years earlier by the last surviving founder, Benjamin Parker. The succeeding generations would provide an even greater role for women in its ranks—as presidents, trustees, curators, and practically every position in between.

Charles’ presidential address communicated perspectives made commonplace in the coming decades and characterized the collecting methods and historical consciousness that was a legacy of not only the HCHS’s founders, but that which dated back to the beginning of the historical society movement in the United States. She said, “The sources of information are many and varied, and it is the business of the local historian, and this means *every member* of the local society, to be *alert* and *seize upon* [emphasis added] every list of reliable information available.”<sup>188</sup> Charles hinted at the perspective made famous by Carl L. Becker in his presidential address before the American Historical Association in 1931, “Everyman His Own Historian.”<sup>189</sup> Her remarks reflected the aggressive attitude often expressed by Rev. Jeremy Belknap in the 1790s as he strove to organize the Massachusetts Historical Society—the first historical society in North America. Belknap demurred a passive approach to collecting; “not to lie waiting, like a bed of oysters” but rather he advocated an active approach by “keeping a *good look-out*, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey.”<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> See “Past is Brought in Plain Review” [undated newspaper clipping], in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 115.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Carl Becker, *Annual address of the president of the American Historical Association*, delivered at Minneapolis, December 29, 1931, *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (January 1932), 221–236.

<sup>190</sup> Tucker, “Massachusetts,” 7-8.

Charles' remarks also foreshadowed the basic approach of many social historians of the 1960s. Echoing the long expressed views of Benjamin Parker, she pushed for a collection of material culture that would tell the stories of the common man and woman, "how they dressed: what they ate and how it was cooked," and not just the prominent industrialists and war veterans.<sup>191</sup>

Such forward-thinking philosophies, passed on by Benjamin Parker and Mattie Charles, were taken up by Clarence Smith, who was hired as the first curator of the HCHS in 1921, two years before Charles' death. Instances of poor decision making and numerous pitfalls mark the path of museum collecting by the HCHS throughout its long history. But the foresight of the early leaders helps explain why today the organization has such exceptional collections, even if improper cataloging and misguided conservation practices, so common at the local level, have long been an obstacle to researchers. Collecting philosophies regressed over the years returning at times to the passive "bed of oysters" rather than the aggressive "prowling...wolf" pursuing "prey."<sup>192</sup> The solid foundation, although not always wisely built upon, aided the early collecting history of this organization that reaps benefits for those now connected with the Society.<sup>193</sup>

The call for equality in 1896 by Margaret Wood may have been the original catalyst in the elevation of women within the HCHS. But a later decision to solicit the

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<sup>191</sup> "Past is Brought in Plain Review" [undated newspaper clipping], in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 115.

<sup>192</sup> Tucker, "Massachusetts," 7-8.

<sup>193</sup> Through my research of the HCHS's archives and six years of intimate contact with the organization and its leadership, both past and present, in the capacity of a volunteer, executive director, public historian, advisor, and friend, I have researched, discussed and experienced the issues and circumstances noted above.

cooperation of the women's clubs of the county helped solidify the eventual equality and even sometimes dominant role of women in the organization.

The first "special invitation" to women's clubs was offered in the fall of 1902 under President Albert W. Saint.<sup>194</sup> The following spring, a motion was carried "that the next semiannual gathering to be held in October 1903 be wholly and exclusively under the control and management of the women of the Historical Society" and the subject matter should be women's history in Henry County.<sup>195</sup> The success of this "innovation or rather the departure from the old rule was a fortunate one," wrote Society Secretary John Thornburgh, and proved "that the women are doing their part and that they will again be called upon to perform a similar duty."<sup>196</sup> Papers were presented at the meeting, with titles like "Woman's Hand in the Progress of Henry County" and "Club Work by the Women of Henry County," as well as demonstrations of pioneer era cooking, clothing production, and even a fashion show of sorts with women wearing apparel from pre-Civil War days.<sup>197</sup>

The Women's Committee for this special meeting consisted of ten women and, as before mentioned, was chaired by Mattie Charles. All were Quakers or non-Quakers with Quaker connections. During this meeting, an invitation was made to the "Women's clubs of the county...to furnish complete collections of their Rosters and Programs for preservation in the archives of the Society."<sup>198</sup> The women's club movement was a

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<sup>194</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 97 (see bottom of printed program).

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111. A notice for this meeting was published in the *Indianapolis Journal*. See *ibid.*, 112 (undated).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 111. Most of these invitations came from John Thornburgh, representing the HCHS, who was a constant presence in the high offices of the Society between 1901 and 1913 (secretary for ten terms; president for one).

recent development in Henry County, but by 1900 had spread to at least six communities.<sup>199</sup> Many of the female leaders of the HCHS were likewise leaders of the newly organized Henry County Federation of Women's Clubs (established in 1897) that the organizations seemed a perfect marriage.<sup>200</sup> Huldah Parker (wife of Benjamin Parker)—named the “Mother of the Federation”—was elected the Federation's first president.<sup>201</sup> Three more HCHS women would serve in the same office in the Federation's first decade of existence, including Rosa (Redding) Mikels (daughter of HCHS Founder Thomas B. Redding).

Over the next four years a growing relationship was assured. A new section of the HCHS grew out of this period and the growing women's club involvement—the Nature Study Club.<sup>202</sup> The Club flourished as an ancillary organization from 1906 through the 1920s. It met once a month, took charge of the Natural History room in the museum, and took regular outings to observe birds in the countryside of Henry County.<sup>203</sup> In the early 1920s, trips to newly formed Indiana State Parks and an annual gathering with the Indianapolis Nature Club were other popular activities among its

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<sup>199</sup> Heller, “Women's Clubs Begin in Knightstown,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 264-266 and taken from *New Castle Courier-Times*, Centennial Edition, August 9, 1941. For brief discussion of the women's club movement in Indiana, see James H. Madison, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 228.

<sup>200</sup> For a good illustration of the place the Women's Club Movement held in the early historical movement in Indiana, see “Study and Teaching of State History,” *Proceedings of [the First Indiana] State History Conference, Bulletin* no. 11 (May 1920), 36-55. At the Thursday morning session, “Study and Teaching of State History,” seven groups were represented to share their viewpoints: Schools, libraries, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, Grand Army of the Republic, American Legion, and Indiana Federation of Clubs.

<sup>201</sup> Heller, “Women Organized Federation of Clubs,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 239. Huldah Parker was “one of the best known and respected women of New Castle” not only as the wife of Benjamin Parker, but for her character and service in the community. “Mrs. Parker Died Suddenly Today,” *New Castle Courier*, March 20, 1922, p.1, c.2.

<sup>202</sup> The Nature Study Club was a partial fulfillment of section four of Benjamin Parker's original plan written into the Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society (1887), (covered in Chapter Three).

<sup>203</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 5.

members.<sup>204</sup> The Henry County club was also officially affiliated with the Indiana Audubon Society.<sup>205</sup>

Clarence Smith was an early organizer of the Nature Study Club, but its ranks were dominated by women (see Figure H).<sup>206</sup> Meetings were generally held on every third Saturday of each month beginning at one in the afternoon. Reports on experiments, the “examination of specimens of natural resources,” or committee reports began most meetings.<sup>207</sup> This was followed by a business session. “Papers were then read and discussed” according to topics designated for study (i.e., trees, birds, plant life, geology, insect life, or agriculture)—a format planned a year in advance.<sup>208</sup>

The HCHS scheduled a number of women guest speakers in the first decades of the twentieth century that coincided with the strengthening women’s movement. In October 1904, Mrs. Virginia C. Meredith (1848–1936), daughter-in-law of Gen. Solomon Meredith—a Quaker general in the Civil War from Wayne County—spoke on “Episodes in Eastern Indiana History.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Heller, “Nature Research Club Formed,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 276. Heller, who attended club outings as a child, relied on his personal recollections and his uncle’s papers now held at the Indiana Historical Society. See Series 8: Other Organizations and Interests, 1904–48, Nature Research Club, Account, 1909–23, Box 14, Folder 9, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>205</sup> Heller, “Nature Research Club Formed,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 276; and Series 8: “Other Organizations and Interests,” 1904–48, Audubon Society and Nature Club, 1906–30, Box 14, Folder 8, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>206</sup> See Series 8: Other Organizations and Interests, 1904–48, Nature Research Club, Account, 1909–23, Clarence H. Smith Papers, Box 14, Folder 9.

<sup>207</sup> Heller, “Nature Research Club Formed,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 276.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* See also “Nature Research Club,” *Daily Times* [New Castle], October 22, 1921, p.3, c.1; and “Club Visits Park,” *New Castle Courier*, April 22, 1921, p.1, c.6.

<sup>209</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 124.



Figure H: HCHS Nature Study Club at the Goodwin Cottage, October 16, 1920. Included in the photograph are Clarence H. Smith (before he was named the first HCHS curator), Herbert L. Heller (as a young boy), several Goodwin sisters – Frances, Helen, and Carrie Jeffery, soon-to-be HCHS president, Mrs. Frank Stanley, and others. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

In the November 2, 1913, edition of the *Indianapolis Star*, Grace (Julian) Clarke (1865–1938), a speaker with strong ties to the Society of Friends in East Central Indiana, recorded her experience as a special guest speaker who “presented in her gracious and modest manner” at the fall meeting of the HCHS.<sup>210</sup> Clarke was touring the state advocating for woman’s enfranchisement while writing a weekly column entitled “Woman’s Clubs.”<sup>211</sup> Like the other women guest speakers, Clarke was a well-educated

<sup>210</sup> HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 31-31.

<sup>211</sup> Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul Boyer, eds., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950, A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 341-42.



author, editor, and journalist—professions dominated by men until later in the century. Clarke gained substantial influence with the woman’s suffrage movement through leadership positions in the Indiana Federation of Clubs, and was present at the establishment of Henry County’s branch in 1897.<sup>212</sup>

Born in Centerville in neighboring Wayne County, Clarke was the daughter of George W. Julian—renowned Quaker abolitionist and state legislator known personally by many of the older members of the HCHS.<sup>213</sup> She received a warm reception for her subject matter, as “it goes without saying that in a Quaker community such as New Castle there is a great deal of suffrage sentiment.”<sup>214</sup> Clarke offered several telling observations from her time at the meeting. Duly noted was the attendance of the Spiceland Quaker, Arthur W. Osborn (1859–1924), “the grandson of Charles Osborn, who published the first anti-slavery newspaper in the country, the *Philanthropist*.”<sup>215</sup> Clarke commented on her time spent during the dinner hour with ninety-year-old Jethro Wickersham, member of the local Rich Square Friends Meeting and father of Huldah

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 342; and Heller, “Women Organized Federation of Clubs,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 239.

<sup>213</sup> George W. Julian was described as “the most outspoken and influential foe of slavery among political leaders of Indiana;” Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 13. Julian, born in 1817, was admitted to the Henry County Bar in 1841 and practiced law in New Castle for a brief time. See Boor, *History of Henry County*, 360.

<sup>214</sup> Grace Julian Clarke, “Woman’s Clubs,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 2, 1913, p.40, c.4.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. Arthur Wendell Osborn (1859–1924) was actually the great-grandson of Charles Osborn (1775–1850), a Quaker minister. The *Philanthropist*, started by Charles Osborn in Mount Pleasant, Ohio, in 1816, is not to be confused with the later manifestation of the same paper edited by James G. Birney in New Richmond, Ohio, in 1836, and mentioned in the famous *Reminiscences* by Levi Coffin. See Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Robert Clark & Co., 1880), 524. Arthur was the nephew of Mattie Charles’ husband, Henry Charles. A life-long bachelor, for a time Arthur lived with the Charles family. 1900 United States Census, s.v. “Mattie E. Charles,” Spiceland, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. See also George W. Julian, *The Rank of Charles Osborn as an Anti-Slavery Pioneer* [Indiana Historical Society Publications 2, no. 6] (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1891), 4, 18, and 26. For more information on the Osborn family, see Record of Springfield Monthly Meeting of Friends, Wayne County, Indiana, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College, 75; and Spiceland Monthly Meeting, Births and Deaths, Book 3, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College, 2.

Parker, “who is one of the leading spirits in the historical society.”<sup>216</sup> She praised the singing performed by the minister of the Friends Church of New Castle and his wife.<sup>217</sup>

And Clarke (who mentioned that only a handful of people attended Indiana Historical Society meetings) was especially pleased that membership of the HCHS “includes all ages between the late teens and ninety years.”<sup>218</sup> Her column closed with what she labeled as “one of the impressive incidents of the day...the entrance of a lad of 10 or 12 on his way home from school, who, after a glance around the room, seated himself, and gave the most rapt attention to the aged gentleman who was addressing the audience.” She continued, “We were sure that the scene and the words were both being indelibly fixed on the boy’s mind, to be recalled long afterwards when many of those present were no more. It is indeed good for the young and old to mingle together.”<sup>219</sup>

After visiting the historical building, “formerly the residence of Gen. Grose, one of the best known men in that part of the state,” and seeing the “many curios and valuable relics and pictures” she regretted “to think that the State Historical Society has no home or real abiding place. How shameful,” she said, “that the late Legislature [of 1913] failed to provide for a suitable memorial building [proposed to house both the Indiana State Library and Indiana Historical Society] in honor of Indiana’s centennial anniversary!”<sup>220</sup>

In the spring of 1917, Mabel Dunlap-Curry (1868–1947), of Terre Haute, characterized as “a strong, feisty woman possessed of keen intelligence,” offered an

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<sup>216</sup> Clarke, “Woman’s Clubs,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 2, 1913, p.40, c.4.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 31-32; and Grace Julian Clarke, “Woman’s Clubs,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 2, 1913, p.40, col.4.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

address on women's suffrage.<sup>221</sup> Immediately following Curry's address, which was "witty, logical and convincing," the members of the Society adopted a resolution to be sent to the congressman representing Henry County in favor of the "Susan B. Anthony amendment."<sup>222</sup> Two year later, Kate Milner Rabb (1866–1937) paid the first of many visits between 1919 and 1933—some as a journalist for the *Indianapolis Star*, others as a guest speaker, or attending with other members of the Indiana Historical Commission. (Rabb visited ten times during that fourteen year period.)

Although not from a Quaker background, Rabb developed an affinity and lasting relationship with the members of the organization, due perhaps in part to the enlarged role women enjoyed. She also commented about the influence of Quakerism on the HCHS. In May 1922, Rabb, a columnist and historical activist, covered the HCHS spring meeting in her popular column "The Hoosier Listening Post" for the *Indianapolis Star*.<sup>223</sup> She mentioned the influence and "strong ties of the Society of Friends" on the "old settlers' and historical society meetings...to which so many of them [Quakers] belong."<sup>224</sup> Rabb provided regular coverage of the organization's activities and growth

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<sup>221</sup> Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 277.

<sup>222</sup> HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 66. "Initially introduced to Congress in 1878 by Senator A.A. Sargent of California, the Susan B. Anthony Amendment proposed a revision of the sixteenth amendment (Weatherford 129). The revision read: 'The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.' This revision became the main lobbying strategy for suffragists committed to winning the vote through a constitutional amendment, who organized through the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), founded by Anthony in 1871. Though it was repeatedly rejected by Congress, Sargent continued to propose the amendment. It came to be known as the Susan B. Anthony Amendment because other amendments to the constitution used the numbers 16 through 18 before the suffrage amendment was passed." "Susan B. Anthony Amendment," University of British Columbia, accessed August 18, 2015, [http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/mchapman/by\\_students/mckinney/susan\\_b.htm](http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/mchapman/by_students/mckinney/susan_b.htm).

<sup>223</sup> Beginning about 1924, there was also a good deal of correspondence between Kate Milner Rabb and Clarence Smith. See Series 2: Personal Correspondence, Box 7, Folders 4-8, and Box 8, Folders 1-4, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>224</sup> Kate Milner Rabb, "Hoosier Listening Post," *Indianapolis Star*, May 2, 1922.

during a period that witnessed a steady rise in historical interest at the state and local levels following the Indiana Centennial in 1916.<sup>225</sup> Rabb played an integral part in an evolving community of historical organizations and historically minded individuals attempting to awaken “interest in historical pursuits, in teaching history and in the preservation of historical material...to develop a state [historical] consciousness” by hosting conferences, advocating the organization of local historical societies, and cooperation among the state’s historical community.<sup>226</sup>

It took another fifteen years before the HCHS elected its second woman president, but during that time substantial changes occurred within the organization and in the world around. The Great War in Europe came and went. Women’s suffrage was achieved in the United States. The Women’s Club Movement opened for the middle-class an avenue of “liberty, breadth, and unity.”<sup>227</sup> And a gradual equalization process

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<sup>225</sup> Rabb’s column was an example of “the growing interest on the part of the reading public in Indiana history” that was “strikingly illustrated by the space now devoted to this subject by the leading newspapers of the state.” “Historical News,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 18, no. 1 (March 1922), 117. In 1916 Rabb authored a centennial pageant for her native Indiana county, “The Pageant of Spencer County,” In 1920 she authored a historical novel “cleverly disguised as a journal written by Mr. John Parsons of Petersburg, Virginia,” which was edited by Rabb, entitled *A Tour through Indiana in 1840*. “Kate Milner Rabb,” *Our Land, Our Literature*, <http://landandlit.iweb.bsu.edu/Literature/Authors/rabbkm.html> (accessed December 21, 2015).

<sup>226</sup> *Proceedings of [the First Indiana] State History Conference*, (May 1920), 5 and 11. This was the stated purpose of the conference—the first conference of its kind in Indiana—inspired by the state centennial celebrations (1916) and first state agency dedicated to historical purposes, the Indiana Historical Commission (later changed to Indiana Historical Bureau). Rabb, of Indianapolis, presented on “Historic Shrines in Indiana.” See *ibid.*, 62-63. “The Indiana Historical Commission was created in 1915 to plan the centennial celebration of Indiana statehood in 1916. The Indiana Historical Bureau evolved from the Indiana Historical Commission (in 1925).” Indiana Historical Bureau, “History of the Bureau,” accessed June 18, 2017, <http://www.in.gov/history/4025.htm>.

<sup>227</sup> Sarah S. Platt Decker, “The Meaning of the Woman’s Club Movement,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28, *Woman’s Work and Organizations* (September 1906), 199. Locally, Mary E. Caldwell, in 1921, was the first woman in Indiana appointed to a county office—deputy recorder of Henry County. In 1922, she was elected county recorder and served for more than a decade behind what the newspaper characterized as strong turnouts of new women voters in Henry County. See “Woman is Named County Recorder,” *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1921, p.1, c.8. See also “Henry County Historical Society Honors Mary E. Caldwell, Curator,” *Knightstown Banner*, November 24, 1977. Caldwell later served as HCHS curator from 1965 to 1977.

between men and women within the HCHS continued, aided by leaders like Margaret Wood, Mattie Charles, Huldah Parker, and many others who were active in the work of the Society. After the death of Mattie Charles in 1923, five more women served in the office of HCHS president before 1950. Four were Quakers who lived in the southern half of the county.

### **African Americans and the Henry County Historical Society**

Unlike the significant gains women made within the HCHS during the organization's first-half century of existence, black residents played a far less prominent role in the proceedings of the Society. Traditionally, African Americans were excluded from membership in historical societies in the United States, if not in actual policy, then in practice.<sup>228</sup> Few blacks were known members of the HCHS, but exclusion did not seem to be the only obstacle to membership. African American residents of Henry County have never exceeded three percent of the total population.<sup>229</sup> Heller's research

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During most of 1921, Jean (Elliott) Barnard—daughter of William H. Elliott, former president of the HCHS—served as manager of the *New Castle Courier*. Jean attended and reported on some HCHS meetings for the *Courier*.

<sup>228</sup> No direct mention is made in twentieth-century scholarly accounts of the early historical society movement in the U.S. concerning the exclusion of African Americans. However, other exclusionary practices were a common topic of discussion throughout works by Dunlap, Whitehill, and H. G. Jones, as groups of white male elites often limited membership to their own class, race, and sex. Mitchell A. Kachun addressed the history and role of African Americans in the study and practice of local history in the U.S. and their exclusion in popular white-authored histories. Separate historical organizations, like the Negro Historical Society (Philadelphia, 1897) and New York's Negro Society for Historical Research (1911), offered segregated alternatives for blacks in some of America's larger cities. See Mitchell A. Kachun, "African American History," in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed., 4-5.

<sup>229</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1036. In 1880, Henry County's total population was 24,016, of which 684 were blacks (three percent). This was the highest total black population from 1830 to 1900. Dr. Herbert L. Heller harvested the United States Census data for his doctoral dissertation and wrote a series of newspaper articles in 1975 and 1976 that detailed the presence of African Americans in Henry County. See Herbert L. Heller, "Negro Education in Indiana from 1816 to 1869" (Ed.D. diss., Indiana University, 1951); and Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 34-40. For Heller's research material collected while a student at Indiana University, see Heller, Herbert L. (Herbert Lynn), 1908-1983, 7 Boxes, Library of Congress.

during the 1960s and 1970s revealed that in the mid-nineteenth century, the “geographic distribution” of blacks in Henry County showed the “influence of sympathetic and supportive Quakers, and proximity of the National Road, [as] major factors that caused many Negroes to settle primarily in the southern and southwestern townships of the county.”<sup>230</sup> Only after 1900—as modern industry developed in New Castle—did the majority of blacks in Henry County settle at the county seat.<sup>231</sup>

Six African Americans—all men—are mentioned by name in the proceedings of the HCHS between 1887 and 1950. The earliest such individuals were members of the Trail family. William Trail, Sr. (1784–1858)—an escaped slave born in Maryland—was the head of a small pioneer settlement sometimes called Trail’s Grove. Trail, Sr., his wife and three eldest sons (all born in Fayette County, Indiana), migrated to Greensboro

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In 2013, blacks made up less than three percent of Henry County’s total population; see *United States Census Bureau*, “State and County Quick Facts, Henry County, Indiana,” accessed June 26, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/18065.html>.

<sup>230</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 39, previously printed in *Courier-Times*, November 20, 1975. Intense racism and the systematic attempts to “keep the small Negro population in an inferior position and to prevent the settlement of Negroes from the slave states” in Indiana generally restricted black individuals from obtaining educations and any type of admittance to cultural organizations like historical societies. Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 14. Hamm explained that blacks in Henry County before the Civil War “had to face the fact that they were still deprived of virtually all rights by law” and that in 1851 three-fourths of “Henry County’s voters had approved a section of the new [state] constitution [Article Thirteen] that forbade black settlement in the state and established a fund to deport those who were already there.” Hamm, “Henry County’s Three Migrations,” 6.

<sup>231</sup> At least a few of the HCHS leaders had black servants and black boarders during the first decades of the twentieth century. See, e.g., 1910 United States Census, s.v. “William H. Elliott,” New Castle Ward 4, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*; and 1920 United States Census, s.v. “Albert Ogborn,” New Castle Ward 6, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. The proceedings revealed no black HCHS members after 1917. Society members tended to hail from families with deep ties to East Central Indiana and not from the newly arrived working-class families migrating to the area after 1900. The majority of these families were from the poverty-stricken counties of central and southeast Kentucky. Hamm posits, the established families wished for economic prosperity but had a desire to preserve their old way of life against the questionable character of the newcomers. New Castle’s industrialists and business owners “were very clear on this subject. ‘New Castle does not want any ignorant population of any race to come in to search for work. It needs law-abiding, peaceable, intelligent people...the same as it has now.’ And it knew where to find these people; among the ‘rich, productive and profitable farms of Henry County.’ It was they who would save New Castle from being overrun by ‘Foreign offscourings’ with ‘unpronounceable names’ as was happening in so many other factory towns.” Hamm, “Henry County’s Three Migrations,” no page numbers [10].

Township, Henry County, in early 1833.<sup>232</sup> By 1842, four more children (all sons) were added to the family.<sup>233</sup>

The Trail family were Baptists but relocated to the same area as two early Henry County Quaker meetings—Duck Creek and Clear Spring.<sup>234</sup> Quaker communities were often more tolerant concerning racial issues, but, in Henry County, no blacks were known to be Friends members and very few were allowed to attend the local Quaker-run schools before the Civil War.<sup>235</sup> According to Hamm, this practice was consistent with Friends communities throughout the United States.<sup>236</sup> Several of the elder Trail children

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<sup>232</sup> William Trail [Jr.], “The Story of a Slave in Indiana,” *Indianian* (April 1899), 261. See also Charles Hubbard and Georgia Cravey, “The Trials of William Trail: An African American Pursues Freedom on the Indiana Frontier,” *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 40-45.

<sup>233</sup> 1850 United States Census, s.v. “William Trail,” Greensboro, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>234</sup> Duck Creek Meeting, in the village of Greensboro, was established in 1823. Clear Spring Meeting, established in 1832, was located a few miles north of Greensboro. Both meetings split in 1843 to form separate anti-slavery meetings, which were led by a number of radical abolitionists. Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 23-25 and 30-31. A number of families from these meetings were well represented in the early historical organizations of the county.

<sup>235</sup> Daniel Newby, in his ‘memoranda’ of the Quaker community of Rich Square, recounts the attendance of a few African Americans who lived in Franklin Township to Rich Square Friends meetings in the 1840s and 1850s. But no evidence of membership or school attendance has been found. Newby, “Memoranda of Old Richsquare,” in *Henry County Historicalog* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1998), ed., Thomas D. Hamm, 14-16. William Trail, Jr. (1830–1914) reportedly attended a neighborhood school in the late 1830s or 1840s, but only for one month. *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County*, 391. Elwood Pleas, editor of the *New Castle Courier*, reported that “a young ‘freedman’” brought to the county by an army officer in about 1863, received eight months education at Rich Square Academy in 1866. See Heller, “Negroes Grateful for Education,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 123 (quoted from *New Castle Courier*, August 2, 1866). [Heller’s article was printed in the *Courier-Times*, December 14, 1976]. The young student, Richard Lamb, wrote a letter “To Teachers and Classmates” that was printed in its entirety by Pleas. In the letter Lamb thanks his teachers, “Mollie A. Wickersham” (probably Mary Annis Wickersham, born 1841, member of Rich Square Meeting, and close relation to Jethro Wickersham and Huldah (Wickersham) Parker) and Debi Starr “for the kindness and respect” they showed him. “They did not say is your face white? or is it black? but come in and we will aid you all we can... under the golden rule and be governed by it.” See also Thomas T. Newby, “Schools” and “Colored Pioneers,” in “Reminiscences” (Carthage, IN: unknown, 1916), HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers. Thomas T. Newby (1834–1919), a member of Walnut Ridge Monthly Meeting—located in northern Rush County about eleven miles southwest of Spiceland, which drew a number of Henry County residents—reported that some black children attended the Friends subscription school at Carthage where Newby was educated in the 1840s. Beech Grove—a small black settlement near Carthage—also had a school as blacks were prohibited from attending public schools before the 1860s.

<sup>236</sup> Hamm, *Quakers in America*, 170-171. On membership: “Even as Friends concluded that slavery was wrong, they were slow to embrace black people as full members of the Society of Friends.” On schools: “While many Friends” in nineteenth-century America “were supportive of and taught in black schools, they usually did not admit blacks to their schools of white children.” Thomas T. Newby reported the

attended the Quaker assisted Union Literary Institute in neighboring Randolph County.<sup>237</sup> On their return to Henry County, a school was started in the Trail settlement for the younger siblings and other black children living in the area.

William Trail, Jr. (1830–1914) and his brothers, Archibald (1826–1903) and Barzillai (often misspelled Barzilla) (1835–1917) were the first documented black participants in the proceedings of the HCHS: and William, Jr. the only known African American to hold elected office.<sup>238</sup> William, Jr. was elected vice-president at the annual spring meeting in 1899—the same meeting at which the article he authored, “The Story of a Slave in Indiana,” detailing his father’s escape from slavery, was read before the Society.<sup>239</sup> All three Trail brother were present “seated facing the audience during the reading of the paper by A. [Albert] W. Saint”—a member of the HCHS executive committee, Civil War veteran, and Quaker member.<sup>240</sup>

William, Jr., the most active and probably the best educated of the surviving Trail brothers, was reelected to the same office the following year.<sup>241</sup> At the 1902 spring

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name of one black man “who belonged to the Society of Friends there [Walnut Ridge Meetinghouse, Carthage, Rush County], and often spoke in meeting.” Thomas T. Newby, “Colored Pioneers,” in “Reminiscences,” no page numbers.

<sup>237</sup> *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County*, 391.

“The Union Literary Institute (ULI) founded in 1845 is the first known institution in Indiana to promote education in an integrated, classless, and residential environment...Randolph County was the home of three African American rural communities (Cabin Creek, Greenville, and Snow Hill) before the Civil War...Many blacks also lived near Quaker strongholds in New Garden and Newport (now Fountain City) in Wayne County—located to the south of Randolph County, Indiana. Quakers and African Americans established the school. The first meeting of the Board of Managers was held at the Newport Friends Meeting House on September 4, 1845.” Union Literary Institute Recording Secretary’s Book, 1845-1890, Indiana Historical Society, Collections Guide, 2.

<sup>238</sup> The unusual name *Barzillai* is a biblical name from the Old Testament meaning “made of iron or strong.” Barzillai was “a wealthy Gileadite of Rogelim,” numbered among the friends of King David in 2 Samuel. 17:27-29; 19:31-40; 1 Kings 2:7. “All the Men of the Bible,” Bible Gateway, accessed June 29, 2015, <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-men-bible/Barzillai>.

<sup>239</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 61 and 63.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 63. The Saint family were Friends involved in the antislavery movement in Henry County. See Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 54-55.

<sup>241</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 65.



meeting, which included the special ceremonies to dedicate the General Grose home as the new historical building, William, Jr. was appointed to represent Greensboro Township on a committee directed to increase membership for the Society; and the organization publically welcomed the donation of large framed pictures of he, Barzillai, and “one of the Trail homestead near Kennard.”<sup>242</sup> Two years later, William, Jr. was even elected to the executive committee.<sup>243</sup> William, Jr. was again called upon, in 1905, to participate on a large committee organized on the motion of Benjamin Parker, but this time to aid in building the museum collection: “to collect old pictures, ancient relics, old fashioned things, generally all and everything which now has or may have historical value.”<sup>244</sup>

William, Jr.’s treatment within the HCHS, and, to some extent, within the county, was the exception to the rule as he and his brother Barzillai were counted among the valued and honored members of the Society. And when subject matter was presented before the Society of special interest to William, Jr., and his family, he did not shy away from commenting and sharing his views. At the spring meeting in 1903, a paper entitled “The Quakers and Anti-Slavery Movement,” written by Dr. M. H. Chappel, of Knightstown, was read before the Society. “Following the reading of the paper there were many interesting anecdotes recalled by” several members including “William Trail” as his father “felt a great interest in the antislavery cause and was conversant with

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 89; and “An Enjoyable Occasion,” *Daily Courier* [New Castle], April 28, 1902. Two images of the “Trail Cabin” are reproduced in “Some Henry County Abolitionists,” in Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, back pages not numbered.

<sup>243</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 106. It should be noted that this was the largest executive committee to date, seventeen total members. In the coming years this committee ballooned up to as large as twenty-two.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 128. Many other prominent members were appointed to this committee of ten women and sixteen men, including Mr. and Mrs. Thad Coffin, Arthur W. Osborn, Henry and Mattie Charles, Benjamin Parker, Eugene H. Bundy, Adolph Rogers, Albert Saint, Carrie Jeffery, and Loring A. Williams.

the workings of the underground railroad.”<sup>245</sup> In the minutes for the 1906 fall meeting, Society Secretary John Thornburgh made special note of the presence of several “old pioneers of Henry County” that included Founder Martin L. Bundy, eighty-nine, “and the venerable Colored friend William Trail, 76.”<sup>246</sup> Following the death of William, Jr., he was remembered as “a highly respected colored member of the society” by Albert W. Saint, and the Society requested that Barzillai prepare a “sketch of his life to be read at the next meeting”—in the spring of 1915.<sup>247</sup> Barzillai died in 1917. But months before his death, he “presented a violin made by his brother Joseph Trail in 1858” to the growing museum collection at the thirtieth annual fall meeting in 1916.<sup>248</sup>

The uncommon respect afforded the Trail family by the HCHS members was, at least in part, influenced by Trail, Sr.’s financial success as a farmer and laborer. He owned one hundred and sixty acres of good farmland and died with a savings of more than five thousand dollars.<sup>249</sup> His son, William, Jr., and grandson, Isaac N. were also stockholders in the First State Bank of Shirley, Greensboro Township—financial achievements rarely attained by other blacks at this time in Henry County.<sup>250</sup> Trail, Sr. “is one of the few black residents of Henry County before the Civil War of whom we have a definite knowledge.”<sup>251</sup> His trials experienced during his daring escape to

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 105; and William Trail [Jr.], “The Story of a Slave in Indiana,” 262.

<sup>246</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 19.

<sup>247</sup> HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 40-41. See also “Annual Meeting Held Thursday” and Henry County Historical Society Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting program, in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 121.

<sup>248</sup> HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 63. Joseph (1833–1868) was the fourth Trail brother. Sympathies were extended to Barzillai’s family at the spring meeting in 1917. Ibid., 67.

<sup>249</sup> *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County*, 391. According to Heller’s research based upon the 1850 U.S. Census, only eleven of the 148 black males over twenty-one owned property. Herbert L. Heller, “Historic Henry County: Negro Population 1830 to 1860 Revealed,” *New Castle Courier-Times*, November 13, 1975.

<sup>250</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1088.

<sup>251</sup> Hamm, *Antislavery Movement in Henry County*, 56.

freedom and often difficult life in Indiana are well documented in the article, “The Story of a Slave in Indiana,” published in the *Indianian* and *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County*—the only black family in Henry County documented in the county’s early local histories.

The military service and level of education achieved by the Trail brothers also likely aided their elevated status in Henry County’s white dominated society.<sup>252</sup>

Activities related to Civil War commemoration in Indiana reached its peak between 1890 and 1910. Four of the seven Trail brothers served in the United States Colored Troops (USCT) during the latter portion of the Civil War.<sup>253</sup> Benjamin (1841–1864) was appointed sergeant major of the 28th USCT, which “entailed his handling much of the correspondence and paper work for the officers of the regiment.”<sup>254</sup> He was killed at the battle known as "The Crater" at Petersburg, Virginia, on July 30, 1864.<sup>255</sup> William, Jr. served as a private in Company I., 28th, USCT, and was a member of the Grand Army

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<sup>252</sup> William, Jr. displayed his level of education by the published story of his father. Benjamin, the youngest of the Trail children, was elevated to the rank of sergeant major during the Civil War. His surviving letters and known responsibilities of rank evidenced his educational achievements. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 282-284.

Daniel Newby offered several stories of black residents in Henry County that reveal the prejudices and paternalistic attitudes that existed even in the Friends community of Rich Square. These stories seem consistent with fragmented stories from other Friends communities in Henry County during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Newby, “Memoranda of Old Richsquare,” 14-16. The Modlin family, a black family from Ogden, Spiceland Township, sent three soldiers to the war. But the four Trail brothers were the most from one black Henry County family. See *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, 565-566.

<sup>253</sup> David was drafted. The other three Trail brothers enlisted. A number of extant letters from the Trail brothers during the Civil War reveal interesting details concerning the family and military life for black soldiers during the Civil War. See *William Trail, Jr. Letter, 1865*, Collection # SC 2883, Indiana Historical Society; Benjamin Trail Correspondence, 1863–1866, 80.2411.1 through 80.2411.11, Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, Lincoln Memorial University; and Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 282-287. See also William Robert Forstchen, “The 28th United States Colored Troops: Indiana’s African-Americans go to war, 1863-1865” (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1994), 53.

<sup>254</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 282.

<sup>255</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 749.

of the Republic (GAR) in Henry County.<sup>256</sup> He not only belonged to the Harmon Rayl Post No. 360, GAR, Spiceland, but was a regular attendee at the Henry County Association of Veterans of the Civil War, which held for its purposes “recruiting and strengthening the Grand Army” and a strong social aspect, “getting better acquainted...and keeping in closer touch” with the members of other posts in the county.<sup>257</sup> James (1829–1865) and David Trail (1838–1869) also served as privates in the USCT, Company C., 28th and Company F., 14th, respectively.<sup>258</sup> James died at Corpus Christi, Texas, in September 1865.<sup>259</sup>

In 1900, the same year William Trail, Jr. was reelected as vice-president of the HCHS, another “story of slavery and liberation” was presented before the organization.

A New Castle newspaper reported:

The fact that Joseph Phillips Dean was to speak on ‘How Made a Slave and How Liberated,’ excited a great deal of interest, and when called upon ‘Joe’ responded promptly, and, in his own peculiar dialect, told with great enthusiasm his capture and release by the late [Captain] James Steele. ‘Joe’ did not read from a prepared manuscript, but in keen, simple words, spoke straight from the heart, waxing more and more eloquent as he rehearsed the frightful terrors of that disgraceful bondage which will ‘forever wail upon the pages of our history’ and leave a stain upon our record which the mingled tears of all the nations of the world can never efface. In speaking of his great love for Mr. Steele, ‘Joe’ overcome with emotion and with tearful eyes, ended his speech abruptly, not having at his command words adequate to express his grateful and boundless admiration for his gallant master, now deceased. ‘Joe’ is quite an orator, and the sudden termination of his discourse, which was heard with eager attention, only made the effect of it the more lasting and impressive.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, 565; and *ibid.*, vol. 2, 667. Ten other black veterans were also GAR members in Henry County. See *ibid.*, 632-667. Forty-two black soldiers served from Henry County. See *ibid.*, vol. 1, 565-566.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 667, 676, and 668.

<sup>258</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, 566 and 565.

<sup>259</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 749.

<sup>260</sup> “Historical Society: Best Meeting Yet Held,” Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 52.

Joseph Dean, seventy, was most probably not a member of the Society, but was afforded a certain amount of deference by the organization. “Uncle Joe” worked as a day laborer in New Castle and lived near the bicycle factory only blocks south of the General Grose home.<sup>261</sup> Joe, who lived to be nearly one hundred years of age, was one of the few African Americans included in the county’s late twentieth-century local histories. In the *New Castle: A Pictorial History*, published in 1992 with assistance from the HCHS, “Uncle Joe” was said to be the “Best known Black in Eastern Indiana” who local residents “marveled at [for] his wonderful singing voice, mellow and strong.”<sup>262</sup>

Topics concerning racial minorities were largely ignored by local historians in the United States until after the Civil Rights Movement when social historians began to bring these important histories to light. In Henry County, due to its strong Quaker presence and somewhat vague history of Underground Railroad activities, the stories of former slaves and the antislavery movement aroused much interest among members of the HCHS, especially during its early period. A number of related papers and biographical sketches were presented before the Society between 1898 and 1915 concerning Quaker efforts in the antislavery movement.<sup>263</sup> But these presentations rarely highlighted the efforts of the local black residents involved in such activities.

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<sup>261</sup> 1900 United States Census, s.v. “Joseph Dean,” Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>262</sup> Darrel Radford, *New Castle: A Pictorial History* (St. Louis, MO: G. Bradley Publishing, Inc., 1992), 34.

<sup>263</sup> See, e.g., “Growth of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in Henry County” presented by Adolph Rogers, May 10, 1898, HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 51; “The Quakers and Anti-Slavery Movement” authored by Dr. M. H. Chappel, April 25, 1903, *ibid.*, 104; “Growth of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in Greensboro Township” presented by Rufus Hinshaw, October 26, 1911, HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 155; and “History Hicksite Friends Church Greensboro” (commonly known as the hotbed of abolitionist activity in nineteenth-century Henry County) by Albert T Kendell, April 29, 1915, Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 121.

Two African American preachers also took part in HCHS proceedings during the first half of the twentieth century. Rev. William Heston, in 1902, played the African American in a historical pageant written by Benjamin Parker and performed by members of the local community as part of the dedication celebration of the General Grose home as the new historical building and museum.<sup>264</sup>

Rev. Heston's part in the 1902 historical pageant, as the "Afro-American"—portrayed as a little uncouth, unaccustomed to formality, but polite—displayed an interpretation of the social pecking order of Henry County's settlement period as he followed the "Youthful Soldier," "Pioneer Father," "Pioneer Mother," and even the "Indian" as each were asked by the "Muse of History," for what "high" and "noble purposes" shall the new historical building "be forever set apart?"<sup>265</sup> Heston, as a character type representing all African Americans from the county's pioneer era, replied, "The Black man has toiled with you and for you. His mother, wife and daughter have served yours. He has fought with you and your fathers, brothers and sons for Liberty and Law. Will you not give him and his people a little space in your History house?" The Muse of History answered, "Your people were among the pioneers and have been forces in the life and growth of the country. They pay taxes and this building, in part, belongs to them; as well as all other citizens, and it will have space for your story and the work of your hands."<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> "Annual Meeting and Dedication of Home of the Society," *Daily Courier*, April 16, 1902.

<sup>265</sup> Stage directions for "The Afro-American" were given: "Enter the Afro-American hastily, and without waiting to be introduced begins... [his opening remarks] I beg your pardon, Lady; but you have heard the Red Man; will you not also hear the Black one?"

<sup>266</sup> Henry County Historical Society Dedication, Saturday, April 26, 1902, booklet, in HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 82.

The pageant's dialogue clearly reveals the discrimination under which blacks suffered during Indiana's settlement period. But it is also remarkable, for the time, that women, Native Americans, and blacks were recognized as owning a piece and "honored" place (if limited) in the collective memory and historical narrative as interpreted by such proceedings under the control of a patriarchal white male dominated culture. Influences on Henry County's historical consciousness, the regional identity constructed during territorial period in the Old Northwest and Quakerism in East Central Indiana, are revealed in combination as was consistent with other local historical interpretations by the early members of the HCHS. It is interesting to contemplate what the Trail brothers thought of this representation of their race and dictated place in the county's history as they sat in the audience.

In April 1947, at the sixtieth anniversary of the HCHS, Rev. Irby D. Dorsey, of Wiley Methodist Church, New Castle, was the first black minister to offer the invocation at a HCHS meeting. Rev. Dorsey led in the singing of "America" and offered devotions with the theme "sowing good seed." Dorsey said, "We as a society should sow good seed by the keeping of history and continue to stand for the things that make good history, in the lives of coming generations."<sup>267</sup> He concluded the biblical devotional with prayer. A larger role for local ministers in Society meetings coincided with the approach of World War II as world events and spiritual matters intertwined and seemed to override concern for the local past.

Women and blacks in Indiana were reduced, by law, to second-class citizens without the civil rights afforded the white male residents. In Friends communities,

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<sup>267</sup> Henry County Historical Society Minute Book 5, 1940-1972, HCHS, Smith Library, 56.

blacks and, especially, women were elevated to a level rarely achieved in areas outside of a strong Quaker influence. The lower social status and restrictions, enforced through cultural norms, for women and blacks concerning education were not conducive to the development of a historical consciousness in these groups as pride in place, patriotism, and other similar factors played into such development. In the southern half of Henry County, where a strong Quaker heritage persisted, education was emphasized on a more equal basis, and traditions of recordkeeping and preservation were ingrained into the local culture and passed down through family and church heritage. Discriminatory practices for blacks and women were softened by the strong Quaker presence. An interest in the local past was cultivated in these groups earlier than most areas of Indiana. Such traditions were visible in Henry County's first historical organization—the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County.



## **Chapter Three: The Old Settlers' Society Movement, Local History Writing, and the American Centennial**

### **The Old Settlers' Society Movement**

Old settlers' associations and pioneer societies in Indiana began as little more than loosely organized annual meetings held to honor and perpetuate the memory of the early settlers. Only six Indiana counties are known to have held old settlers' meetings before the end of the Civil War, and half of those were the East Central Indiana counties of Wayne, Henry, and Randolph.<sup>1</sup> Many more pioneer societies were formed during the final decades of the century, with the movement reaching its peak in Indiana during the 1880s.<sup>2</sup>

In the tradition of religious camp meetings, the earliest old settlers' reunions were held in wooded groves on the outskirts of the county seat, or other significant town, due to the lack of facilities equipped to comfortably house large gatherings. Later meetings, found in county courthouses, city parks, and county fairgrounds, were often held in conjunction with other public commemorations, like Fourth of July celebrations or county fairs. Records of these events, sporadically kept, now exist primarily in the form of local newspaper accounts or later reminiscences. Commercial local histories,

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest meetings were held in the counties of Jefferson, Wayne, Carroll, Henry, Allen, and Randolph. Carroll County Old Settlers' Association (Delphi) claims to be the oldest continuous old settlers' society meeting in United States. "156th Old Settlers' Festival," Carroll County Historical Museum, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.carrollcountymuseum.org/OldSettlersCelebration.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Little has been written on the old settlers' society movement in Indiana, and records and accounts of individual organizations are widely spread. I compiled a partial list of old settlers' meetings —aided by newspaper accounts, websites, county histories, and meeting records—with a special emphasis on the earliest manifestations in Indiana. I feel my research was broad enough to paint an accurate picture of the movement in Indiana as it pertains to this thesis. I considered other states but only in a very cursory fashion. The Indiana Historical Society holds a number of old settlers' society records, but several are on microfilm only and cannot be found in online catalogue searches.

published after the American centennial, generally include brief, but valuable, sections dedicated to the proceedings of county pioneer associations. Many of these organizations were discontinued as the pioneer generation passed away, while others helped foment county historical societies.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid to late nineteenth century, celebrating and honoring early settlers became a popular form of public commemoration in many locations across the United States. This was especially true in the former frontier regions of the Midwest, the Great Plains, and the Pacific Northwest.<sup>4</sup> Ignited by the American centennial era, old settlers' societies were usually the first historical organization to be established in an area, sometimes as early as a few decades following a state's or county's official founding date.<sup>5</sup> Such organizations in Indiana were based predominately on oral traditions, although some kept historical collections, compiled pioneer family histories, and published newsletters, souvenir programs, and even local histories. In the first decade of the twentieth century, pioneer associations in Grant and Wabash counties even constructed log cabins where historical "relics and curios" from pioneer homesteads

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<sup>3</sup> Excellent examples of this latter phenomenon are the HCHS and the Grant County Historical Society, established in 1905. See Whitson, *Centennial History of Grant County*, 373-387.

<sup>4</sup> The Sons of the American Revolution (1889) and Daughters of the American Revolution (1890) were formed, as were other patriotic societies, in the latter part of the nineteenth century following the American centennial celebrations and were in many ways similar to the pioneer societies spoken of here. See NSSAR, "Origins of the SAR," accessed December 22, 2015, <https://www.sar.org/About/Origins>; and DAR, "DAR History," accessed December 22, 2015, <http://www.dar.org/national-society/about-dar/dar-history>. See also Frank H. Wood, "Cooperation of Historical and Patriotic Organizations," *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 11 (1912), 166-183.

<sup>5</sup> James E. Potter, "Local History in Nebraska" in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, eds. Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 395. Such cases are limited to states that developed in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, which coincided with the beginning of the pioneer society movement in older states, like Indiana and Ohio. Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," 548. In Indiana, a number of county pioneer organizations predate the founding the first state organization, the Pioneer Association of Indiana, organized in 1878. Society of Indiana Pioneers, organized in 1916 in connection with state's centennial, replaced the Pioneer Association of Indiana, and is still active at the present time.

were exhibited. Many visitors reportedly came to view these authentically built structures and their contents that were often opened to the public only on Sundays during the summer season.<sup>6</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, a typical old settlers' meeting in Henry County was an all-day event held at the fairgrounds on the edge of the county seat. It began in the morning around 10:00 a.m. and usually lasted until 3:00 p.m. Merchants and other proprietors were sometimes requested to close their places of business during these hours. Held in the late summer or early fall, the annual picnic usually coincided with the county fair.<sup>7</sup> Proceedings began, led by the chairman or president, with an opening address, followed by a prayer offered by a local minister, and then music from a local musical group, like the New Castle Cornet Band or the Greensboro Choir. Meeting organizers set aside time for stories and reminiscences from the pioneers. A time limit was often set for each individual storyteller or speaker, but this was ignored if the speaker was favored by the crowd. The pioneers were encouraged to bring historical relics to display during the day's activities with time reserved at the close of the day for viewing. Prizes, awarded for achievements like "oldest living pioneer" and "pioneer mother with the most living children," sometimes consisted of luxury items donated by local merchants (e.g., gold framed reading glasses, gold-handled canes and umbrellas, and sets of silver spoons).<sup>8</sup> The dinner hour, in the mode

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<sup>6</sup> Leola Hockett, "The Wabash Co. Pioneer Society," *Indiana Magazine of History* 29, no. 4 (December 1933), 287-296; and Whitson, *Centennial History of Grant County Indiana*, 373-387.

<sup>7</sup> All old settlers were admitted free to the county fair the day of the reunion. See "Old Settlers' Meetings," Box 2, Folder 6, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, no page numbers [p.3].

<sup>8</sup> An individual needed to have been born or migrated to Henry County before 1825 to qualify as an "old settler" for the 1871 meeting. According to Parker there were still many in the county that answered this qualification, but the meeting was also "made general to the public" and was "very largely attended by the people of the County without regard to age." "Old Settlers' Meetings," Box 2, Folder 6, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, no page numbers [p.1]. This qualification changed as the years progressed.

of an “old style picnic lunch,” was a time for socializing and reunions between elderly pioneers and their families. And, on at least two occasions, a local photographer was employed to take a group photograph of the seventy to eighty old settlers gathered together that day (younger family members and other attendees do not appear in the photographs).<sup>9</sup>



Figure A: Old Settlers' Association of Henry County group photograph taken in the fall of 1887 at the old New Castle fairgrounds by Eugene McDowell (1865–1939)— local photographer and, later, city engineer for New Castle and county surveyor. Eighty-seven members pictured. (From left to right: Gen. William Grose standing, third in front row; Martin L. Bundy, seated eighth in second row between two women wearing black bonnets). Henry County Historical Society Collection.

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<sup>9</sup> Henry County group photographs are available at the HCHS from 1887 (87 pioneers pictured) and 1890 (65 pioneers pictured). Old Settlers' Society Folder, HCHS, Smith Library. Photos were advertised through the *New Castle Courier*: “Don’t forget to secure a photo of the old settlers. You will never regret the cost. Only fifty cents.” *New Castle Courier*, October 14, 1887, p.5, c.3.

Such activities at Henry County old settlers' picnics always centered on the main oration.<sup>10</sup> The main speaker, either a prominent local figure or special guest, focused his address on the historical theme of progress. The ancillary themes of morality and religion were also regularly connected with the nineteenth-century interpretation of progress.<sup>11</sup> The speaker's remarks, tailored to flatter the old and excite admiration among the youths in the audience, exaggerated the hardships and accomplishments of the pioneer generation while, at the same time, ignoring all its faults and failures. The most entertaining speakers regaled the audience with humorous tales of "the days of coon skins, wildcats, and Indians" in attempts to educate and entertain. The orations rarely ended without reminding the young people in the audience (anyone under fifty) of the debt owed to the pioneers for the hardships they faced while establishing a "bulwark of liberty and the foundation from which all true progress springs."<sup>12</sup>

Although not specifically defined in words by the cultural leaders of Henry County, the concept of *progress* was central to the way local residents, and local historians of the time, interpreted the past. In 1850, William D. Gallagher, an important Western journalist and poet, in the annual discourse to the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio entitled *Facts and Conditions of the Progress in the North-West*

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<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth analysis of public commemorations in nineteenth-century America, see David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 11-40. Among Parker's manuscripts is a five page section on the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County written in 1905 while the organization was still active. For a partial list of speakers, see "Old Settlers' Meetings," Box 2, Folder 6, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, no page numbers [p.4].

<sup>11</sup> Such interpretations remained prominent during the early years of the HCHS. See, e.g., "Spirit of Eternal Progress" in *The Henry County, Indiana, Centennial Pageant* booklet, September 29, 1916, in Scrapbook 58, 125; and meeting resolutions that followed "Indiana and the Old Northwest," presented by Ross Lockridge, Jr. before the HCHS, October 27, 1938, HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 241.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin S. Parker, *Address of Hon. B. S. Parker at the Annual Meeting Old Settlers' Association of Henry County, at New Castle Indiana, September 18, 1885* (New Castle, IN: Courier Printing Company, 1885), Old Settlers' Society Folder, HCHS, Smith Library.

(commemorating the sixty-third anniversary of Ohio's settlement), defined progress as it was commonly understood by other Westerners born before the Civil War in places like Henry County. Captured in its original language, Gallagher's expansive definition of progress is essential to the understanding of historical and social thought in the Old Northwest during the nineteenth century.

Here, [progress] is used in its most comprehensive sense, as the equivalent of the term Human Civilization...[it is] presented as an unbroken chain of events and consequences, whose beginning is in the soul of man as he exists upon the earth, whose links are perfect to the Eternal Eye, though to the human vision their connection is often lost, whose different sections stretch from historic epoch to epoch, under the Supreme design and guidance binding together the whole and whose end is in the bosom of God.

But on less abstract terms, Civilization may be described as that part of human progress which takes man in his savage or his nomadic state,—that state which had its type in the Gothic hordes before the conquest of Rome, or that which is *represented now by the wild Indian tribes of the North-American Continent* [emphasis added]—and instructs his understanding, cultivated the affections of his heart, elevated his tastes and desires, improves his physical condition, until he is endowed with the arts generally of peace and the associated life: agriculture, commerce, trade, manufactures, science, painting, sculpture, music, literature and others of the more elegant and refining accomplishments of Society.<sup>13</sup>

Gallagher's definition included all the various chauvinistic elements—providential references, civilized man over savage man, peace over war, and culture over uncultured—that reappear throughout the oral and written traditions of the historical organizations in nineteenth-century Henry County. The basic philosophies of progress and human civilization formed the basis for a collective memory of origins that “played a conspicuous role in the construction of regional identity and historical consciousness”

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<sup>13</sup> William D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of the Progress in the North-West: being the Annual Discourse for 1850 before the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio: Delivered April 8, the Sixty-third Anniversary of the First Settlement of the State* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby and Company, 1850), 5-6.

that emerged through the historical movement in the Old Northwest between roughly 1820 and 1860.<sup>14</sup> As Barnhart noted, such “narratives no longer provide us with an acceptable version of the past, but they remain valuable sources of American intellectual and cultural history and address significant themes and problems in the historiography of the region.”<sup>15</sup> This regionalism constructed by Western writers like Gallagher before the Civil War, was carried forward and localized as the Old Northwest was populated and states like Indiana were divided into smaller counties.<sup>16</sup>

Addresses given at old settlers’ meetings in Henry County aided the further propagation of this collective memory about origins. Collective memory, as defined by David W. Blight, is “the ways in which groups, people, or nations remember, how they construct versions of the past and employ them for self-understanding and to win power and place in an ever-changing present.”<sup>17</sup> Speakers at old settlers’ reunions used the opportunity to expound on the uniqueness of their national and regional character “in terms of liberty, democracy, and individualism—values rooted in the American experience and also values that became central to Romantic [era] thinking.”<sup>18</sup> Speakers furthered these traditions of American historical thinking to reinforce the commonly held attitudes toward patriotism, and the concepts that Americans were a “chosen people” and America was a “haven from oppression,” a concept that “had flourished

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<sup>14</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 42.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Indiana’s ninety-two counties were established by 1844. Newton County was abolished, but later reestablished in 1859. For a complete list of Indiana counties with founding dates and other information. See National Association of Counties (NAOC), accessed August 6, 2015, <http://explorer.naco.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory & the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>18</sup> George H. Callcott, *History in the United States, 1800-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 14.

since Puritan times.”<sup>19</sup> And all these assumptions fell under the virtually undisputed philosophy of progress—“the underlying theme of human development.”<sup>20</sup>

The American Romantic era is generally set between 1800 and 1860 and roughly coincided with the settlement period and development of regionalism in the Old Northwest. Historians of this period, as opposed to the Enlightenment era that preceded it, believed “that passion was a more useful guide than observation and that men could reach beyond objective facts to intuitive truth.”<sup>21</sup> On the national scene, a new generation of historians began to gradually distance themselves from this way of doing history in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> Change came much slower among local historians in places like Henry County where they “found the theme of progress self-evident in the growth of struggling settlements” into prosperous towns and cities.<sup>23</sup> The concept of progress that dominated the Romantic era’s historical thinking remained a substantial part of the collective memory practiced first by the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County and then by the HCHS until at least 1910. The theme of progress continued to be central to the understanding and expressions of local history through the 1920s, but a definite shift had occurred after the pioneer generation passed away and the post-Civil War generation replaced them as the elders of the community.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 20 and 216.

<sup>22</sup> Henry County’s own Charles A. Beard was among this new generation of American historians, although Beard’s prominence was primarily limited to the first half of the twentieth century. See William Palmer, *From Gentleman’s Club to Professional Body: The Evolution of the History Department in the United States, 1940–1980* (Booksurge, 2008), 161. See also Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000), 111-112.

<sup>23</sup> Callcott, *History in the United States*, 162.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on historical thought during the Romantic period, see *ibid.*, Chapter VIII “Interpreting the Past,” 151-173. The “shift” in historical thinking is covered in the next section.



Benjamin S. Parker, in his 1885 oration, presented perhaps the most elegant example of the use of collective memory from among the many recorded addresses of the Old Settlers' Association in Henry County. It contains all the chauvinistic elements employed by Gallagher, which are unacceptable based on today's mores and cultural thought, yet at the time, were simply viewed as the essential characteristics of the Western pioneer. When describing the leading characteristics of the early settlers of the Old Northwest, Parker said:

Hatred of slavery, love of freedom, willingness to labor and to wait, an earnest yearning after knowledge and an abounding faith in the goodness and paternal care of God seems to me to have been the leading characteristics of the early settlers. ...You may go all over the continent...and no where will you find a body of people of higher average intelligence, of more uniform morality, or of more generous impulses than in these eastern counties of Indiana ... if you were to ask me to what cause I most attribute the good character of this favored section I should say without hesitancy, to the earnest and conscientious devotion to principle that characterized the early settlers. How could it be otherwise with men who when they came into the wilderness brought hearts full of love to God and their fellow beings, minds that reached out for knowledge and felt the need for education, and consciences that would not let them remain in slaveholding communities lest they should incur a portion of the reproach and sinfulness of holding a brother in bonds? These were far-seeing men who waited not to gain riches before they established schools and churches in the wilderness.<sup>25</sup>

Similar hyperbole in the memorializing of ancestors remained common in Henry County more than two decades into the existence of the HCHS and gradually faded only as the majority of the first generation native to the county had passed away. As we read such obvious exaggerations of the past, a number of questions naturally come to mind. Did not the living old settlers in the audience witness the supposed experiences described in the main orations? How could they be fooled into believing it as history?

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<sup>25</sup> Parker, *Address of Hon. B. S. Parker at the Annual Meeting Old Settlers' Association*, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers, [p.2].

Why not simply give a more accurate account of the past instead of myth making? Michael Kammen, helps answer these questions: “Societies...reconstruct their pasts instead of faithfully record them, and that they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind—manipulating the past in order to mold the present” into a usable collective memory.<sup>26</sup>

There were a number of practical motivations for furthering the pioneer mythology. History, much like it is today, was viewed by many as a form of entertainment. Local residents attended the meetings of historical organizations for the pleasure and enjoyment many received from listening to the stories of by-gone days, as well as the opportunity to interact socially and share their own stories and viewpoints. Many local historians undertook the role of teacher and felt an obligation to promote concepts and ideals that would inspire their audience. Historical figures, made beyond reproach and larger than life by the alterations of historical fact, were used as models for emulation. This was especially true in efforts to influence the youth of the time. Performing a civic duty was also a strong motivation for presenters of history. By reconstructing the past into something morally and socially positive, such individuals felt they were performing a service to society.

The reconstruction of history was also a useful tool to aid in justifying the present. As the local historians of the time were customarily from the professional class and the community’s elite, this function was very practical for controlling public opinion, maintaining social and economic stability, and for the retention of power. Amos Funkenstein added a significant point to the definition of collective memory that

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 3.

amplifies a central purpose of the old settlers' orations in Henry County when he wrote, "Nations [or any geographic location] are meant to remember their heroes 'forever;' to perpetuate the memory of a person means to embed it in the collective memory, which forgets only failures and sins."<sup>27</sup>

A significant example of using collective memory as a means of justification for a past wrong was the way the early settlers of Henry County used it to justify the means by which the territory was taken from the Indians. By making the early Anglo-American settlers above reproach and, likewise, lowering the American Indian tribes to the level of "savages" and "barbarians," the settlement story and the acquisition of the land was more easily justified.<sup>28</sup> The speakers at the Henry County old settlers' meetings, as was common elsewhere in Indiana, yearned for a past, and a present, they could take pride in. To admit that their ancestors had unfairly acquired the land and mistreated its rightful inhabitants would stain their honor and bring shame on their family and community.

Although the literature of the time described the first settlers in mythic terms, this should not diminish in any way their actual accomplishments and the historical significance of the westward movement. Mixed feelings concerning the controversial acquisition of the Indian lands and chauvinistic values of the time too often overshadow

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<sup>27</sup> Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," 5.

<sup>28</sup> This was done in a similar way in relation to nature and natural resources. Clearing the forests, which once covered most of Henry County, and exterminating wildlife, especially predators like wolves and bears, was the rule. Not until the first decade of the twentieth century, as erosion caused by the deforestation of the "hillsides...and unprotected lands" alerted some to this growing problem, did residents begin to voice concern and search for solutions. See examples of concerns about nature, natural resource, and the HCHS, Symposium on Forestry by the Natural History Study Club (assisted by other members of the HCHS) presented before the HCHS at the Twenty-Second Semi-Annual Meeting, October 29, 1908, in HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 62-63; Charles Fairbanks, "Forestry," presented before the HCHS at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting, April 27, 1911 (reprinted in full in the local newspapers), in HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 129-130; and Arbor Day exercises and tree plantings at the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting, April 30, 1908, HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 51-55 and Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 111.

the efforts of the common Westerner who, in most instances, offered no direct violence to the Indians and had no direct hand in stealing their land.<sup>29</sup> (It should also be noted that few whites objected to U.S. Indian policies that advocated conquest and removal, therefore making them in some way compliment.) Much violence occurred on both sides against the common people, usually perpetrated by leaders and a small percentage that make up the criminal element in any population.<sup>30</sup> Yet this does not excuse the fact that in the myth making, the faults and shortcomings of an entire generation were wiped clean. The negatives were replaced by descriptions of the settlers at their very best. Their very best was transformed into the norm and any negative characteristics were forgotten.

Myth-making was not always an unconscious process, and became characteristic of many nineteenth and early twentieth century histories written during the Romantic period. Benjamin S. Parker, a native of Henry County and regular speaker at old settlers' events, in a paper presented in 1892 before the HCHS, made light of the prevailing tradition of exaggeration used in historical writing that made a common man into a

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<sup>29</sup> James H. Madison, writing about his book, *Hoosiers: A New History of Indiana*, said that new and better scholarship about Indiana's pioneers make them more important than he once thought because it "makes them more human—real people with all the halos and warts." Madison "developed a new respect for the democracy pioneers created—a democracy they felt deeply in their bones and just as deeply restricted only to white men." James H. Madison, "Hoosiers, Why I Wrote a New History of Indiana," *Traces* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2014), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Surviving accounts of contact between the early white settlers and the remaining Indians in Henry County are nonviolent, and many display shared respect between the two cultures; although they are all authored by the "conquering" people. For accounts of contact between early white settlers and Indians, see Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present*, 134-138; and Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 15-19. This small percentage of violent frontiersmen was often on the front edge of migrating population. Frederick Bates, Secretary of the Louisiana Territory in 1807, wrote: "We have among us a set of men turbulent and ungovernable in their disposition, which I believe may be accounted for, from that spirit of enterprise and adventure which brought them first into the country." Although Bates was speaking of the territory further west of the Old Northwest, his assessment generally holds true for all early American frontiers. Thomas Maitland Marshall, *The Life and Papers of Frederick Bates*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1926), 241 and as quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Merriweather Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 447.

“demigod.”<sup>31</sup> Yet Parker, himself a local historian, did not break from the tradition. In an 1885 address given at the annual old settlers’ picnic (before referenced), he explained the reasoning behind this obvious reconstruction of the past.

Let no cynic say that the pioneers are praised too much while their faults are forgotten. It is by remembering and honoring virtue and forgetting the weaknesses and frailties of men that we make the examples of those who have gone before into golden milestones to mark the upward and onward march of progress.<sup>32</sup>

Similar myth-making began early in the nation's history. Following the American Revolution, a “powerful nationalistic push” by a small group of historians produced a mythology to “reconcile the Declaration of Independence, a revolutionary document successfully setting forth and sanctioning unsettling principles, with the hope of stability and permanence provided by the Constitution.”<sup>33</sup> By 1800 the Revolution no longer symbolized to “Americans the revolt of thirteen separate colonies against imperial injustice; instead, it was the birth struggle of a new republic and symbol of national unity. The victors, and thus interpreters, of the revolution were the “national historians who called for the erection of a granite monument and thereon carved its story.”<sup>34</sup> Myths were introduced into the popular culture of the time concerning iconic figures of the revolution—George Washington, Paul Revere, Patrick Henry (Henry County’s namesake), Benjamin Franklin, and many more; myths that in many cases persist in today's public history even though documented evidence has been presented by historians to contradict such stories.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin S. Parker, “Beginnings of History,” presented before the Fifth Annual Meeting of the HCHS, April 9, 1892, in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Parker, *Address of Hon. B. S. Parker at the Annual Meeting Old Settlers’ Association*, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers [p.6].

<sup>33</sup> Tucker, *Massachusetts Historical Society*, 3; and Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Diane F. Britton “Public History and Public Memory,” *Public Historian* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1997), 14.

A similar tradition of myth-making was carried forward by many cultural leaders and literary figures as new territories and states were opened for settlement and the people moved westward.<sup>36</sup> The new territories had little or no claim to the glorious history of the American Revolution, but new myths were constructed and disseminated concerning the settlement periods of each newly settled area. The Westerners who established the first historical organizations in the Old Northwest and who wrote the first historical narratives of the region were “in search of a usable past. . . . They created a narrative framework—a mythology about origins—that placed the organization and settlement of the region within the larger context of American history.”<sup>37</sup> Historians presented the “organization, settlement, and rapid development of the Old Northwest as a linear march of progress and liberty.”<sup>38</sup> Western writers used this cult surrounding the “Promethean accomplishments” of the pioneers as a way to compete with the already legendary heroes of the American Revolution with the purpose of elevating their developing region.<sup>39</sup>

The pioneer mythology followed very similar patterns to that of the earlier mythologies in America. This particular incarnation of filiopietism centered upon the early Anglo-American settlers to the region and served to justify the settlers' rights to the lands that once belonged to the American Indians. This justification was made by

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<sup>36</sup> This was not the only tradition of mythmaking in frontier America. Mythmaking took on many purposes and continued throughout the nineteenth century. A book concerning the Indian wars and settlement of the Great Plains says: “A young America craved heroes, and homegrown adventurers had fired the public imagination since the republic’s inception. Lewis and Clark...Zebulon Pike, and Daniel Boone were feted as demigods in their own lifetime.” Drury and Clavin, *The Heart of Everything That Is*, 97. Pioneer and frontier mythmaking continued throughout this period and took on a variety of forms for many purposes. For expanded commentary on mythmaking in America, see Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*.

<sup>37</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 51.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Barnhart, “Elegant and Useful Learning,” 10-13.

celebrating the moral, physical, and spiritual superiority of the settlers over “Nature and the savage men and savage beasts” that inhabited the region. The spirit of progress and civilization that thrived in nineteenth-century American culture trumped all other concerns. The creation of a pioneer mythology was an essential part of an interpretation of the past to not only justify the Anglo-American’s presence on the land, but served as a point of celebratory history which, through public theater, commemorations, memorials, written histories, and historical organizations easily became embodied as the collective memory in locations like Henry County.

### **Old Settler’s Meetings—Intermediary to the Henry County Historical Society**

The organization, and later reorganization, of a pioneer association in Henry County was a major steppingstone on the path to the founding and development of a county historical society. Although the oral tradition of preserving Henry County’s pioneer history, first practiced at Old Settlers’ picnics in 1857 and 1858, did not fulfill the basic mission set forth by the HCHS three decades later, it helped validate the presence of a strong popular interest and a historical consciousness that developed locally in the nineteenth century.

According to the *Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, the first meeting of a county old settlers’ society in Indiana took place in Jefferson County in the year 1852.<sup>40</sup> This event was followed in 1855 by similar meetings in Wayne and Carroll counties.<sup>41</sup> Henry County followed suit on August 13, 1857, with an old settlers’ society meeting

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<sup>40</sup> “First Old Settlers’ Meeting,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 3, no. 3 (September 1907), 116.

<sup>41</sup> “Old Settlers’ Meeting,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 2, no. 1 (March 1906), 28; and Carroll County Historical Museum, “156th Old Settlers’ Festival,” accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.carrollcountymuseum.org/OldSettlersCelebration.html>.

held at the Knightstown Springs with another meeting held at the same location the following year.<sup>42</sup> According to historian Herbert Heller, “the Civil War caused a lapse of these events during the 1860s” in Henry County.<sup>43</sup> After a twelve-year hiatus, a reorganized group of pioneers held a picnic in the fall of 1871, at the fairgrounds in New Castle to celebrate the county’s semicentennial.<sup>44</sup>

Such meetings of nineteenth-century old settlers’ societies in the United States generally followed a basic format and consisted of a number of celebratory traditions and activities. David Glassberg, in *American Historical Pageantry*, posits that organizers “had an intuitive sense of the appropriate ways to celebrate an important civic event—a sense developed from growing up attending Fourth of July celebrations year after year...with parades, speeches, picnics, band concerts, and fireworks.”<sup>45</sup> Glassberg’s assertion rings true concerning the organizers of Henry County’s old settlers’ society. A clear evolution of practices and traditions is visible in the history of old settlers’ picnics from pre-Civil War days and progressing through the reorganized version in the latter decades of the century. The same traditions—speeches, musical performances, and picnic-style lunches—were also carried forward in the events orchestrated by the HCHS. Certain rituals and traditions were mimicked by the historical society organizers, while others were altered or discarded altogether in order to meet a different mission and new role within the county. The historical society founders were sure to differentiate the HCHS from the Old Settlers’ Association even as they worked in close cooperation with that organization by sharing executive committees and many

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<sup>42</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 59 (quoted from *New Castle Courier*, August 20, 1857).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>44</sup> Boor, *History of Henry County, Indiana*, 253-59.

<sup>45</sup> Glassberg, *American Historical Pageants*, 9.



crossover members.<sup>46</sup> The hope was that elderly residents and their families would be drawn to the old settlers' meeting, while younger residents and students of history would participate in the historical society.

It is difficult to say with certainty when the final old settlers' meeting occurred. The Association continued to meet until at least 1908 having co-existed with the historical society for more than twenty years. Even before the two organizations shared the responsibility for preserving the history of Henry County, several significant steps in the eventual organization of HCHS need to be examined.

In 1867 in a public letter addressed to Elwood Pleas, editor of the *New Castle Courier*, Benjamin S. Parker attempted to garner public support for a local historical society. Parker bluntly stated that “for historical purposes they [the old settlers' meetings] have little or no value. ...The proceedings are recorded in the weekly newspaper which is glanced at and thrown away, while New Englanders preserve their stories in the finest binding.”<sup>47</sup> Parker's challenge was fierce and well-aimed. Local pride, honor, and sense of place were looked upon by most citizens in Henry County as precious and something to be protected at great cost. Such challenges were a tactic repeatedly utilized by cultural leaders of Henry County in the coming decades as they continued to rally public support for the HCHS. Only two old settlers' meetings had been held in Henry County up to this time; and Parker, thirty-four, was yet to become a participant. He was frustrated with the methods of the pre-war old settlers' reunions—in Henry and its neighboring counties to the east, Wayne and Randolph—and wished for

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<sup>46</sup> This separation of purposes was a common refrain and was expressed as late as 1938 by HCHS President Ralph Harvey in an address before the Society. See HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 215.

<sup>47</sup> “The Old Folks,” *New Castle Courier*, March 14, 1867.

an organization more permanent in nature to collect and preserve the area's history instead of the oral tradition practiced by the old settlers.

A local historical society did not immediately result from Parker's challenging letter, but the county's old settlers' society was soon reorganized in time to commemorate Henry County's semicentennial in 1871. Over the next two decades, the organization exhibited a pattern of continued development much changed from its pre-Civil War beginnings. After the 1871 successful reorganization, meetings continued throughout the decade.<sup>48</sup> The county also had an impressive showing at the second state convention of the Pioneer Association of Indiana in 1879 at the State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis. The Henry County group was organized by the president of its local organization, Judge Martin L. Bundy, who was instrumental in the founding of both early historical organizations in the county.<sup>49</sup>

The organization's progression was sidetracked at the start of the next decade by two years with no meetings, followed by an 1882 meeting of an "impromptu character" and a poorly planned meeting in 1883.<sup>50</sup> The Old Settlers' Association of Henry County, behind new leadership that included a number of charter members of the future HCHS, rebounded with a meeting in 1885 highlighted by a lengthy address given by Parker that was printed in a handsome souvenir booklet. The year 1885 marked the beginning of

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<sup>48</sup> Eight of the nine individuals responsible for the reorganization of the old settlers' society were Quaker or of Quaker families. For an account of the 1871 meeting, see "Old Settlers' Picnic," *New Castle Courier*, August 18, 1871 (reprinted in full in Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 323-329). See also Martin L. Bundy to editor, "Old Settlers' Meetings: Some Interesting Facts About the First Regularly Organized of the Henry County Old Settlers," *New Castle Courier*, September 27, 1889, 1.

<sup>49</sup> "The State Pioneer Association," *New Castle Courier*, September 19, 1879, 1. See also *The First Convention of the Pioneer Association of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Indiana Journal Company, 1878), "List of Applicants for Membership of Convention, 1878," 410-421.

<sup>50</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 15-19 and 37-39. Although poorly planned, Parker specifies the 1883 meeting as one that "stood out in the minds of the old people as 'a red-letter day' in the afternoon of their lives." "Old Settlers' Meetings," Box 2, Folder 6, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, no page numbers [p.4].

two decades of meetings highlighted by large crowds and impressive speakers. Many of the traditional ritual elements of the earlier meetings were later retained and a special oration remained the centerpiece, which reinforced valued traditions of the past interpreted in a fashion acceptable, and even exceedingly flattering, to the local audience.<sup>51</sup>

Interest in the Association peaked during the 1890s as the last remaining individuals who witnessed the settlement period neared the end of their lives. A number of prestigious figures were guests at the meetings during this decade that attracted even larger crowds of local residents.<sup>52</sup> In 1895, Congressman James Eli Watson of Rushville gave a few remarks to the “moveable feast” held at Shively Park, north of New Castle, which reportedly drew 5,000 attendees.<sup>53</sup> In 1899, the *New Castle Daily Press* account of the annual reunion announced the special guest appearances of Henry County native Charles A. Beard (1874–1948), “recently returned from Oxford, England” where he was making quite a name for himself at Oxford University, and contemporary Republican governor, James A. Mount.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Parker confirms this assertion that the meetings centered on the main orations. But he adds that the “social features, the leisurely picnic dinners, and the hour devoted to friendly conversation and the gathering in groups to listen to old-time stories of toil and adventure have been considered the best features.”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Parker offers a list of eight such speakers at old settlers’ meetings between 1895 and 1905.

<sup>53</sup> Joe Blossom, *New Castle Democrat*, August 9, 1895, p.9 c.3. During the early 1890s, it was decided to hold the annual meetings in various places around the Henry County. The meetings returned to the New Castle Fairgrounds in 1897.

<sup>54</sup> “Mr. Beard will Speak,” *New Castle Daily Press*, August 28, 1899, 1. According to Braeman, Beard “lived for approximately three years in England following his graduation from DePauw in the spring of 1898.” John Braeman, “Charles A. Beard: The English Experience,” *Journal of American Studies* 15, no. 2 (August 1981), 167. For more information on Beard’s early life in Indiana, see Clifton J. Phillips, “The Indiana Education of Charles A. Beard,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 55, no. 1 (March 1959), 1-15; Clifton J. Phillips, “Charles A. Beard’s Recollections of Henry County, Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 55, no. 1 (March 1959), 17-23; and John Braeman, “Charles A. Beard: The Formative Years in Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 78, no. 2 (June 1982), 93-127.

Charlie Beard (as he was called in his native Henry County), at the beginning of a prestigious career in the fields of history and political science, was already well known in central Indiana as newspaper editor and for his infectious public lectures while attending DePauw University at Greencastle.<sup>55</sup> Beard, born in Knightstown, Henry County, was perhaps the most influential American historian in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> He published hundreds of texts books, monographs, and interpretive studies in both history and political science “sufficient to fill the lifetimes of many men.”<sup>57</sup> Beard is best known for his influential but controversial book, *An Economic Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution* (1913), but also developed highly controversial theories on the American Civil War and America’s participation in both World Wars. Beard, who attended the Spiceland Academy, hailed from Quaker roots, and is the subject of a locally written work by Richard P. Ratcliff—longtime Henry County Historian.<sup>58</sup>

Beginning in 1886, the Old Settlers’ Association of Henry County operated with a nominating committee for the election of its officers, an executive committee, and a full slate of officers, which regularly included several women among its ranks.<sup>59</sup> During this time, the old settlers’ picnics were supplemented by biographical accounts of Henry County pioneers regularly featured on the front page of the *New Castle Courier*. A serialized front-page feature entitled “The Old Folks” appeared in 1890, documenting

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<sup>55</sup> Phillips, “Indiana Education of Charles A. Beard,” 7.

<sup>56</sup> Beard was president of the American Historical Association in 1933.

<sup>57</sup> Braeman, “Charles A. Beard: The English Experience,” 166.

<sup>58</sup> Richard P. Ratcliff, *Charles A. Beard, 1874–1948: A Native of Henry County, Indiana* (New Castle, Indiana: Community Printing Company, 1966).

<sup>59</sup> “Old Settlers: A Grand Outpouring of Young and Old People,” *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2.

the past lives of the county's early settlers along with likenesses drawn by the newspaper's staff.<sup>60</sup>

Popular interest and organizational matters were not the only significant advancements made by the Old Settlers' Association in the final decade of the nineteenth century. Some attention was paid to racial and gender issues as well. Pioneer women in the organization had always served in complementary roles—as members of various committees, lesser officers, musical performers, and volunteer or extemporaneous speakers.<sup>61</sup> But in 1894, Huldah (Wickersham) Parker—charter member of the HCHS, soon-to-be founder and first president of the Federation of Clubs in Henry County, and wife of Benjamin Parker—was the first woman placed on the formal program in a role previously reserved for men. Parker presented a paper during the afternoon session of the annual reunion in the timeslot immediately before the main speaker.<sup>62</sup> Three years later, Parker was appointed the honor, traditionally reserved for a local minister or other personage of position, of giving the annual meeting's welcoming address, which was responded to by the venerable Civil War veteran and respected Quaker educator, Colonel Milton Peden.<sup>63</sup>

Parker was a natural choice (although perhaps not a conscious decision by the leaders of the Old Settlers' Association) as the first woman to formally present at an old settlers' meeting. A birthright Quaker, she was a leader in issues not only concerned with women's rights, but in the improvement of her community. While still in her

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<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., "The Old Folks," *New Castle Courier*, May 22, 1891; and *ibid.*, May 19, 1893

<sup>61</sup> In 1886, the treasurer and one of the five-member executive committee were women. See "Old Settlers: A Grand Outpouring of Young and Old People," *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2.

<sup>62</sup> *The Evening News* [New Castle], July 26, 1894; and *New Castle Democrat*, August 10, 1894, p.4 c.7.

<sup>63</sup> "Old Settlers' Meeting," *New Castle Democrat*, July 30, 1897, p.1 c.5. The "response" was a regular formal practice following the opening address at old settlers' meetings in Henry County. General William Grose filled this role in 1894.

forties, she had gained a level of respect in Henry County uncommon for a woman at that time.

William Trail, Jr., the first African American to officially participate in a Henry County old settlers' meeting, also enjoyed an uncommon level of respect and acceptance in Henry County. Two years after Huldah Parker's breakthrough, Trail was selected to give the "address of welcome" at the 1896 annual meeting<sup>64</sup> Trail, from a well-respected pioneer family of Greensboro Township, served in the Civil War and was included in two Henry County histories written in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> In 1899, Trail was the first (and only) African American to be elected as an officer in the HCHS.<sup>66</sup>

### **Relationship between the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County and the HCHS**

The potential existed for a spirit of conflict and fruitless competition to arise between the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County and the newly formed HCHS after 1887. But this never materialized. For the HCHS's first two years, the groups held separate meetings in the early fall around county fair time. The idea arose to combine the groups. A joint meeting of the executive committees was called around the end of August 1889.

After other business was disposed of, the question of consolidating the groups was raised and discussed at length by the members of the joint executive committees.

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<sup>64</sup> *New Castle Democrat*, July 25, 1896, p.1, c.6.

<sup>65</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 391-392; and *Hazzard's History*, 565-566, 667, 676, 749, and 832. *Biographical Memoirs* also included a biographical sketch of Barzillai Trail, the younger brother of William on pages 592-596.

<sup>66</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 61 and 63.

The committees decided that the present arrangements of the two organizations, “with cooperative executive committees” and separate fall meetings, was the most practical and beneficial scenario. The committees’ rationale for such an approach was that the historical society was “not an old settlers’ society; that young people, scholars, students, and in fact, all who are interested in history and growth of the county are qualified for membership and [were] earnestly desired to become active members... while the idea that it is an old settlers’ society would repel them.” However, “many elderly people,” who qualified for membership in the old settlers’ society, enjoyed the picnics and reunions who would not otherwise “take interest in or attend the meetings” of the historical society.<sup>67</sup>

The agreed upon cooperation between the two historical organizations of Henry County demonstrated the ability of each group’s leadership to display an honest self-awareness of their mission, their separate roles within the community, and each group’s responsibility for preserving of the county’s history. The officers of the Old Settlers’ Association even agreed to urge their members at the next meeting “to prepare...sketches of their lives and toils, and reminiscences of early times” for the use of the HCHS.<sup>68</sup> Few Indiana counties were fortunate enough to have two viable historical organizations at such an early date.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> “Henry County Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, September 6, 1889. The point that the HCHS was not an old settlers’ association was often emphasized on the programs printed and distributed prior to the HCHS’s semiannual meetings during the first decade of the twentieth century. See meeting programs file at HCHS library.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> By comparing my lists of old settlers’ societies and county historical societies in Indiana, only the counties of Jefferson, Wayne, Henry, and Delaware had both types of historical organizations before 1900. The Jefferson County Historical Society evidenced little activity before 1917, although some local historians date its origin around mid-century. The Delaware County organizations were both founded in the 1890s. Wayne and Henry exhibited the most simultaneous activity for old settlers’ societies and historical societies (Wayne, 1854 and 1882; and Henry, 1857 and 1887, respectively).

Other evidence exists that suggests why a cordial, and even friendly, relationship developed instead of a negative one that may have been detrimental to both organizations and the preservation of Henry County's history. A number of local participants in the old settlers' meetings were also early members of the HCHS.<sup>70</sup> There is also a strong history of shared leadership between the two historical organizations; all four of the chief founder for the HCHS played significant roles as officers, speakers, and organizers for the Old Settlers' Association. Besides the 1867 letter by Parker, public comments from the two organizations appear respectful of the other organization's mission, membership, traditions, and role in the community. The old settlers seemed to understand the need for another historical organization open to all the county's residents and not just the "old folks." This is illustrated by old settlers' cooperation in filling out pioneer certificates, which helped document the county's settlement history in a form more permanent than oral reminiscences and accounts of their meetings printed in local newspapers.

The traditions and ceremonies practiced by the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County not only aided the propagation of a raw form of historical thinking and preservation, but, aided by the effects of the American Centennial Exposition, they raised the local level of historical consciousness. For the active crossover members, the Old Settlers' Association served as a testing ground or way to determine what methods

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<sup>70</sup> Of the thirty-two officers of the HCHS, elected from 1887 to 1889, eighteen (or fifty-six percent) participated in the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County. Unfortunately, the minutes and membership lists of old settlers, known to have been taken in the 1890s, are lost. "Officers" of the HCHS in this tabulation include nine trustees and thirteen vice-presidents (one from each township), in addition to president, secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary. A few individuals served in multiple offices but were counted only once. No membership list exists for the old settlers' and names were gleaned from newspaper and other accounts. Several more HCHS officers qualified for membership as "old settlers," but no evidence was found to confirm their connection. For lists of HCHS officers elected from 1887 to 1889, see HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 10, and 12-13.



and traditions were effective for achieving the historical society's mission of "preserving the county's history for present and future generations." Many of the historical society's charter members (individuals generally born before 1835) held a reverence for the pioneer generation evidenced in their speeches and writings.<sup>71</sup> This respect is also illustrated in their traditions of public commemoration and practices of preserving the past. But this same generation was also dedicated to the contemporary vision of progress and civilization that was also visible in these same traditions and practices.

The old settlers' society movement in Henry County helped set the stage for the early and successful organization of a local historical society. The relationship formed between the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County and the HCHS was mutually beneficial, but seemed to especially favor the success of the younger organization and was a significant link in the advancement and continued development of a historical consciousness in the county. The old settlers' reunions served as an ideal proving ground for the many crossover members as they prepared to launch the HCHS, and even after, as the group's struggles induced it to reach out for support to the older and more stable organization. The reunions were a vehicle for the continued practice of a collective memory about origins. And the nearly two decades of meetings previous to the 1887 founding of the HCHS fully demonstrated that an oral tradition (as practiced by the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County) was not sufficient for the proper collection, preservation, and dissemination of Henry County's history.

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<sup>71</sup> Parker, born in 1833, did not consider himself of the pioneer generation although those younger than he certainly did. To many residents born in the 1830s, their parents and grandparents were the true pioneers of Henry County.

## **Local History Writing in Henry County**

By the 1890s, few Henry County residents seemed to consider themselves *Westerners*. Rather, the Western tradition—developed in the Midwestern states during the antebellum period—remained popular only among a generation that had all but passed away by 1910. Yet, it was from the elderly or “pioneer” generation that the HCHS drew many of its early members. Because of this, a longing or nostalgia for the “good old pioneer days” was an ever-present part of HCHS proceedings. A general longing for the past was also a motivation stimulating local history writers, who were intimately connected with the historical organizations in Henry County.

A clear reflection of the historical consciousness in Henry County is also visible through the county’s local history writing. Available in a variety of formats, local histories not only preserved an interpretation of the local past, but, in conjunction with the old settlers’ and historical society meetings, aided in popularizing local history by its seemingly constant presence and availability. Local history writing also had the ability to reach groups and individuals who had little or no connection with the local historical organizations. And through the many local newspapers of the time, the proceedings of the historical organizations were regularly reprinted to broaden their outreach and include those unable to attend the meetings.

From roughly 1860 to 1910, the early local history writers in Henry County followed contemporary practices and traditions of local historians elsewhere in America. According to Carol Kammen, *American local histories*, “extolled and explained the uniqueness of the United States...described the local, promoted attachment to and often the enhancement of place...as they recounted tales of early settlers, the founding of

places, local industry, the creation of schools, governments, and churches.”<sup>72</sup> Local historians in Henry County “presented the organization, settlement, and rapid development” of the county and region, as did their Western predecessors, “as a linear march of progress and liberty.”<sup>73</sup> In the minds of these local historians, “Past events, present conditions, and future prospects formed a seamless web.”<sup>74</sup>

Local histories also popularized local history in Henry County. Some of the techniques used in these county histories—boosterism, ancestor worship, and myth making—are now considered dubious historical practices, and were even then called into question by contemporary historians at both the state and local levels.<sup>75</sup> Such methods fell out of favor with many in the academic world of the newly professionalized field of history following the American centennial, but were practiced for many more decades at the local level.

The first effort at writing a county history in Henry County, entitled *Henry County—Past & Present 1821–1871*, was compiled, authored, and published by future HCHS Founder Elwood Pleas. The proprietor of three local newspapers in the 1860s through the 1880s, the author also built a reputation as an accomplished man of science. The history written by Pleas—a small volume of only 148 pages—served its purpose as a record of the county’s first fifty years and added some prestige to Henry County’s moderately celebrated semicentennial in 1871.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 547.

<sup>73</sup> Barnhart, “Common Feeling,” 51.

<sup>74</sup> Barnhart, “Elegant and Useful Learning,” 17.

<sup>75</sup> See George S. Cottman, “History to Order,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 7, no. 1 (March 1911), 16-19; and Heller, “Herd Book History Published in 1884,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 68.

<sup>76</sup> The first “old settlers’ picnic” of the reorganized group was held in 1871 as “sort of a semi-centennial celebration” as the first land entries were made in the fall of 1821 and the act creating the county was signed December 31 of that year. Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 2. See also Boor, *History of Henry County*, 253-59.

A seasoned journalist practiced in writing history-related content for his local newspapers, Pleas had no formal training as a historian, yet he was no stranger to the possible advantages that could be gained by a smartly written county history.<sup>77</sup> And, to this end, Pleas incorporated historical narrative that was a commonplace example of boosterism in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Henry County. His techniques were reminiscent of the glowing oratory that would be made so familiar by speakers at the reorganized Henry County old settlers' meetings, reinstated that same year, and during the early period of the HCHS. "Many had come in prospecting as early as 1818 and 1819," Pleas wrote in the section on the first settlers; "By this means the fame of this magnificent region spread abroad. Its great fertility, its magnificent forests, fine streams, numerous springs, abundant game, and its perpetual dedication to the cause of human liberty, pointed it out to many in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ohio, as the **Eldorado** [emphasis in original] of the West."<sup>78</sup> In addition to other examples of boosterism, this initial history included sections containing reliable historical data, which was recycled by local historians in Henry County during the coming years.

*Boosterism*, used to promote the county and its history, was a common technique employed by local historians, that tied economic interests together with "historical consciousness and cultural aspirations into a vision of [present and] future greatness."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Pleas' history was bitterly criticized due to its incompleteness. The most vicious of these came from a competing editor of another New Castle newspaper. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 319-320. The history also received praise from other local historians like Benjamin S. Parker and George Hazzard. See "Elwood Pleas: The Man and his Labors. A Brief Sketch of a Busy Life," Box 2, Folder 12, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, 17; and *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1094.

<sup>78</sup> Pleas, *Henry County Past and Present*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Barnhart, "Elegant and Useful Learning," 17. For the practical purposes of boosterism during the early historical society movement, see Russo, *Keepers of Our Past*, 12.

Boosterism connected very closely with the contemporary vision of progress, which remained a dominant theme of local historical writing in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century America. Pride in place, together with the ambitions of rural communities to prosper and grow into centers of industry and commerce, were paramount for many residents who took an interest in local history in Henry County. Local history writers made unabashed claims of residing in the “best” location—whether that referenced a town, county, state, or country—as evidence of uniqueness to boost “their communities in the face of competition from other nearby growing towns or the lure of ‘elsewhere.’”<sup>80</sup> Unrealistic virtues of Christian morality and unparalleled heroism in military accomplishments were routinely added by overzealous writers to reinforce their claims. Forms of boosterism remained a common, if not prominent, feature of later local histories in Henry County throughout the next century, but is often less detectable than its application by Pleas and other authors of his time.

Before Pleas issued his 1871 history, the most significant sources of local historical information were the extant copies of local newspapers, official court records, and data from the 1857 wall map of Henry County.<sup>81</sup> Produced by a trio of local men, the large wall map was an accurate and detailed plat of the entire county. The borders surrounding the county plat are embellished with lithographs of several prominent local structures, enlarged plats of the sixteen local towns, as well as various township data and information about the county’s natural resources.<sup>82</sup> Thomas B. Redding, as co-editor of

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<sup>80</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 547.

<sup>81</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 75. The only two remaining originals of the 1857 wall map (pictured in Heller on page 76) are framed and hang in the library of the HCHS and on the first floor of the old Henry County Courthouse. Fortunately this valuable map was copied and reprinted by a local publisher in Knightstown and is sold in the bookstore of the HCHS in the form of a historical atlas. The original map was sold for \$5.00 per copy in 1857.

<sup>82</sup> See *1857 Atlas Henry County, Indiana* (Cincinnati: Harwood and Watson, 1857).

the *New Castle Courier* and one of the map's creators, handled much of the promotional and sales duties concerning the 1857 county map.<sup>83</sup> Such experience served Redding well later in life as he, like Pleas, was a future founder of the HCHS.

Later incarnations of Henry County historical atlases were published commercially in 1875 and 1893.<sup>84</sup> The latter, a combination county history and county atlas, was meticulously done and remains a valuable source of historical information. Feeding into the promotional element employed by local historians, historical atlases in Henry County always provided information about natural resources, land fertility, and land ownership. Plat maps and county atlases have long been an essential tool for local historians and aided in developing the ideas and practice of local history in Henry County at a time before such information was widely available.

Even more prevalent than the privately published county histories and county atlases issued during this period were the seemingly ubiquitous commercial local histories. Pejoratively called *mug books* or *herd books*, commercial histories became a popular method of documenting local history in the decades following the 1876 American Centennial Exposition.<sup>85</sup> Although questionable in content, these local histories played a significant role in popularizing local history in the geographic

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<sup>83</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 75. For an example of Redding's promotional efforts, see "The New Map of Henry County," *New Castle Courier*, January 10, 1856 (reprinted in Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 75). Heller also includes a detailed description of the map's features on page 77.

<sup>84</sup> Higgins Belden & Co., *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Henry County, Indiana* [Chicago: 1875] (Knightstown, IN, 1972) reprinted by Mayhill Publications. Rerick Brothers, *County of Henry*.

<sup>85</sup> For two criticisms of commercial histories, see Cottman, "History to Order;" and Heller, "Herd Book History Published in 1884," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 68. The term *mug book* is the more popular term of commercial histories and is so used due to many such books containing numerous lithographs or engravings of "prominent" local individuals. *Herd book* is a term employed by William H. Elliott, owner and editor of the *New Castle Courier* beginning in 1877 and secretary of HCHS and Old Settlers' Association of Henry County.

locations each covered.<sup>86</sup> As Carol Kammen explained, “Commercial publishers in Philadelphia, Syracuse, Chicago, and (later in the century) in San Francisco and elsewhere broadened the spectrum of those included in local history by offering anyone with a sum of money to have an engraved portrait included in the book.”<sup>87</sup>

Encyclopedic in appearance, commercial histories in Henry County, published in 1884 and 1902, included hundreds of short biographies of past and contemporary residents whose lives, in many cases, would have otherwise remained anonymous to the historical record.<sup>88</sup> The subjects, and their families, who, for “ten to twenty dollars” preordered a book in exchange for their inclusion in it, now felt a part of their local history and became more apt to support historical efforts at state and locals levels. The “biographical memoirs” that make up the bulk of these volumes are difficult to distinguish from each other due to the “stock virtues and honors” used in describing their subjects.<sup>89</sup> These much-maligned books remain invaluable to local historians “despite their lack of references and their disjointed narratives.”<sup>90</sup>

Newspapers were another noteworthy outlet for local history writers in Henry County. The major newspapers of Knightstown and New Castle in the nineteenth and

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<sup>86</sup> In January 1910, the HCHS executive committee authorized the purchase of a commercial history, “Young’s History of Wayne County,” (1879) for the Society’s library. See HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 91.

<sup>87</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 548.

<sup>88</sup> Boor, *History of Henry County*; and *Biographical Memoirs of Henry County*.

<sup>89</sup> Cottman, “History to Order,” 18-19. Cottman, who was very critical of the commercial histories in Indiana, said when describing a publisher of such a history that “He is skilled psychologist enough to know that what his patrons hunger and thirst for first of all is something flattering—something that will hypnotize a man into the belief that he is in the public eye, that will make him feel good while he is alive and look well after he is dead.”

<sup>90</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in the U.S.,” 299. Kammen labels them as “gold, as we who pan through them know.” Many obituaries printed in Henry County newspapers were copied from the two commercial histories. These histories were conveniently (for the publishers and later-day historians) spaced more than twenty years apart and generally cover two successive generations of county residents.

early twentieth centuries were largely owned and operated by strong supporters or active participants in the history-related activities of the county: its historical organizations and local history publications. *The Knightstown Banner* and *New Castle Courier* (now the *Courier-Times*) are the oldest surviving newspapers in Henry County. The *Banner* was primarily owned and operated by the Deem family from its origin in 1867 until well into the twentieth century. Thomas B. Deem ran the newspaper from 1877 until 1885.<sup>91</sup> Deem was president of HCHS from 1929 to 1931 and president emeritus from 1931 until his death in 1945.<sup>92</sup> Deem was also a prolific writer of local history pertaining especially to Wayne Township and Knightstown and presented numerous papers at HCHS meetings.<sup>93</sup>

The *Courier* began as the *Indiana Courier* in 1841. Numerous HCHS members took part in its operation over the years, not to mention a number of other area newspapers of shorter duration. Benjamin S. Parker, Elwood Pleas, Thomas B. Redding (all previously discussed as HCHS founders), John Thornburgh, and Adolph Rogers all took turns as editor of the *Courier* before 1877. William H. Elliott purchased the newspaper and edited the *Courier* and the *Daily Courier* for more than thirty-five years. Elliott was a charter member of the HCHS, its first secretary, and Society president in 1891. His son and partner, George A. Elliott, joined the newspaper in 1896. George served as president of the HCHS from 1922 to 1924, as well as mayor of New Castle for multiple terms around that same time.<sup>94</sup> Walter S. Chambers, Sr., HCHS trustee 1924 to

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<sup>91</sup> Hazzard, *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1090-1091. See also, *Biographical Memoirs*, 258-259.

<sup>92</sup> HCHS Minute Book 5, HCHS, Smith Library, 48.

<sup>93</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 112,135,139,148,172, and 184.

<sup>94</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 486-487.



1929, was owner/editor of the *New Castle Democrat* and *Daily Times*.<sup>95</sup> In 1930, he consolidated his operations with the *Courier* to form the *New Castle Courier-Times*—the current newspaper in New Castle.<sup>96</sup> Chambers was instrumental in the 1941 centennial editions of the *Courier-Times*—a series of editions that helped record and preserve much the county’s local history.<sup>97</sup>

Even prior to the founding the HCHS, brief county histories were printed in the *New Castle Courier* and *Knightstown Banner*.<sup>98</sup> Newspapers were the regular source of all types of news and general information. Newspaper companies also served their communities as local printers of not only newspapers and books, but programs for organizational meetings and other ephemera.<sup>99</sup>

Public opinion, so vital to the success of a local historical society, was strongly affected by the early leaders of the Society and historically minded individuals who served as editors and columnists for local newspapers. Five of the first nine HCHS presidents were editors of Henry County newspapers. Only one of these men controlled a newspaper outside the county seat. Newspapers in Middletown and Knightstown covered the activities of the HCHS but not to near the extent found in the newspapers of New Castle. John Thornburgh and Benjamin S. Parker, even when not directly involved in the operation of a local paper, wrote regular columns filled with history related

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<sup>95</sup> Walter S. Chambers, Sr. served five terms in the State Senate: 1915-1919, 1923-1927, and 1931-1943.

<sup>96</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 304.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 488-489.

<sup>98</sup> See, e.g., William Henry Beard, “Henry County: a brief history of the early settlement” *New Castle Courier*, February 26, 1876, 1 and 2. William Henry Harrison Beard’s (father of Charles A. Beard) *History of Henry County* occupied more than four full length columns of text, which recounted the territorial history and organization of the county.

<sup>99</sup> The Courier Company printed the 1887 booklets containing the HCHS Constitution and By-Laws and the programs for many of its meetings. It also published several local histories in book form.

content. Martin L. Bundy was also a regular contributor as were a number of other early members.<sup>100</sup>

Control of the local newspapers by the same men acting as officers of the new and often struggling county historical society offered many obvious advantages. The early editors and columnists promoted the organization's mission, shaped its role within the community, and garnered support for county funding; all of which served the continuity and longevity of the Society. Although active leaders of the HCHS no longer served as editors of any local newspaper after 1930, routine coverage of the organization's activities still existed.<sup>101</sup> This was aided by the work of the Society's first curator, Clarence H. Smith, who wrote a weekly column "Happenings of Other Days" for more than two decades that found a regular place on the front page of the *Courier-Times*.<sup>102</sup>

### **Military Histories in Henry County**

Military-related local history was another type of history writing that not only contributed to the making of Henry County's historical consciousness, but effected the preservation of local history in the state and the nation, especially pertaining to the Civil War. No other nineteenth-century American military involvement captured the imagination of local historians quite like the Civil War—"a war fought by citizen

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<sup>100</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 486-487.

<sup>101</sup> The HCHS often made a special effort to thank the local newspapers for publicizing the organization's meetings. A publicity committee was also appointed by the Society beginning in 1941. See HCHS Minute Book 5 (1940-1972), HCHS, Smith Library, 16.

<sup>102</sup> Smith's newspaper articles are bound and indexed in the HCHS library named in his honor in 1976. In later years, HCHS curators regularly wrote articles for the *Courier-Times*. Herbert L. Heller, like his uncle Clarence Smith, was a columnist for the *Courier-Times*. In the 1980s, Heller's column, "Historic Henry County," was collected and published in a three-volume set that is an invaluable source for local historians in the county.

armies.”<sup>103</sup> As stated in *Recording America’s Past*, “Men recruited in a certain locality were formed into regiments and generally remained together throughout the war.”<sup>104</sup> In this way, “every state, county, and town was represented by its male citizens in military units which served on the battlefield as extensions of the local communities.”<sup>105</sup>

Previous wars followed similar policies. But the sheer numbers recruited and drafted during the Civil War overwhelm any other comparisons. Henry County, like many other Indiana counties, sent thousands of young men off to fight.<sup>106</sup> Local recruits served in many different regiments, but only the 36th Indiana Volunteer Infantry is traditionally understood as distinctly representative of the Henry County.

The 36th, led by Colonel William Grose (later promoted to Major-General) and other field and line officers of local residence, always held a special place in the hearts and minds of Henry County’s people. And it was through the local regimental histories that Henry County’s communities shared “in the glory of the great national struggle.”<sup>107</sup> Such histories were not devoted to military tactics or battle plans but “were an extension of local history—local history gone to war.”<sup>108</sup>

Henry County received its news during the Civil War primarily via the local newspapers, correspondence, and by word-of-mouth from returning soldiers and other

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<sup>103</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 149.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>106</sup> According to *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion, Report of the Adjutant General*, Henry County contributed 2,147 men to the Union Army (roughly ten percent of the county’s 1860 population). William H. H. Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion, Report of the Adjutant General*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: A. H. Conner, State Printer, 1869), 244-245. Only twenty-eight of the ninety-two Indiana counties sent more than 2,000. The totals per county issued in this 1869 report may be lacking. The “grand total enrolled in the state” was reported at only 158,348. Most current counts exceed 200,000, or approximately two-thirds of its military-aged men in the state. See John M. Glen, Stephen E. Towne, Nancy K. Turner, Thomas E. Rodgers, and Sandra B. Taylor, “Indiana Archives: Indiana in the Civil War Era,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 92, no. 3 (September 1996), 254.

<sup>107</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 149.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

local persons involved in war-related activities. Other war-related newspaper stories appeared in the immediate postwar years—coverage of Memorial Day commemorations, public interest stories, and the obituaries of veterans—but the first locally published book-length account was not issued until two and a half decades after the war’s end. A regimental history of the 36th Indiana, written by General Grose, its undisputed leader in war time and peace time was published by the Courier Company Press, which also issued the *New Castle Courier* from its office at the county seat.<sup>109</sup>

As explained by David Van Tassel, “No matter how unmilitary and how like reminiscences these regimental histories seem, in order to write them the authors required access to official documents.”<sup>110</sup> Writers needed “accurate muster roles” and other pertinent information about the soldiers and their regiments, “for it was to the soldiers and their families that they hoped to sell their books.”<sup>111</sup> Indiana’s official eight-volume effort at documenting the state’s role in the Civil War was published in 1869, but federal records, held up in the War Department in Washington, were slower in coming. *The Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana* was useful to local authors, but told little about experiences in the field of Henry County veterans.<sup>112</sup> General Grose, in his preface, was obviously frustrated by the lack of an official account of the war by the

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<sup>109</sup> General William Grose, *The Story of the Marches, Battles and Incidents of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Indiana Volunteer Infantry* (New Castle, IN: Courier Company Press, 1891). William Grose, colonel and contemporary president of the regimental association of the 36th Indiana, in the final year of the war was promoted to brigadier general and brevetted major general. Following his death in 1900, Grose’s house in New Castle was purchased by the county and preserved as the HCHS Museum.

<sup>110</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 151.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion*, 8 vols. [averaging more than 700 pages each]. *The Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana* was the first time Indiana’s General Assembly ever allocated funds for the purpose of history. Although useful to Henry County’s local historians in the writing the county’s role in the war, its contents covered only that which occurred inside the state’s borders (e.g., Indiana’s Militia involved in Morgan’s Raid, military expenditures, state aid to servicemen and their families).

Federal Government, and commented that “abundant materials that are buried in the War Department at Washington are slowly becoming accessible to the enterprising student of history...but it is probable that the next century will come before the Records, upon the present limited plan for the public, can be completed.”<sup>113</sup> “The passion for material on local troops in the Civil War, and the pressure of local veterans’ organizations and regimental historians...to rescue and publish many documents of the war” may not have helped General Grose in his writing efforts in 1891.<sup>114</sup> But for opportunistic local historians like George Hazzard, they paid greater dividends.

In 1906, George Hazzard—Henry County native and member of Company C., 36th Indiana Infantry—compiled *Hazzard’s History of Henry County*, a substantial two-volume Henry County Civil War history that included a plethora of other locally relevant historical information.<sup>115</sup> The county’s entire military history up through the recent Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection was covered in more than 600 pages in volume one.<sup>116</sup> The history also contained an updated version of the county’s history in volume two that essentially combined what had previously been written by

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<sup>113</sup> Grose, *Story of the Marches*, preface.

<sup>114</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 151.

<sup>115</sup> Like General William Grose, Hazzard was an active member of the GAR post at New Castle, and frequent contributor at HCHS meetings. Hazzard left Henry County for the Pacific Northwest in 1883. In 1902, he returned to New Castle to compile a county history. Shortly after Hazzard’s history was published in 1906, he returned with his family to the Pacific Northwest. Benjamin S. Parker, John Thornburg, and Loring Bundy (son of Martin L. Bundy) were all acknowledged for being “most closely associated with the author...in the preparation and compiling of the History.” All three men were active in the HCHS during its early period and worked as editors of local newspapers. *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, 3.

<sup>116</sup> The first volume—the Military Edition—includes detailed lists of veterans of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 buried in Henry County; residents who attended military academies, and even the “postoffices [sic] and postmasters in Henry County from 1823-1905” (which is not military related). Hazzard also “borrowed” by permission several chapters from a 1902 Indiana history entitled *Civil War Times, 1861-5*, written by Daniel Wait Howe, superior court judge of Marion County and president of the Indiana Historical Society, who was himself described by Hazzard as a “gallant Union soldier.” *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 1, “Special Acknowledgements,” no page number.

other local historians with new and expanded sections not touched upon by his predecessors.<sup>117</sup> Ancestral histories and biographical data of prominent figures (occasionally taken directly from the earlier commercial histories) dominate large sections of each volume. Hazzard also spent extensive time and space on the history of Henry County's industries, courts, government, attorneys, banks, newspapers, townships, villages, and even included a brief founding history of the HCHS (the first local history to do so).

Hazzard's work is the most extensive history of Henry County and is much more complete in many ways than anything written before or since. The author considered his work to be a great service to his native county where so many of his family and friends are buried.<sup>118</sup> But the history is also marred by inaccuracies and Hazzard's exaggerated and extravagant praise of his subject matter. Every man is virtuous and successful. Every soldier is gallant and courageous. Every woman is a perfect help mate to her husband (as women are rarely mentioned outside the traditional roles of mother, wife, and daughter). Major omissions were made by Hazzard due to the utter absence of controversy as it related to the county's elite and military figures. When situations of a negative character could not be avoided, the author glossed over them by applying "stock virtues and honors" reminiscent of commercial publishers. As quoted in *Zen and the Art of Local History*, Dr. Philip Scarpino reiterated the point, "what we [as historians] don't tackle tells us much about ourselves, our prejudices, our cautions, our

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<sup>117</sup> Thomas D. Hamm, in a paper presented before the 100th HCHS Annual Meeting in 1987, said "Hazzard was content to rely on Pleas for other information and when that failed, to call on the memory of Judge Martin L. Bundy;" Hamm, "Henry County's Three Migrations," no page numbers.

<sup>118</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol. 1, 2. Thomas Hamm offered commentary contrary to Hazzard's claim: "Hazzard saw the project as a money-making venture, the latest in a life of money-making ventures that landed him in jail more than once. That was the case here." Hamm, "Henry County's Three Migrations," 5.

limitations—and about our own time.”<sup>119</sup> Scarpino’s statement is not only relevant in relation to Hazzard’s history, but to the efforts of other local authors in Henry County as well.

Numerous reasons may have caused the delay of the writing of Civil War-related histories in Henry County: the unavailability of official war records; heated controversies over the war’s outcome and Reconstruction; the lack of a strong organized veterans’ association; and, as with most extended and bloody wars, many residents simply wished to forget about war for a while. By around 1880, imbued with the patriotic spirit created by American Centennial Exposition, Civil War enthusiasts and war veterans began to organize. Between 1882 and 1885, six Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) posts were formed in various towns across Henry County. The activities of this organization renewed an urge to memorialize and pay tribute to the thousands of local men who served in the war, as did the natural progression of time. As the end of Reconstruction, as well as resolutions to other external factors, gradually brought the war and its veterans back into the limelight, Henry County residents became hungry for Civil War related stories and reminiscences, as were Americans in general. This popularity produced a market rife for regimental histories and county histories who recorded “civilian efforts during the war” and the up-to-date story of the county’s past that centered on the “Rebellion.”<sup>120</sup>

The two Civil War related local histories, by Grose and Hazzard, represent a changing trend that occurred in the historical consciousness of Henry County. This trend

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<sup>119</sup> Dr. Philip V. Scarpino, “The Things We Ignore,” in *Zen and the Art of Local History*, eds. Carol Kammen and Bob Beatty (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 242.

<sup>120</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America’s Past*, 158.

gained traction in the 1890s and, by the first decade of the next century, it became more evident in the subject matter that dominated much of the proceedings of the HCHS.<sup>121</sup> As the generation of early settlers passed away, reminiscences of the Civil War veterans and stories related to the war effort on the home front began to crowd out or fuse with the pioneers' story in the collective memory. The mythology remained basically the same, but the main characters and setting changed. The pioneer myth, always kept within easy reach, was dusted off and revisited at intervals, especially during centennial celebrations of the state (1916), county (1922), and county seat (1923). But now it was meshed with the story of the Civil War soldier.<sup>122</sup> Both character types were symbolically represented as overcoming their foes (Indians and Nature for the pioneer and the evil armies of the South for the soldier) by facing "toils, privations, and perils" in their mutual cause of freedom and democracy. But which one took center stage was dependent on the occasion, the audience, and the author of the remarks.

The dramatic increase in the popularity of Civil War-related activities is clearly visible throughout Indiana in the 1890s until about 1930, evidenced by the sharp increase in strength of the Department of Indiana GAR, increased number of regimental histories, and the increased frequency in the erection of Civil War monuments on

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<sup>121</sup> No papers pertaining to the Civil War were presented at the HCHS before 1891. Besides memorials to deceased veterans, only one such paper was given before 1900. Between 1902 and 1912, seven papers on Civil War related topics were given, as well many memorials to veterans. After 1920, attention quickly turned to marking the graves of Revolutionary War veterans buried in Henry County and issues related to the First World War.

This trend is not seen in states like Wisconsin that were organized after 1840 and had little claim to either the American Revolution or Civil War. Settlement history remained the main feature of the historical organizations and the popular collective memory. See Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*, 100, fn. 22.

<sup>122</sup> The 1902 historical pageant, written by Benjamin S. Parker as part of the dedicatory ceremonies of the HCHS Museum, features a soldier, a pioneer father, and a pioneer mother. See HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 82.



courthouse lawns, town squares, and in cemeteries.<sup>123</sup> In Henry County, the shift toward the Civil War during this period is evidenced in very similar ways. As mentioned before, six GAR posts were active (but only three by 1908), and New Castle was named as the host city of the Annual Encampment of the Department of Indiana GAR three different times.<sup>124</sup> The Henry County Association of Veterans of the Civil War formed in 1902. Frequent coverage of Civil War related stories in local newspapers, and the installation of the county's only Civil War monument in 1923 near the front steps of the courthouse also speaks to the county's ongoing fascination with the conflict. The shift was precipitated, at least in part, by local historians' call for the release and preservation of official war records held by the War Office in Washington, D. C. and by state governments. The veterans, as they grew older, worked harder to ensure that their contributions would be remembered. Numerous historical papers, patriotic in nature, were presented before Henry County's local veterans organizations by their members, who were, in many cases, active members in the HCHS.<sup>125</sup> Such papers were often

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<sup>123</sup> GAR reached its peak nationally in the early 1890s with over 400,000 members. Nicholas W. Sacco, "Kindling the Fires of Patriotism: The Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Indiana, 1866-1949" (master's thesis: Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2014), 2. Indianapolis hosted the national GAR encampment eight times between 1866 and 1949, "more than any other city in the nation," including the first and last encampments. Dan M. Mitchell, "Grand Army of the Republic (GAR)" in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, eds. David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 635. In Indiana, membership was 15,633 in 1908 but had dropped to 6,394 by 1922. *Journal of the Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Department of the Indiana Grand Army of the Republic* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1908), 122; and *Proceedings of the Forty-Third Annual Encampment of the Department of Indiana Grand Army of the Republic* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding, 1922), 52. The organization's auxiliary corps—the Women's Relief Corps, the Ladies of the GAR, the Sons of Union Veterans, and the Daughters of Veterans—aided in continued activity, but many veterans had passed away. For monuments, see Glory-June Greiff, "Indiana War Memorials Web Exhibit," SCULPTURAL CIVIL WAR MONUMENTS IN INDIANA, accessed August 7, 2015, [www.in.gov/iwm/files/indiana\\_sculpture.ppt](http://www.in.gov/iwm/files/indiana_sculpture.ppt).

<sup>124</sup> October 21-23, 1886; 42nd Annual on May 10-12, 1921; and 52nd Annual on June 8-11, 1931. The HCHS was highly involved in the latter two encampments.

<sup>125</sup> See, e.g., Dr. Thomas W. Gronendyke, "The Indiana Soldier," *New Castle Courier*, June 7, 1895, read before the George W. Lennard GAR Post at New Castle. Gronendyke was president of the HCHS from 1903-1904, treasure 1908-1912, and trustee 1917-1922.

published in the local newspapers, especially during the 1890s. And as the veterans passed away, many Civil War related objects and documents were donated to the museum, where their exhibition and availability helped further the cycle of interest.

### **Unpublished and Incomplete Works of Local History in Henry County and HCHS Proceedings**

In addition to the published local histories in Henry County, it is also important to briefly mention the unpublished and never completed efforts linked to the early local historical society. The most significant of these efforts is the pioneer history of Henry County that remains in manuscript form in the special collections department at the Indiana State Library. Drafted by Benjamin S. Parker—inaugural president of the Western Association of Writers and president of the HCHS from 1898 to 1899—the manuscript is made up of a number of sections on subject matter related to the natural, social, and cultural history of nineteenth-century Henry County.<sup>126</sup> Five articles from the section entitled “Pioneer Life,” published in the *Indiana Magazine of History* between

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<sup>126</sup> “History of Henry County,” Box 2, Folders 6-9, Benjamin S. Parker Papers. List of section titles: A Short Geological History of Henry County; Native Fruits and Nuts (shortened from Native Fruits, Plants, and Medicinal Herbs); Natural History of Henry County: Geological Formation, Hydrology; The Aborigines [sic] of Henry County; Henry County Forest Trees and Shrubs; Extinct or Partially Extinct Mammalian Animals, and Lost Birds of Henry County; Early Hunters and Trappers; Education in Henry County: First Efforts at Primary Schools; The Early Industries of Henry County; and Old Settlers’ Meetings. This list does not include the published portions of the proposed history found in the March 1907 issue of *Indiana Magazine of History*. Parker was compiling materials for this county history for some time before the first article was published in 1907. He presented a paper before the HCHS at the December 12, 1896, Semi-Annual Meeting entitled “Backwoods Code of Honor,” which made up a portion of the first article in the series. See HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 45-46.

1907 and 1911, were the only finished selections offered to the public before Parker's prolonged illness and eventual death cut short his work on the manuscript.<sup>127</sup>

The eventual goal of a nineteenth-century historical society was to write a definitive account of its area's history.<sup>128</sup> Almost immediately following the November 1887 founding of the HCHS, the organization's executive committee began this process by employing "a competent canvasser to solicit members and prepare historical sketches."<sup>129</sup> The Society's ambitious plan, carried forward by Nathan H. Ballenger—a Quaker minister of Spiceland and HCHS president from 1892 to 1893—was "to secure a reliable historical sketch of every early settler of Henry county" to be published in book form.<sup>130</sup> Great value, at least initially, was placed on this project signified by Ballenger's comment, "We could leave nothing to our posterity that would be so highly prized."<sup>131</sup> Although the book never materialized, some of these pioneer biographies were published in the *New Castle Courier*, and perhaps in other local newspapers of the day, during the next several years as tributes to the early settlers.

The HCHS proposed another late nineteenth-century effort to compile a county history, but this time as a compilation of papers written by Society members and presented at its semiannual meetings.<sup>132</sup> The Society's 1887 constitution divided the organization into four broad sections of study: Historical and Biographical, Educational,

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<sup>127</sup> The last years of Parker's life were closely followed by interested Hoosiers in newspapers across the state, including the *Indianapolis Star*. Parker died on March 14, 1911. His final article in the *Indiana Magazine of History* was published posthumously.

<sup>128</sup> Van Tassel, *Recording America's History*, 97.

<sup>129</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 11.

<sup>130</sup> "Historical Society and Old Settlers," *New Castle Courier*, August 3, 1888; and Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 97. The article is an account of a joint executive committee meeting of HCHS and Old Settlers' Association on Saturday, July 27, 1888. Nathan Ballenger was given the authority "to appoint assistants and secure necessary aid in the work in all the townships, as far as practicable."

<sup>131</sup> "Important," *New Castle Courier*, December 21, 1888.

<sup>132</sup> A similar idea was again discussed in 1915. A committee was appointed to investigate the viability of the idea. See HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 46.

Old Settlers, and Natural History. Classified beneath these headings, many of the papers presented were published in the *New Castle Courier* and collected for the Society's files. Although similar proceedings were used by other historical societies, not only in Indiana but elsewhere in the United States, the organizers claimed their plan to preserve local history as "somewhat new and unique" and not "after the usual manner of county historical societies."<sup>133</sup> The new and struggling Society wished to be viewed as a progressive institution by the public, and to set itself apart from other like-minded organizations in the state. Society officials naturally focused on the most popular attraction they had to offer—the prominent local speakers and the historical papers they presented.

This "somewhat new and unique" program put forward by the young organization appears more like a somewhat veiled attempt at covering the disappointing turnouts at the first few meetings. The newspaper account (clipped and pasted into the minute book) continued, "and of course, like all new movements of that character, [it] works its way slowly forward. ...But it is doing good [sic], the interest in it is growing, and the papers and other proceedings all have the stamp of merit." The writer concluded by saying, "Let us hope that hereafter more of our people will turn out and give encouragement and aid to a movement which deserves so much at their hands."<sup>134</sup>

Without a doubt, the papers were a popular attraction at HCHS meetings. According to Clarence H. Smith, HCHS curator from 1922 to 1952, "Many of the most brilliant papers read before the Society in its early days were by Elwood Pleas...and

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<sup>133</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 15.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. The writer, probably editor and HCHS secretary William H. Elliott, offers some explanation for less than hoped for attendance: "While the audience was not as large as it could have been it was made up of a class of citizens who take no backwards steps in any good work that they undertake"

Thomas B. Redding.”<sup>135</sup> Men of recognized scientific accomplishment, Pleas and Redding, not only served as organizers and charter members, but both contributed results from efforts of their ongoing research at the semiannual HCHS meetings. Between 1888 and 1894, Pleas (who specialized in the fields of biology and geology—the study and classification of fresh water mollusks of the ancient past and present) presented “six of the most important of his scientific papers” before the Society previous to his death in 1897.<sup>136</sup>

Thomas B. Redding, classified posthumously as “distinctly a Christian scientist,” specialized in the nascent field of microscopy in specific applications concerning agricultural, science, and religious theory.<sup>137</sup> Although paleontology was not his primary field of study, Redding regularly selected his topics from this field as it relates to Native American history in East Central Indiana. Redding presented a paper at the HCHS semiannual meeting in October 1889, entitled “The Prehistoric Earthworks of Henry County,” based on a careful archaeological survey he conducted of the Native American sites of Henry County.<sup>138</sup> Redding’s presentation, which was “accompanied by

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<sup>135</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 4-5. Smith was associated with the HCHS at least by 1910, but probably several years earlier. On page seven of his address, Smith claimed to have read his first paper before the Society in 1906, yet no record of this appears in the minutes or on the programs pertaining to this year.

<sup>136</sup> “Elwood Pleas: The Man and his Labors. A Brief Sketch of a Busy Life,” Box 2, Folder 12, Benjamin S. Parker Papers, 17. This was Parker’s handwritten draft of a memorial address entitled “Elwood Pleas: the Man & his Works” and presented before the HCHS on May 10, 1898 at the Twelfth Annual Meeting. The titles of Pleas’ papers includes “Natural Resources of Henry County,” “Molusca of Henry County,” “Some Prehistoric Animals of Henry County,” “Our Insects,” “Some Studies in Natural History,” and “Reason and Instinct: Do Lower Animals Think?”

<sup>137</sup> Heller, “Historic Henry County: T. B. Redding Eminent Scholar, Lawyer,” *New Castle Courier-Times*, March 20, 1976. Redding was the subject of other papers presented at HCHS meetings in 1900, 1939, and 1946.

<sup>138</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 14 (see undated *New Castle Courier* account). See also Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 1, 1. Heller wrote that Redding’s paper was published that same year in the *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science for 1891*, vol. 2 (Terre Haute, Indiana: Press of Moore and Langen, 1892). Then again in 1892, it appeared in the *New Castle Courier*. A county by county archaeological survey in Indiana, initiated in the early 1920s, considered Redding’s 1889 work.

illustrations showing the location and forms of the mounds and earthworks of the county...exhibited skulls and skeletons of a departed race; also shell gorgets and ornaments of various kinds including beads,” sparked the Society’s immediate interest in local Native American studies. A committee of five members, led by Redding, was appointed “to select, open and examine one of the large mounds in the county” and report at next meeting.<sup>139</sup>

In April 1888, at the second ever meeting of the HCHS, Redding was appointed to present on a topic of his own choosing (on very short notice as referenced in his paper).<sup>140</sup> Contrary to local tradition, his paper, “Our Early Settlers and Their Belief,” referred not to the Anglo-Americans, who immigrated to Henry County from North Carolina, Virginia, and elsewhere, but to the American Indian tribes who were living in the region before the arrival of the white settlers. Instead of telling tales of the toils and privations of the early white settlers and their conquest over the “savage Indians,” Redding educated the audience on the human elements shared by both races through stories of Native American folklore and religion. Although his lengthy account is flavored by traces of culture superiority, which were so pervasive in the historical thinking of late nineteenth-century America, the speaker did not shy away from documenting the Fall Creek Massacre that took place only twenty miles from the

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An updated survey was undertaken in 1923. See Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, November 21, 1922; and John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, December 14, 1922, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>139</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 14 (see undated *New Castle Courier* account). The names of the other committee members: Benjamin S. Parker, Benjamin F. Koons, William H. Vance, and John R. Millikan. Artifacts and physical remains from these and other excavations were once displayed at the HCHS Museum. The collection is now properly catalogued, reported, and is being held in storage under stipulations of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

<sup>140</sup> Redding admits to at first refusing the assignment, perhaps because he was currently engaged with the archaeological study that resulted in the above mention paper, “The Prehistoric Earthworks of Henry County,” presented the following year.

meeting's location. "It [the massacre] is remarkable as being the only instance in the history of our country," Redding remarked, "where a white man was tried, convicted and executed for the murder of an Indian."<sup>141</sup>

After briefly setting the general contextual history of his topic, Redding told of the oral tradition of the Native Americans who "had but few, if any books and those of a very crude nature." He joked that "they [the Indians] had not learned the refinements of progressive euchre, nor the aesthetic play of three deep, nor the mysteries of pool, and other modern methods in which modern pagans, who cannot talk so as to be interesting," use for enjoyment.<sup>142</sup> Redding made several attempts to help the audience relate on a personal level with the Indians by using humor and making comparisons that illustrated the similarities between his listeners' world and that of the Indians' who, according to local tradition, once lived in a small village near the site of the county asylum or poor farm on the northwest edge of New Castle. Unlike other local historians of his time, Redding was careful never to refer to Native Americans in a derogatory fashion that would countermand his presentation's aim.

Redding's approach was quite contrary to the traditional view of Native Americans from Indiana's settlement period as illustrated in the *History of Henry County Indiana*, a commercial history published in 1884, referenced earlier in this chapter. In the section "Guarding against Indians" the author wrote: "The fashion of carrying fire-arms was made necessary by the presence of roving bands of Indians, most

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<sup>141</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 1, 9. The Fall Creek Massacre refers to the slaughter of nine Native Americans—two men, three women, two boys, and two girls—of uncertain tribal origin on March 22, 1824 by seven white settlers in Madison County, Indiana.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Unlike the scientific papers given by Pleas, Redding structured his talk for the interest of the general listener unversed in "historical philosophy and scientific method." Highly educated, Redding was better equipped to overcome many of the prevailing stereotypes and racial thinking of his relatively uneducated audience who knew little of the Indian tribes Redding spoke about.

were ostensibly friendly, but like Indians in all times, treacherous and unreliable. An Indian war was at any time probable, and all the old settlers still retain vivid recollections of Indian massacres, murders, plunder, and frightful rumors of intended raids.”<sup>143</sup> No mention of the Fall Creek Massacre is made here. Rather, the author continued with accounts of the Pigeon Roost Massacre that occurred in southern Indiana during the turbulent years of the War of 1812 commonly used in other state and local histories in Indiana.<sup>144</sup> The Pigeon Roost Massacre occurred approximately ninety miles away from Henry County and almost a full decade before the first whites settled there. No recorded instances of violence between white settlers and Indians exist from Henry County’s past, although isolated incidents reportedly occurred in neighboring Wayne County during the War of 1812, as was the case with the Pigeon Roost event in Scott County.<sup>145</sup> Such writings only fueled the antagonism against historic Indian tribes in the collective memory of Henry County.

It was precisely this notion of antagonism that Redding sought to dispel with his presentation. Redding used Native American folklore in an apparent attempt to dispel the collective memory of the present— perhaps the only such example in the proceedings of the HCHS during its first sixty years. Other locals gave credit to the Indians in specific or isolated scenarios and occasionally admitted to their wrongful

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<sup>143</sup> Boor, *History of Henry County*, 288. Most local historians in Henry County believed the history to be authored by Dr. William F. Boor of New Castle, as his image is prominently displayed next to the title page. However, Boor’s authorship has been called into question by Dr. Herbert Heller. See Heller, “Herd Book History Published in 1884,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 68.

<sup>144</sup> The Pigeon Roost Massacre refers to the brutal murders of twenty-four Anglo-American settlers by a band of marauding Indians on the southern Indiana Territorial frontier on September 3, 1812 in what later became Scott County. This event is referenced in many other state and local histories in Indiana, including John B. Dillon, *History of Indiana from its Earliest Exploration by Europeans to the close of the Territorial Government in 1816* (Indianapolis: Bingham and Doughty, 1859), 492-494. See also Lewis C. Baird, *Baird's History of Clark County, Indiana* (Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Company, 1909), 147-148.

<sup>145</sup> David Hoover, “Memoir of David Hoover,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 2, no. 1 (March 1906), 21-22.



treatment by the whites.<sup>146</sup> Sympathy and a measure of understanding was common enough in Henry County: a tradition passed down through strong Quaker teachings. But to consider Native Americans as “our early settlers” was a different notion altogether.

Two factors stand out in Redding’s background that might explain his divergent views, which contrast starkly against many of his fellow history enthusiasts—an advanced education in the fields of science and religious studies. Redding was perhaps the most educated individual associated with the HCHS in its early period. He earned an A.M. from DePauw University at Greencastle (formerly known as Asbury College), was a charter member of the DePauw chapter Phi Beta Kappa, as well as a DePauw University trustee from 1878 until his premature death in 1895. He also received a Doctor of Philosophy from Iowa Wesleyan University, was a charter member of the Indiana Academy of Science and Western Association of Writers (president 1892–1893), and a fellow in an impressive list of national and international scientific societies.<sup>147</sup> Redding wrote many articles explaining his conclusions on how his religious beliefs and modern scientific theory complemented each other rather than the two being irreconcilable.<sup>148</sup> Added to all this, Redding also practiced law, in Chicago and New Castle, and ran a successful agricultural operation specializing in the use of

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<sup>146</sup> See, e.g., “Relative to Delaware Indians” by John Thornburgh presented before the HCHS, April 7, 1900 at the Fourteens Annual Meeting, in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 52-53.

<sup>147</sup> William Allen Daily and Fay Kenoyer Daily, *History of the Indiana Academy of Science, 1885-1984: a Centennial Volume* (Indianapolis: Indiana Academy of Science, 1984), 190-191.

<sup>148</sup> In his quest to resolve these seemingly conflicting beliefs that were both central to his life, Redding felt it necessary to consult the original Biblical texts. “He knew Latin, Greek, French and German, but for the Old Testament he needed Hebrew. So...he learned Hebrew, got a Hebrew Bible, and studied the original text. The results” together with his study and use of the microscope, “satisfied him that God does not contradict himself.” Heller, “Historic Henry County: T. B. Redding Eminent Scholar, Lawyer,” *New Castle Courier-Times*, March 20, 1976.

greenhouses to carry on experiments with fruits, flowers and other agricultural products.<sup>149</sup>

Other than a few selected papers presented by Redding, the proceedings of the HCHS helped further the collective memory that had evolved as a part of the regional identity of the Old Northwest but was now being reshaped locally according to specific values and traditions in Henry County. Outside influences still played a significant role in dictating how the HCHS interpreted the past. But cultural and socioeconomic influences from within gave meaningful distinctions to the local practice of history.

An organizational history of the HCHS was underway before 1910. Before his death in 1912, eight-time president of the HCHS, Adolph Rogers, was drafting a manuscript of the history of the HCHS that was never completed before he passed away.<sup>150</sup> In early 1923, there was much discussion about the Society sponsoring a new history of Henry County. At the April meeting, the executive committee reported it was willing to recommend such an action if “there proved to be a demand for such a history.”<sup>151</sup> Present at this meeting were “two representatives from the Historical Publication Company,” presumably from its offices in Indianapolis.<sup>152</sup> After further discussion, the Society rejected the idea on the grounds that “Henry county does not need a history, since the present one, although a good deal military [referring to Hazzard’s two volume history published in 1906], is only about fifteen years old. Also,

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 85.

<sup>151</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 54-55.

<sup>152</sup> “History Makers in Annual Session,” *New Castle Times*, April 26, 1923, p.1, c.6. [The newspaper’s date was misprinted “April 25”] The Historical Publication Company had publishing firms in many major cities in the United States, including Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Detroit, and published such works as John Clark Ridpath, *People’s History of the United States* (New York: Historical Publishing Company, 1895); and Frank D. Heimbaugh, ed., *History of Delaware County*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Historical Publishing Company, 1924).

it was believed that by waiting several more years, more facts could be obtained.”<sup>153</sup>

During the 1940s, a series of locally compiled writings, together with previously presented papers, on the thirteen Henry County townships were presented at HCHS meetings. Again, the unfulfilled quest to publish these as a county history was pursued.<sup>154</sup>

Although no comprehensive Henry County history was published after 1906, local history writing did not come to a standstill. After Henry County surpassed its centennial anniversary in 1921, many of its small towns likewise celebrated centennials before 1950. These celebrations were often marked by the writing of a centennial history, as well as other celebratory events and activities. A history of the Spiceland Academy was written to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the first school in that community. Local history writing in other forms also surfaced before 1950—WPA Index, memoirs, and family genealogies. Dr. Herbert L. Heller, who at the time was a young history teacher at New Castle High School, initiated and edited a multivolume set of nineteenth-century newspaper readings specifically to aid in the teaching of Henry County’s local history. With the aid of the HCHS, the county commissioners, and the WPA writer’s project, sets were distributed to schools and libraries throughout the county.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. See also HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 55. A similar attempt was also contemplated in 1915 leading up to the Indiana Centennial Celebration. See HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 46 and 51-55. Perhaps Benjamin Parker’s manuscripts were being considered for use, but this is speculative.

<sup>154</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 261. This effort was led by Bessie Coffin, daughter of Thaddeus Coffin—planner and builder of the Grose mansion and HCHS custodian from 1905–1908.

<sup>155</sup> These five-volume sets are still available at the HCHS Library and the New Castle-Henry County Public Library (non-circulatory, in the Indiana Room). See Herbert L. Heller, ed., *Newspaper Readings in the History of New Castle, Indiana*, 5 vols. (It should be noted that many of these early *Courier* articles are no longer available in any other form.)

Local history writing played a significant role in the institutionalization and preservation of local history in Henry County. Changing trends in the field of local history were reflected in the styles, techniques, formats, and subject matter of the county's local history writing. Many possible reasons may account for the numerous failed or aborted attempts at writing local histories by individuals directly associated with the HCHS. A major underlying reason was circumstance and timing. Henry County's county-wide (or comprehensive) histories were all published by 1906. In the coming decades, local history writers and the HCHS were faced by numerous obstacles triggered by the two world wars and Great Depression. Not only did public interest and support ebb, but resources necessary for funding and publishing local histories were often limited between 1917 and 1945. Many distractions that made the present and future an immediate concern took the collective attention away from the local past. This was compounded by the fact that several county histories were already in circulation and the market for local histories along with its popularity receded, especially during times of international emergencies in the 1930s and 1940s.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, Henry County's historical writers and their county histories preserved an interpretation of the local past and helped fuel the county's evolving historical consciousness before and during the early years of the HCHS. These local historians and other practitioners were greatly affected by the impact and far-reaching influence of the American Centennial Exposition of 1876.

## **American Centennial Exposition of 1876: Influence on the Institutionalization of Local History in Henry County**

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the rise and popularity of local history in Henry County was no mere coincidence. A myriad of forces combined during these decades that excited local residents into action on behalf of their county's past. What began as an idea in the hearts and minds of a few soon blossomed into a popular movement for the institutionalization of local history. The movement helped cultivate the private endeavors of preservation-minded individuals that already existed, while giving birth to a wide range of public and collective activities that contributed to the general goal of preserving Henry County's history. Not everyone agreed on the best method or methods for achieving this goal, or perhaps even consciously realized the future results of their efforts. But thanks mainly to the determined actions of a small group of local community and cultural leaders, who together were able to direct the sometimes disparate forces of local government and popular opinion, the smaller efforts of many resulted in something lasting.

The 1876 American Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, a momentous and far-reaching event, triggered a precipitous rise in the historical consciousness in the United States at the national, state, and local levels. According to Robert W. Rydell, the exposition was an attempt to shape American culture.<sup>156</sup> As the first world's fair ever held in America, the Centennial set the standard for similar events in the coming decades.<sup>157</sup> The theme of modern progress through the civilizing process of material

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<sup>156</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 17.

<sup>157</sup> The Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, held annually between 1870 and 1889, was a regional fair only a short train ride from Henry County. The *New Castle Courier* sent a correspondent to that fair. The

growth and industrialization reinforced notions already widely accepted across the United States and its territories.<sup>158</sup> And the event was carried out on the country's grandest stage. The sharp upswing in popular interest in local history triggered by the fair gave rise to written histories, historical organizations, and other related activities for the preservation of local history.<sup>159</sup>

It is difficult to measure the specific influences and effects the American Centennial had on the preservation of local history in Henry County. The apparent corollary effects in the succeeding years, however, were significant and are characterized in numerous ways. No direct reference to the American Centennial was made in connection with the organizational process of the HCHS, yet the second of two documented public attempts to organize a county historical society occurred in the late fall of 1876, only weeks following the close of the American Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.<sup>160</sup> The HCHS was founded in 1887—during the much less celebrated

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newspaper accounts and event posters contain similar messages to that of the American Centennial Exposition. A HCHS member also visited the world's fair in San Francisco and San Diego Pan-American Exposition in 1915. His report was read before the Society at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting, April 29, 1915. See Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 121; and HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 47-48. The Pan-American Bridge Company, New Castle, Indiana, was named for the Pan-American Exposition being held in Buffalo, New York, in 1902 (the year the company was founded). See Scotten, *Our Golden Anniversary*, "First Year," no page numbers. Many local residents also attended the 1893 Columbian World's Exposition in Chicago. Among them, HCHS Founder Martin L. Bundy, who reported on the "greatest creation the world has ever seen" to the *Courier*. "The World's Fair: Impressions Made by a Frequent Visitor to the White City," *New Castle Courier*, October 27, 1893, p.1, c.7. Other such letters about the fair from Bundy appeared in the *Courier* during the fall of 1893.

<sup>158</sup> Such thinking was reflected in Henry County's local history writing. See, e.g., *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1166.

<sup>159</sup> Carol Kammen, "Local History in United States," 548. Kammen illustrates the effect the American Centennial had on local history writing with the example of Michigan. Only two of the fifty-five counties had county histories before the 1870s. Forty-one counties had histories written in the 1870s and 1880s. The remainder had histories published in the 1890s. Kammen added, "This was a common pattern in many states." Carol Kammen, "Local History in the U.S.," 299.

<sup>160</sup> The editor of the *New Castle Courier*, Elwood Pleas, printed an appeal made by Benjamin S. Parker on November 27, 1876, that proposed the founding of a historical society in Henry County. See Heller, "County Historical Society Proposed," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 64.

centennial of the United States Constitution.<sup>161</sup> But the circumstantial evidence is compelling. Patriotic sentiment played such an important role in the early decades of the HCHS that it stands to reason the timing was no mere coincidence.

Henry County participated in fundraising activities and local centennial celebrations in 1875 and 1876. A “Grand Centennial Ball” was held in March 1876.<sup>162</sup> A county history published in 1884 documented another local centennial event that combined the Old Settlers’ reunion and annual Fourth of July celebration. County leaders Judge Martin L. Bundy (future HCHS founder), General William Grose (future HCHS member whose mansion later became the Society’s headquarters), and Judge Joshua Mellett (first HCHS president, 1887–1888) were named among the few main orators.<sup>163</sup> Many other individuals driving these activities were also instrumental in the early stages of the HCHS. It was estimated that at least 300 residents from Henry County made the trip to Philadelphia to participate in the Centennial Exposition.<sup>164</sup>

Officially named the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, held during the summer and fall (from May 10 to November 10, 1876), the exposition was the national celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The exposition attracted large crowds from all corners of the nation and beyond. In 1872, the United States Centennial Commission had been created in preparation for the event. Circulars were sent out to all the state governors urging them to participate by encouraging the writing of local histories, the organizing of groups at

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<sup>161</sup> See editorial by William H. Elliott, *New Castle Courier*, September 23, 1887, p.4, c.2.

<sup>162</sup> “A Grand Centennial Ball,” *New Castle Courier*, February 25, 1876, p.5 c.2. Local press coverage by the New Castle’s newspapers was substantial.

<sup>163</sup> Boor, *History of Henry County*, 259.

<sup>164</sup> This estimate was made by Clarence H. Smith in 1926. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 350.

the state and local levels to raise funds earmarked for each state's participation, and other history related activities.<sup>165</sup>

On the authority of President Ulysses S. Grant and Indiana Governor Thomas A. Hendricks, an Indiana Centennial Commission was formed as well as a state women's commission. The women's commission, responsible for fundraising activities, appointed women from each Indiana county to hold a "tea party" in the vein of the Boston Tea Party of 1773. An announcement for Henry County's "Centennial Tea Party" appeared in the September 3, 1875, edition of the *New Castle Courier*. Phrases pertaining to the preliminary meeting, such as "largely attended" and "deep interest manifested" intimates the potential for a high level of community participation and excitement. The notice continued with plans for canvassing the area by wards. The names of local women assigned to the six wards are telling. The wives and daughters of community leaders like Judge Martin L. Bundy, General William Grose, John Thornburgh, and George W. Goodwin organized and were primary participants in the event and were all members of Henry County's elite.

A letter signed by a number of these women detailed the mission of the event and campaign for contributions. The letter also offered a challenge to the patriotic pride and spirit of Henry County and placed the duty on its citizens to support the county and state: "For proper representation there...at the great Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia...our state is dependent upon the individual efforts of her people. ...No patriotic Hoosier can fail to appreciate the necessity of having our State resources and

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<sup>165</sup> Russo, *Keepers of Our Past*, 80.



advantages properly represented and her proud position fully sustained; hence none should fail to respond to this call.”<sup>166</sup>

“The Tea Party at New Castle” that soon followed was held in a handsomely decorated hall. Speeches were made by prominent civic leaders. Four historical tableaux were acted out with people from the community playing the historical figures. And “a number of relics of different kinds were on exhibition.”<sup>167</sup>

Public events such as this not only raised the patriotic spirit of the residents involved, but also fueled the rising historical consciousness of the entire county. Press coverage and oral communication spread the patriotic fervor throughout the county. And the contributions, which reportedly made the event “a financial success,” were donated by many more county residents than the number in attendance.<sup>168</sup> This also helped connect locals to a momentous event, as most would not or could not travel to Philadelphia in person. Also, the way in which the event was commemorated—the nation’s history interpreted by persons familiar to them—made the event more acceptable and relatable to every individual; from circuit court judge to day laborer.

In addition to the local celebrations, the many who visited the American Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia brought the celebration closer to home through letters, newspaper articles, and firsthand accounts told and retold upon their return. The direct influence and effect on those who attended the exhibition is, again, difficult to measure. But significant among the names who attended were Martin L. Bundy, Thomas

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<sup>166</sup> *New Castle Courier*, September 3, 1875. (Notice is reprinted in full by Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol.2, 347-348.) Many of the names of the ladies participating in the planning and execution of this event were the wives and daughters of either founding or active members of the early HCHS; or active members themselves.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

B. Redding—two of the four chief founders of the HCHS—General William Grose, and Robert B. Smith—father of Clarence H. Smith, the first curator of the county historical society.<sup>169</sup>

The Centennial not only heightened the popularity of local history, but it also advanced and officially authorized many of the views Henry County residents inherited as a part of the regional identity of the Old Northwest. Themes of progress, patriotism, and American exceptionalism were centralized at the Centennial Expo, in the exhibitions and press coverage, and reflected in later expositions in the United States before World War I.<sup>170</sup> In the age of the scientific method and Social Darwinism, science was now, for the first time, closely linked with the study of history. The most eminent scientists of the United States were employed to organize the Centennial exhibitions and the Smithsonian played a central role in the fair.<sup>171</sup> Planners of state and local museums naturally took cues from and attempted to mimic the professional practices of the National Museum. The early years of the HCHS, under the leadership of men who attended the Centennial, were filled with scientific papers, an intense focus on natural history, and continued to compare past against present in its papers, pageants, and early museum exhibits.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Clarence Smith, “Happening of Other Days” *New Castle Courier*, October 2, 1926; and Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 349-350. Robert B. Smith recorded the details of his family’s trip to Philadelphia in one of his many diaries that are now at the Indiana Historical Society. See Robert B. Smith Papers, 1832–1942, Special Collections and Archives, Indiana Historical Society.

<sup>170</sup> Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 17-19.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 and 24-25.

<sup>172</sup> Rydell wrote that the fair’s design “organized the Centennial into a dynamic vision of past, present, and future.” *Ibid.*, 17. Smithsonian’s special exhibit was characterized as “Chaotic in organization but successful in creating the impression of Indians as antithesis to the forces of progress.” *Ibid.*, 25. This was very similar to the later reports about the hodgepodge methods and chaotic nature of the museum exhibits at the HCHS. See also “World’s Fair Fragments,” *New Castle Courier*, September 29, 1893 [Signed “One of the Visitors, Spiceland, Ind., September 1893”]. The writer listed a hodgepodge of objects displayed around the U.S. Government Building at the Chicago fair: “a great many stamps, bank-notes, documents, relics, waxen, uniformed soldiers, maps, artillery, stuffed beasts, birds and fish,

Such historical philosophies and collecting and exhibition practices were adopted and generally followed by the members of the HCHS throughout its first half-century of existence. Following the acquisition of the General Grose home in 1901, the museum phase of the Society began in earnest. Although certain historical practices evolved more slowly, affected by social, political, and cultural changes in Indiana, the HCHS exhibited a more progressive spirit in other areas, like the day-to-day operation of its newly acquired museum building and the building of museum and library collections. But first it is necessary for us to examine the founding years of the organization. By 1886, on the rising tide of the American centennial era, the stage was now set for the organization of the HCHS's and its decade-long quest to acquire a permanent home, acts that would set a course for growth and lasting stability for the organization.

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portraits, historical paintings, and white and crimson folds of the flags and banners hanging everywhere." Similar collection patterns were followed by the members of the early HCHS.

## Chapter Four: Converging Forces and the HCHS

### The Founding Years of the HCHS, 1886-1902: Institutionalizing Local History

In the December 3, 1886, edition of the *New Castle Courier* the paper's editor, William H. Elliott, made a persuasive public proposal for the organization of a historical society in Henry County. Elliott appealed "to the reading and thinking portion of the community," which he adroitly pointed out was "now growing so large that it may fairly be said to include pretty much everybody."<sup>1</sup> The author made a candid admission pertaining to the many past attempts at establishing such an association, "but it has always failed because it did not sufficiently appeal to the popular interest."<sup>2</sup> The editorial outlined in some detail a new four-section plan recently proposed that would make "the work of preserving and perpetuating our [Henry County's] early and passing history...not only a duty we owe to posterity, but a most pleasant and profitable entertainment."<sup>3</sup>

Elliott enumerated a sweeping list of diverse rationalizations in an attempt to engage public support so essential in organizing a private historical society.<sup>4</sup> The list

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<sup>1</sup> "As to a Historical Society," *New Castle Courier*, December 3, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Lack of popular interest and insufficient funding were the primary problems that plagued the local historical society movement in Indiana.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Elliott's claim was commonplace concerning history during the late Romantic period in America. According to Callcott, *History of the United States*, 193, "Although ill at ease with the idea that mere amusement was an aim of history, men of the early nineteenth century eagerly embraced history as a constructive, elevated kind of pleasure."

<sup>4</sup> Less than a month before the inaugural meeting of the HCHS, Benjamin Parker, in his regular column "Pencil Touches," chose public opinion as his topic: "Public opinion is the most powerful of forces that dominate the average happiness of the individual in civilized communities. Public opinion fixes local standards of success. It dictates what men must accomplish to stand well in community. It even assumes to say what they must or must not believe...[It was once said] it was not necessary to convince everybody in order to gain a point. 'You need only to convince the men with heads on their shoulders' ... 'the rest will follow.' But year after year the number of people with heads on their shoulders grows larger and larger, and every head does its own thinking." Benjamin Parker, "Pencil Touches," *New Castle Courier*, September 16, 1887, p.1, c.4-5.

included a call to civic duty, pride in and love of place (place consciousness), the abundance and availability of materials, the “eminent practicability of the idea,” and the potential value of a historical collection “worth more than its weight in diamonds to our children and those who are to follow them.”<sup>5</sup> A fear was also expressed that the historical materials “will soon pass out of sight and memory if some action is not taken for its preservation.”<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the proposal’s inclusion of nearly every resident in Henry County as a means to attract broad public support was the key point to his successful plea. Elliott listed the hundreds of teachers, professional men (lawyers, preachers, doctors, editors, etc.), farmers, mechanics, “amateur observers and thinkers of one kind and another,” merchants, business men, and “ladies equally with the gentlemen.” He asserted that Henry County can take the lead in this literary venture and “if properly commenced here, will soon be followed by all the better counties in the State.” The article closed with a provoking question: “Who will take the lead and circulate a call for a meeting to organize The Henry County Historical Society?” which challenged each resident to act in regard to their sense of duty and sense of place.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “As to a Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, December 3, 1886.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century “pride of place ranked second only to pride of blood.” See Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), 16. Such challenges to civic pride were not taken lightly. Examples of public challenges to place and character abound in the newspapers of the period, many of which were fought out in public amid the pages of the *New Castle Courier*. HCHS founder Benjamin S. Parker, in his writings on pioneer customs, recalled, “Any reflection upon the courage, physical strength, prowess or truthfulness of these men demanded an apology or a fight; and when the bottle was circulating freely among them the causes for offense multiplied in a sort of geometrical ratio.” Although a more civil atmosphere existed by the turn of the century, public challenges were taken with much indignation. See Benjamin S. Parker, “Pioneer Life: Early Manners and Customs,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 3, no. 1 (March 1907), 1.

The plan for the HCHS, alluded to by Elliott, was initiated the previous April at a meeting where “a committee was appointed to draft a constitution and laws and report at a meeting to be held” at the Henry County Courthouse in October 1887 (see Figure A).<sup>8</sup> The October meeting, consisting of an executive committee of seven men, took the next major step in forming the Society and unanimously adopted the plan. The committee also slated a general program for Saturday, November 5, “entertaining enough to warrant the hope of a large audience, but the most important work of the day will be the organization on a permanent basis of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society, through which it is proposed to collect the past history of the county, too long neglected, and preserve it for the information and edification of generations to come.”<sup>9</sup> The organizers were unequivocal in their expectations of the citizenry in the weeks leading up to the inaugural gathering. Two separate notices in the *New Castle Courier* concluded with the statement, “It becomes the duty of every citizen who feels a particle of pride or interest in the welfare of the county, to attend this meeting and stand ready to give his or her assistance in collecting the matter necessary to prepare the records for future reference.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Hazzard's History*, vol.2, 1104. George Hazzard, in an account published in 1906, added that support for the organization of a historical society was also sought and received from the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County at its meeting in September 1886. An old settlers' “committee was named to work in co-operation with that already appointed.” The officers and executive committee of the Old Settlers' Association of Henry County in 1886 included Margaret P. Wood (vice-president), William H. Elliott (secretary and treasurer), Dr. Mary J. Smith, and Gen. William. See “Old Settlers: A Grand Outpouring of Young and Old People,” *New Castle Courier*, August 13, 1886, p.4, c.2.

<sup>9</sup> “The Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, November 4, 1887. The November 5, 1887, program is the inaugural meeting of the HCHS from which the organization is now dated.

<sup>10</sup> “Henry County Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, October 14, 1887, 1; and “The Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, November 4, 1887, 1. John Thornburg (who lived in Minneapolis in 1887 but soon returned to New Castle and assumed a leading role in the HCHS) wrote of the pride he felt in the “steps being taken in ‘Old Henry’ to organize and place on its feet a society for the preservation of the facts regarding the early settlement of that portion, at least, of eastern Indiana.” John Thornburgh, “John's Occassional-XLIII,” *New Castle Courier*, November 4, 1887, 1. It should be noted that HCHS notices were always careful to be inclusive to women as well as men.

The November 5, 1887, inaugural meeting, held in the courtroom at the Henry County Courthouse (see Figure B), was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Hon. Martin L. Bundy. The constitution and by-laws (written by Benjamin Parker) were read and adopted. A committee was appointed to nominate the initial permanent officers for the association.<sup>11</sup> Three addresses were presented, the titles of which generally characterized the typical subject matter covered by the organization over the next few decades: Judge Joshua Mellett, “The Early History and Settlement of Eastern Indiana;” Elwood Pleas, “Natural Resources of Henry County;” and (following the dinner hour) Martin L. Bundy, “The Prominent Men and Women of Henry County, 1820-1850.”<sup>12</sup> The first officers and committees were then nominated and confirmed. From among this group—almost exclusively males over fifty from established and prominent families in Henry County—the new organization drew a good measure of prestige and political influence.

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<sup>11</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure A: Henry County Courthouse,  
site of early HCHS semi-annual meetings, 1887 to 1902.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.





Figure B: Interior of Henry County Courtroom, ca. 1890, where the early HCHS semi-annual meetings were held. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

The inaugural November meeting was a satisfactory beginning, yet the early years of the HCHS (1887–1902) were in many ways a struggle. Citizen participation and meeting attendance were areas highlighted for needed improvement by the Society’s leadership. No official figures were tallied during the period, but a careful study of the Society’s minutes and early newspaper accounts reveal membership totals roughly between fifty and seventy-five with approximately twenty individuals actively engaged in the work. A 1907 letter written by HCHS Founder Benjamin S. Parker estimated membership numbers at “25 or 30 active members and a total of probably 100, many of

whom pay only when especially called upon to do so.”<sup>13</sup> Attendance and overall participation was on the gradual increase following the 1901 acquisition of the historical building. At least twenty active members planned and carried out the meetings and other activities with about seven filling actual leadership roles at any one time. Two meetings were planned for each calendar year—routinely in April and October—and were begun at 10:00 a.m.<sup>14</sup> Morning sessions of these semiannual meetings were often lightly attended.<sup>15</sup> Afternoon sessions drew moderate but regular attendance which often exceeded 100.

Financial difficulties also plagued the organization from the very first. Handwritten treasury accounts for 1889 through 1891 reveal minor, annual deficits of the Society even though expenses were relatively minimal.<sup>16</sup> During this time the efforts of two qualified local individuals, who collected the histories of early settlers as the beginning of the Society’s library collection, went unremunerated. Their labor, according to then Society president, Thomas B. Redding, was “so necessary to the preservation of our local history” although the organization could not fund the work.<sup>17</sup> At an executive committee meeting in February 1889, following this failure, Benjamin

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin S. Parker to Charles Reagan, November 15, 1907, Box 1, Folder 1, Charles M. Reagan Papers. Parker added, “Like all similar Societies the work of pushing it along, securing interesting programs, etc., developed upon a few and what it most needs is young, active people who will take hold and assist in that part of the work.”

<sup>14</sup> To boost attendance the executive committee experimented with alternative meetings schedules: “It was thought that if held on the first Saturday in October as provided in the by-laws that it would come too soon after the old settlers’ meeting, and...that Saturday was a bad day to secure the attendance of many people who would probably attend on some other day of the week.” Henry County Historical Society, *New Castle Courier*, September 6, 1889 (reprinted in full in Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 114). Tuesday and Thursday were tried, but Saturday remained the primary meeting day until the spring of 1907. At this point, Thursday became the standard day for the semiannual meetings.

<sup>15</sup> The 1887 Constitution stipulated the spring meeting as the “Annual Meeting” and the fall meeting as the “Semi-Annual Meeting.” The designations can be a bit confusing but are a tradition at the HCHS.

<sup>16</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 16, 24-25, and 27-28.

<sup>17</sup> “Henry County Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, March 1, 1889, p.1.

S. Parker—primary author of the Society’s constitution and initial organizational plan—was appointed to devise a strategy to raise funds for the Society’s immediate needs.<sup>18</sup> Attendance at the semiyearly meetings slowly increased during the 1890s due to heightened efforts to hire well-known speakers, the occasional traveling musical group, and other various enhancements. The rise in attendance, accompanied by the accumulation of new members and membership fees (\$1.00 annually), aided in balancing the treasury accounts.<sup>19</sup> However, in the closing years of the century financial needs remained a primary issue of concern for the executive committee and the Society at large.<sup>20</sup> Financial struggles, natural to historical societies, were probably exacerbated by the Panic of 1893, which produced a staggering financial crisis and ensuing economic recession that lasted for most of the decade—the worst such recession in American history up to that time. The organization was falling woefully short of its mission. The core membership understood that greater expenditures and greater effort were required to properly preserve and institutionalize Henry County’s history.

Adversity was expected by the core members of the HCHS leadership—a group with experience in coordinating public volunteer associations, in civic work, political parties, government offices, and a wide array of professions and business ventures. “The

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The Society eventually lowered member dues in 1908: “the annual membership fee is only .50 for men and .25 for women and .15 for children under 15 years of age, and come prepared to pay it; for it is badly needed to carry forward the good work of the Society.” HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 42 (see reverse side of meeting program).

<sup>20</sup> In November 1898 the Society instituted several measures to address financial issues. The executive committee named a new financial committee established with the “objective to find means of raising the necessary money to prosecute the Association’s work.” An additional committee was formed “to help make the Society more effective in its work.” And the fall 1898 meeting was canceled. HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 58-59. During these early years, speakers like Dr. John Clark Ripath, William Dudley Foulke, and, the county’s own Benjamin S. Parker (whose fourth volume of poetry was issued in 1887) were engaged by the executive committee. Traveling glee clubs were also a local favorite. Such strategies increased local interest and boosted membership.

State [Indiana] Historical Society had the same difficulties to contend with as our own and...the only way in which such associations do or can succeed is through years of patient, persistent effort,” the much respected Society Founder Martin L. Bundy explained to the executive committee in February 1889.<sup>21</sup> Early results fell short of the high expectations set by organizers, so their efforts were redoubled. Organizers employed myriad tactics in the first few years of the Society’s existence that attempted to overcome obstacles impeding its immediate success. No one publically expressed doubts or misgivings about the value or “importance of the work which the society has undertaken and the great need...that it be hastened forward.”<sup>22</sup> Society Founder Benjamin S. Parker later admitted in a 1907 private correspondence that after “more than 20 years of experience in the work [it] has proven to us [the active participants] to be a very difficult task and one slow of fulfillment.”<sup>23</sup>

The primary source of disappointment and frustration faced by the organizers, as the Society became established in the local communities of Henry County, was the failure to carry forward the initial plan set forth by the 1887 HCHS Constitution and By-Laws. The success of the plan was contingent on acquiring sufficient resources (human and financial) to carry out Parker’s four-section organizational design and the acquisition of permanent quarters for the safe preservation of a historical collection.

The original organizational structure of the HCHS consisted of four individual sections: Historical and Biographical, Educational, Old Settlers, and Natural History.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “Henry County Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier*, March 1, 1889, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin S. Parker to Charles Reagan, November 15, 1907, Box 1, Folder 1, Charles M. Reagan Papers.

<sup>24</sup> Township historical society branches were also encouraged by the founders of the HCHS to help substantiate the preservation of local history in Henry County. Early forms of communication and transportation made it more difficult for those living in the outer townships to attend meetings at the

Each section was to adopt “by-laws and rules of work...elect its own President, Vice-President and Secretary, and appoint its own Executive Committee...in accordance with the general constitution of the society.”<sup>25</sup> The majority of the board of trustees, the primary executive committee, and the committee of archives and collections were to consist of members from the four sections and each section’s officers (in ex-officio capacity). According to by-laws 19 and 20, “The sections” were also to “hold two meetings per year” and were sanctioned to organize “exhibitions of pioneer relics, natural history collections, educational and art displays...and apply the net proceeds, if any, to the expenses of the society.”<sup>26</sup> The plan was fashioned, at least in part, in response to public concern related to the time-consuming and difficult work involved in establishing a historical society. Organizers repeatedly reassured the county residents regarding the relative ease of accomplishing the task, as alluded to by Elliott in the 1886 public proposal. Similar messages in local newspapers followed. “It looks like a great task...when you see it roughly sketched in print,” cautioned the writer, “but as a matter of fact, a very little active interest on the part of even a few persons in each township, will secure it.”<sup>27</sup>

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county seat. In the coming years the interurban helped alleviate such difficulties. The Wayne Township Historical and Biographical Society held its first meeting February 11, 1888, roughly two months following the founding of the county society. Little additional evidence exists of the Wayne Township Historical Society, but it is probable that it dissolved before 1900. See Benjamin S. Parker, “Pencil Touches,” *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1888; HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 11; Article IV, “Township Sections or Branches;” Henry County Historical Society Articles of Association (1902) booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, 9-10; and HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 67.

<sup>25</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 9. See Article III of the Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society, no page numbers.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, By-Laws 8-10, 12, 19, and 20. Two meetings per section totaled a minimum of ten public meetings annually for the HCHS.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, “Pencil Touches,” *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1888. An initial plan, which would attract sufficient participation in each of the thirteen townships to fulfill the four sections of the historical society, was put into place immediately following the first meeting in November 1887. Four to six person committees were appointed in each of the townships to organize township meetings “as shall bring out the people and secure the greatest interest in the work of the society.” Five hundred copies of

Failure to fulfill the four-section structure seriously undermined the organizational strength and versatility necessary to properly manage the broad scope encompassed by the Society's mission.<sup>28</sup> The failure also limited the activities and overall effectiveness of the organization. Without the four individual sections the Society was confined to only two general meetings per year. It also became impossible for the limited number of active participants to pay proper attention to the numerous history-related areas of study in addition to the necessary managerial and executive duties. The enormous workloads fell to a willing and able group who envisioned, perhaps unrealistically, much more interest and participation from the younger generations. The organizational design was sound, but was also very ambitious for a nineteenth-century historical society, especially one in a rural Indiana county of less than 24,000 residents. In reality, there simply were not enough dedicated individuals to carry the plan forward.<sup>29</sup>

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the proceedings of the first annual meeting were distributed. The local GAR posts (six posts were active in Henry County at this time) were also appealed to for support. "Henry County Historical Society," *New Castle Courier*, November 25, 1887, p.4, c.4. Similar township committee plans were initiated several times over the early decades of the HCHS with few tangible results.

<sup>28</sup> The majority of nineteenth-century historical societies embraced similar broad and eclectic scopes of interest due in part to the fact that no other organizations routinely existed in their areas to preserve natural history, artwork, and material culture. The libraries that did exist were rudimentary reading rooms and lending facilities not intended for research purposes. These libraries did not share in the responsibility of collecting and preserving historical materials. The historical society in America was the incipient organization in all things related to collecting and preserving evidence of the past and present on the state and local levels. For specific areas designated for preservation and collection, see "Article Two," Henry County Historical Society Articles of Association (1902) booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, 7.

<sup>29</sup> The four-section plan was somewhat simplified in the revised constitution of 1902. Although an additional section of study was added, such sections were more a suggestion and not a requisite part of the Society. The acquisition of the Gen. Grose home provided a sense of permanency for the organization and helped offset the failings of the unfulfilled four-section plan. See Article III, "Sections," Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, no page numbers. A Natural History section, organized in 1908, was very active in the county throughout the 1920s. Of the four sections, the "Nature Research Club" was the only section to ever officially organize. The Old Settlers' Association of Henry County, organized in 1871, continued to exist in tandem with the HCHS until at least 1908, but always remained a separate organization. Subject matter from the various sections of study were regularly presented before the Society, even without the formal organization of

## Quest for Permanent Quarters: The General William Grose Home

In 1890, even before an effective judgment could be made on the viability of the organizational design, the leadership realized the foundation and future success of the HCHS depended on procuring permanent quarters to safely house a historical collection—a collection “calculated to illustrate the steps of progress from the earliest settlement to the present.”<sup>30</sup> Without a permanent home, the possibility to achieve the Society’s mission “not only to collect the early history of the country, but also to preserve and crystalize its present and passing history,” much less simple survival for the organization, was greatly in doubt.<sup>31</sup> Hindsight bears out the prudence of the early members. The historical building, and the collections it holds, has long been the foundation on which the HCHS is constructed. Future struggles, even changes in the shifting popularity of local history, most likely would not have allowed the Society to remain active without interruption minus the stability afforded by the historical building.

The absence of permanent quarters was the most problematic obstacle to the continued survival and hoped for success of nineteenth-century historical societies in the United States.<sup>32</sup> A microcosm of this fact was played out in the counties of Indiana. Traditionally, historical societies were housed in courthouses, public libraries, or other civic structures only to lose these privileges as their hosts faced ever greater confines on

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all the sections. Such broad interest was typical of the early state historical societies and stemmed from their predecessors, the old scientific academies. See Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 19.

<sup>30</sup> Parker, “Pencil Touches,” *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1888. History was viewed as “linear progress” around the turn of the twentieth century: the past was intimately connected to the present and future. The “past is a foreign country” model came a little later. See David Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* The importance of a permanent home for a local historical society was often stressed by speakers associated with the movement in Indiana. See, e.g., Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 13-14; and George S. Cottman’s address, “Co-operation between State and Local Historical Agencies,” in *Proceedings of [the First Indiana] State History Conference*, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Bryan Jr., “Virginia,” 85.

space.<sup>33</sup> The resulting scenario—due to the expanding needs of the county—often left an already struggling organization, with little financial resources, homeless and saddled by a large, valuable, but vulnerable collection. A few fortunate societies found temporary quarters in aging schools or other public buildings, but this usually only delayed the inevitable. Many early historical collections were lost under these circumstances—sold at auction, given back to donors, or poorly secured in storage and lost to deterioration, theft, or forgotten with the passage of time.<sup>34</sup>

The early hope and general consensus among the HCHS's leadership was to follow past tradition and take up rooms in the courthouse at New Castle.<sup>35</sup> Some counties provided rooms rent free, but this was not the case in Henry County. Other means "to secure a suitable room at the county seat for the safe keeping of books, papers, records, historical relics, etc." were sought by an appointed committee in August 1888 without success.<sup>36</sup> A campaign was subsequently begun at the 1890 annual spring

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<sup>33</sup> For an excellent example of the variety in permanent quarters for a state's local historical societies, see Bertha L. Heilbron, "Local Historical Museums and the War Program," *Minnesota History* 23, no. 1 (March 1942), 11. For a typical example of the housing situation of an early state historical society, see Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 17-18. Although not a historical society, the Indiana State Museum during its early years in the State Capitol Building illustrated many of these scenarios. See "Who We Are," Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, accessed August 28, 2015, <http://www.indianamuseum.org/about>.

<sup>34</sup> For examples of lost historical collections, see George Newman Fuller, *A Sketch of Historical Societies in Michigan* (Lansing, MI: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., State Printers, 1914), 8-9. Michigan Historical Commission: A State Department of History and Archives, *Bulletin* no. 3, (May 1914). See also Kammen and Wilson, eds., *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed., essays on local history about each of the fifty states.

<sup>35</sup> All the semiannual meetings, from 1887 until 1902, were held in the courtroom at the Henry County Courthouse (free of charge), except for the Third Annual Meeting, April 5, 1890. This meeting was held across the street on the second floor of the Murphey building, which at the time was the Knights of Pythias Wigwam. The new venue just so happened to coincide with the first resolution issued by the Society concerning the idea that permanent rooms (on a year-round basis) should be provided for by the county to house collections. See HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Parker, "Pencil Touches," *New Castle Courier*, March 30, 1888; and *New Castle Courier*, August 3, 1888. Many interesting questions and possible alternate scenarios arise if the HCHS would have been granted space in the courthouse in 1888. In all likelihood, the HCHS leaders would not have initiated and lobbied for the 1901 historical bill, and thus the General Grose home would likely never have been purchased as the HCHS's headquarters. Without county funding, authorized by the 1901 bill, and the permanence provided by a separate and distinct historical building, the HCHS most likely would have



meeting with the first official proclamation in the quest for a permanent home:

“Resolved: That it is the sense of this society that the county should make provision for a safe and commodious room for the preservation of relics, archives and cabinets illustrative of the pioneer and natural history and the progress of the county.”<sup>37</sup>

The idea remained alive for the next few years in discussion only. No definite action was taken until April 1896 when a resolution was passed at that year’s spring meeting which read:

Resolved that the permanence of the Henry County Historical Society and the importance of its work to the future of the county are in our opinion sufficiently established in the minds of the people to justify us in asking that the Commissioners of Henry County take into serious consideration the matter of constructing a suitable building for the accommodation of the society, with fireproof vaults for the preservation of papers, records, relics and natural history collections and mature plans that shall lead thereto at the earliest time consistent with the financial welfare of the County and the People.<sup>38</sup>

I located no record of the 1896 meeting between the Henry County Commissioners and representatives of the HCHS, but it is reasonably safe to speculate its outcome from later actions taken by both parties. In 1896 the commissioners had no legal authority to act on behalf of the HCHS since no Indiana law yet existed to allow a county government to appropriate public expenditures for the support of benevolent or literary societies.<sup>39</sup> In the absence of such a law, the commissioners had little choice in the matter but to turn

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fallen victim to the perpetual pattern of failure and reorganization that marked the histories of most local historical societies in Indiana—a pattern that seriously marred the collection and preservation of local history in many counties.

<sup>37</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 17. Resolutions represented the official collective mindset of an organization and were routinely used by nineteenth and early twentieth-century clubs and other volunteer public organizations. After 1950 resolutions became less common in the proceedings of the HCHS.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 42. The occasion marked the memorial of the recently deceased HCHS Founder Thomas B. Redding.

<sup>39</sup> Historical societies were considered a “literary society” by the Indiana General Assembly at this time.

the Society's representatives away even though close ties existed between the commissioners and the historical society.<sup>40</sup> It is impossible to know for sure from the present evidence whether assurances were given by the commissioners indicating their support in favor of such an action if and when the necessary law was enacted.

In December 1896, only months after its first official request for permanent quarters was turned down by the county commissioners, the HCHS appointed a committee to begin the process of passing legislation in the Indiana General Assembly for this purpose.<sup>41</sup> The committee—three Henry County jurists—drafted a bill and arranged for its introduction in the state legislature the following year. The first attempt failed. A similar bill was introduced in 1899 with better success; it passed in one house but failed in the other. In 1901, “through the united effort of Senator [Albert D.] Ogborn and Representative [Benjamin S.] Parker, the matter was again taken up and the bill passed both houses with scarcely a dissenting vote.”<sup>42</sup>

Judge Eugene H. Bundy, in his 1901 presidential address before the annual spring meeting, faithfully recounted the sequence of events of the last five years related to the passage of House Bill No. 379—“An act for the encouragement of county historical societies” providing for “Boards of County Commissioners...and County

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<sup>40</sup> Commissioners in 1896: Newton B. Davis (1894-7), Harvey B. Chew (1895-8), and White Heaton (1896-9). Chew and Heaton served in Civil War. Davis was a HCHS charter member (his wife was also active) and Heaton's brother, Waitzel M., and sister-in-law Viola were members.

<sup>41</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. Both Parker and Ogborn were officers and active members of the HCHS. Ogborn was a member of benevolent institutions committee in the senate, the same committee the historical society bill came through. See *Biographical Memoirs*, 305. It is interesting to note that in the 1900 senatorial election to represent Henry, Fayette, and Union counties, Ogborn, a Republican, ran against Rev. Asa M. Weston, a Democrat, who was also an active HCHS member. Weston, a Civil War veteran, signed the Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society (1902), and attended the dedication ceremonies. This insured a favorable voice in the senate for the Society regardless of the election's outcome. See John B. Conner (Chief of Bureau), *Eighth Biennial Report of the Indiana Department of Statistics for 1899 to 1900*, vol. 14 (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, Contractor for State Printing and Binding, 1900), 798; and HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 70-75.

Councils” to appropriate money from the county funds “for the benefit of such historical societies” in Indiana; and specifically “to construct and furnish rooms...for the meetings of such historical societies.”<sup>43</sup> Bundy explained that the law would go into effect in a few weeks and “it will be the duty of this society to formulate a plan and present it to the county board [of commissioners] and ask their aid in putting it in operation.”<sup>44</sup> The major question yet to be decided was what the best plan for establishing permanent quarters would be. President Bundy advised that the plan should be formulated in close cooperation with the county commissioners and newly formulated county council.<sup>45</sup> He closed by saying, “One thing seems to me certain...the matter is too important to be longer neglected, and now that authority has been given by law, there should be no halting or hesitating on the part of either the county board or county council, but they should act promptly in carrying out the provision of the law.”<sup>46</sup>

The initial conclusion reached, after limited discussions by those present at the spring meeting, was to have “historical society apartments built in connection with a fire-proof addition to the courthouse;” an addition already in the early planning stages.<sup>47</sup> The plan was soon discarded in lieu of an offer from John M. Morris, legal

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<sup>43</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Sixty-Second Regular Session of the General Assembly Begun on the Tenth Day of January A. D. 1901* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, contractor for state printing and binding, 1901), 542.

<sup>44</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 67. The address was given on April 6, 1901. Judge Eugene H. Bundy, eldest son of HCHS Founder Martin L. Bundy, was a former state senator and member of the HCHS legislative committee. The occasion marked the first major milestone in the decade-long process for obtaining a permanent home for the HCHS.

<sup>45</sup> The county council was created by the Indiana General Assembly in 1899. The new county council introduced changes to the county budgeting process. See *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1000-1001.

<sup>46</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 67.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* An addition to the county's third courthouse was already under consideration. According to Ratcliff, “On December 29, 1903, a contract was awarded...for an addition to the west end of the existing structure.” The third (and currently extant) courthouse was begun in 1865 and completed in 1869. For a concise history of Henry County's three courthouses, see Richard P. Ratcliff, *Henry County at the Millennium: a Reference Book of History, Firsts, Trivia, Lists and Interesting Facts* (New Castle, IN: Community Printing Co.), 95-98; and *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 896-899.

representation for the heirs of the General William Grose estate, in the summer of 1901.<sup>48</sup>

By early September, roughly six months following the enactment of House Bill No. 379 by the General Assembly, the Henry County Board of Commissioners estimated and recommended an appropriation for the maximum amount allowed by law for the acquisition of a historical building along with an annual appropriation for utilities and maintenance. This recommendation was approved by the members of the county council. The quick response was no doubt aided by the fact that HCHS members were in key decision-making positions in the county government. In 1901, two of the three commissioners and three of the seven county councilmen were actively affiliated with the Society.<sup>49</sup>

Other influences were also involved. Support for purchasing the Grose property came from members of the HCHS with political connections and influence. An

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<sup>48</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 68-69. William Grose, major general in the Civil War, was a significant military and civic figure in nineteenth-century Henry County history. General Grose is the most notable among a family with a long military tradition beginning in the American Revolution. The late Victorian two-story brick residence, constructed in 1870 in the Italianate style (on South Fourteenth Street in New Castle), has many important ties to the county's past and has served as a primary symbol of Henry County's local history for over one hundred years. Preserving the home of a significant local historical figure, while at the same time providing a permanent home for the HCHS situated in an excellent location were all factors that weighed heavily upon the decision-making process.

<sup>49</sup> The commissioners in 1901 were John W. Whitworth (1897-1904), William D. Pierce (1898-1905), and Edwin Hall (1899-1903), with Hall the only one without ties to the HCHS. See *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 996; Henry County Commissioners, *Commissioners Record Book 11*, August 1900-February 1903, 303-305, in the Office of the Henry County Auditor, Henry County Courthouse; and HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 73. Henry County Council in 1901 (elected Nov. 8, 1900) consisted of Benjamin F. Koons, Thomas C. Phelps, Milton Edwards, John F. Luellen, Levi Cook, Ephraim Leakey, and Harper F. Sullivan. Koons, a Quaker minister, was Society treasurer from 1897 to 1906. See *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1000-1001; and HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 73. Phelps was elected to the HCHS Executive Committee in 1903 and his family were also practicing Quakers. See *Biographical Memoirs*, 319. Phelps' father Elias was a charter member and longtime vice-president of the HCHS. Leakey signed the HCHS Constitution and By-Laws on October 14, 1901. Three of the six county commissioners from 1896 and 1901 were Civil War veterans. Family ties and longtime relationships also existed as was common especially among the "prominent" families in a small rural county like Henry during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

impressive number of Society organizers and its contemporary leadership were veterans of the state and local political system as well as veterans of the Civil War.<sup>50</sup> These men exerted a large measure of influence around the state, but especially in their home county. A much improved local economy and growing community spirit that also prompted the addition to the courthouse and construction of several new school buildings in and around New Castle should also be taken into account (discussed further in Chapter Four).

A special meeting of the HCHS was called for the evening of Saturday, September 28 at the Bundy House Parlors, a hotel adjacent to the courthouse square, to review the results of the county council's regular meeting earlier that month. The council had approved recommendations by the board of commissioners to appropriate \$5,000 for the purchase of the Grose home and grounds for use of the HCHS. The amount was the maximum allowed by the recently enacted bill in the past session of the Indiana General Assembly.<sup>51</sup> The county council's action was unanimously approved by

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<sup>50</sup> Eight of the ten primary leaders in the first decade of the HCHS served at least one term in the Indiana House of Representatives and/or State Senate. Several other members did likewise. Seven were judges, and all ten served in some capacity as an elected county office holder (e.g., treasurer, assessor, prosecutor, court clerk, and many in multiple offices and positions). Five were Civil War veterans. Biographies of these community leaders are found in *Hazzard's History*; *Biographical Memoirs*; and/or Boor, *History of Henry County*.

<sup>51</sup> In 1901 the Indiana General Assembly was in its Sixty-Second Regular Session that met from January 10 to March 11. The state legislature at that time only met every other year, with special sessions called when necessary, as opposed to the current cycle of annual sessions. The older system made it even more difficult for the HCHS to introduce and pass legislation in support of its cause. The Grose home was purchased for \$4,500. The direct intention for the additional \$500 went unstated. The six percent interest charged on the deferred payment of the final \$3,000 to John M. Morris, attorney for the Grose estate, was no doubt paid from it. The excess appropriation may also have been intended to assist with furnishings and/or other expenses. See Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 6. Insurance for the new historical building soon became an issue of financial concern for the HCHS. See HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 77. It should be noted that the soon-to-be Judge Morris, who in 1887 served as the first financial secretary, was still an active member of the HCHS, as had been the late Gen. Grose. Martha Grose, the general's second wife, was made an honorary lifetime member of the HCHS at the dedication exercises in April 1902. *Ibid.*, 90.

the Society and a committee was appointed “to proceed at once to take the necessary steps required for the incorporation, legally, of the Henry County Historical Society.”<sup>52</sup>

For the leaders of the HCHS the next six months leading up to the dedication ceremonies of April 1902 were a flurry of activity and anticipation. The leadership introduced, adopted, and distributed articles of incorporation among the membership in October. A committee revised the constitution and by-laws which reflected needed changes to the organizational structure of the Society and included added responsibilities for the board of trustees as the primary managers of present and future acquisitions of property (including the museum and library collections).<sup>53</sup>

Although the sale of the Grose property was not yet final, the October 14 meeting served as a watershed event for the core group of active HCHS members.<sup>54</sup> The minutes reported that the meeting was “marked with great interest and enthusiasm [and] all went home feeling that soon the [HCHS would]...have a home of its own—a place of which every citizen may well be proud.”<sup>55</sup> It was an important success for the Society. The goal, set at the birth of the organization, was all but achieved and enthusiasm among the members was high. Many years of hard work, planning, and sacrifice went into securing a home for the Society and, for this intimate group, it all culminated at the October 14 meeting. The organization would face many more obstacles in the coming

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<sup>52</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 69. For a detailed sequence of public actions related to the acquisition of the Grose property, see minute records of the Henry County Commissioners, *Commissioners Record Book 11*, August 1900-February 1903, 284, 287, and 303-304.

<sup>53</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 71-75.

<sup>54</sup> A “certificate of indebtedness” was issued to John M. Morris “administrator of the estate of William Grose deceased for the sum of Forty-Five Hundred Dollars, upon the terms prescribed by the Henry County Circuit Court for the sale of said real estate.” Henry County Commissioners, *Commissioners Record Book 11*, August 1900-February 1903, 304.

<sup>55</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 75. The sale of the Grose property was finalized October 22, 1901 at a special session of the court of Henry County Commissioners.

decades, but the experience seemed to provide a renewed interest in the organization uniting a local group of dedicated history enthusiasts to carry the work forward.

Historical accounts point to the existence of four key founders; the last of which passed away in 1911. Many local historical societies failed as the original organizers died off. This experience seemed to forge a bond with the next generation of members aiding in the sustainability of the organization. The monetary investment on the part of the county also supplied a sense of permanence for the HCHS, cementing its role in the community as the final authority on the county's local history.

The acquisition was also a significant community accomplishment; a part of the socioeconomic movement and rising progressive spirit beginning to develop in Henry County at the turn of the century, especially in New Castle. Now plans were made by the Society leaders for the dedication ceremonies where the active members would celebrate their sense of accomplishment with the public, who also played an important role in the final outcome of the process. The purchase of the Grose property, and the HCHS's early success, is never realized but for the importance placed on local history by the residents of Henry County. The entire process required the combined efforts of the Society's most dedicated history enthusiasts, its membership, the county commissioners and county council, and the general public, who supported the use of their tax dollars to finance the preservation of a local landmark and Henry County's history.<sup>56</sup> But without the resources stimulated by a period of rapid economic development in and around New

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<sup>56</sup> In a letter written by Benjamin S. Parker to the editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History* describing the early history of the HCHS, he wrote: "Small appropriations have been made, year after year, to this society, but up to the present a considerable percent, of the appropriations thus made have gone back to the county treasury unused, so that the cost of maintenance has, thus far, been but trifling to the county. The society pays its own running expenses except the cost of light, water and fuel, and the maintaining of buildings and grounds." "Local Historical Societies," 101.

Castle, which began in 1899, it is difficult to envision a similar pattern of development for the HCHS that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **Period of Rapid Industrialization in New Castle, 1899-1910**

In addition to the influence of Quakerism, the old settlers' society movement, and local history writing, other cultural influences and historical trends contributed to the development and sustainability of the HCHS. Several forces converged at seemingly the perfect time in Henry County that enabled and facilitated the acquisition and preservation of the General Grose home as the first county-owned and supported local historical society museum in Indiana.<sup>57</sup> The establishment of the HCHS Museum in 1902 was predicated on the county's historical consciousness and the determined efforts of its members to acquire a permanent home for the organization. By 1902, the resources necessary to acquire and support a county museum were available for the first time in Henry County. Perhaps more significant, the rapid socioeconomic growth created a spirit of optimism for the future success of the area, which helped solidify public opinion for a county supported entity like the HCHS Museum.

Beginning in 1899, the residents of New Castle witnessed a period of rapid industrialization that spurred continued growth in the county until the onset of the Great Depression. An anomaly of sorts, the unexpected transformation of a "straggling village" into a bustling mid-sized Indiana city had far reaching implications for its local

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<sup>57</sup> A mindset of historic preservation was still a century away in Henry County. Old structures were simply not saved in Indiana or, for that matter, most anywhere in the United States, unless they were closely associated with a very famous personage or event—usually associated with war or politics or both. "Historic Preservation in the United States," U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS), accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.usicomos.org/preservation>. But even the local renown of Gen. William Grose was not sufficient to save the home unless there was another viable reason for doing so. And this is where the HCHS's need of permanent quarters came in.



residents and its institutions. A new courthouse addition, seven new schools in and around New Castle, and increased funding for the county home (or poor farm) were all a product of the rapid economic development that took place at the county seat during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The timing of events worked out well for the struggling county historical society that held its meetings at the county seat. The sudden influx of new industries, the doubling, and redoubling, of New Castle's population, drew the attention of the business communities of larger cities in Indiana and elsewhere. Advancements in utilities and transportation, as well as governmental and cultural institutions, accompanied the rapid economic growth. A positive spirit of progress and new sense of importance gripped the community. Early signs of economic success in New Castle coincided with the HCHS's quest for a permanent home and passage of House Bill No. 379 by the Indiana General Assembly in 1901. This bill provided a legal means for county historical societies to construct or acquire permanent quarters for their meetings and house historical collections through county funding.<sup>58</sup> The sequence of events boded well for the committee of HCHS representatives seeking an appropriation from the county council and county commissioners in the fall of 1901. The county's 1901 appropriation began a tradition of supplemental support by the local government for the HCHS, which is an ongoing reality rare, if not unprecedented, among Indiana historical societies.

As demonstrated by the numerous special edition booklets and magazines issued by the New Castle Industrial Company—an organization of eight prominent businessmen and forerunner to the New Castle Chamber of Commerce— and local

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<sup>58</sup> House Bill No. 349, passed in March 1901, was discussed at the close of Chapter Three.

newspapers, Henry County's local history was a prime vehicle for the promotion of the county seat.<sup>59</sup> Many of the major players associated with the Industrial Company and the newspapers in New Castle had close affiliations with the HCHS.<sup>60</sup> During this transitional period, only a strong tradition of leadership and active involvement from neighboring communities kept the HCHS from becoming too New Castle-centric in its attention.

The small industries that existed in Henry County prior to 1870 were dominated by various types of water-powered mills and farm-related operations. The Industrial Revolution reached the county in the 1870s and coincided with the major period of railroad construction in the latter quarter of the century.<sup>61</sup> Factories consisted of steam

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<sup>59</sup> Six over-sized special edition magazines were published locally between 1902 and 1910 including a twenty-page booklet in April 1907 by the New Castle Industrial Company entitled "New Castle – The Beautiful" and a handsomely printed forty-page booklet by the *New Castle Daily Times* entitled "New Castle – The Rose City." On April 28, 1907, very similar 'New Castle editions' were published by the *Indianapolis Sunday Star* and the *Muncie Sunday Star* devoted largely to the town's newest industries.

<sup>60</sup> The primary actors involved with the New Castle Industrial Company were generally members of prominent families who settled in the area before the Civil War. *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, in chapters XLVII, provided biographies of Henry County's industrialists, bankers, lawyers, and "men of affairs" who were at the "forefront of progress" in New Castle. Hazzard published his two-volume history midway through this decade of rapid industrialization. For a list of the original members of the Industrial Company, see *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 1166. Among the most prominent members of the company was Judge Eugene H. Bundy—president of the HCHS from 1899 to 1901 and son of HCHS Founder Martin L. Bundy. Charles Hernly, secretary of the Industrial Company, was also active in the HCHS during this time. Other important players involved with the historical society were Judges William O. Barnard and Mark E. Forkner and families; William C. Bond and family; and James and Emmett McQuinn, owners of Hoosier Manufacturing, and their families. Several other Company members were connected to the HCHS through their wives and other close family members including names like Jennings, Heller, Goodwin, French, Kinsey, and Millikan. The HCHS membership from the start consisted of the county's prominent families. Little wealth existed in the county until after 1900 and this, as a general rule, was concentrated in New Castle. As the population rose and many "outsiders" arrived to work in the factories, an elite class developed in the city that combined newer families, like the McQuinns, with the older established clans. The majority of this class lived within a few block of the historical building as the city grew and engulfed the historical society grounds that, at its establishment, was located on the southern edge of New Castle. HCHS members associated with the local newspapers are covered in Chapter Three.

<sup>61</sup> Thirty-two of the various mills and factories in Henry County were powered by steam engines, while nineteen operated with water wheels. See *U.S. Ninth Census of Manufactures, Indiana, 1870*, reel 3774 (Gibson-Madison counties), Indiana State Archives. Railroads were an important attraction for industries at the turn of the century. Two rail lines were in operation through New Castle by 1875 and four by 1893. Higgins Belden & Co., *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Henry County*, 3; and Rerick Brothers, *County of Henry*, see map opposite title page.

operated planing, grist, and flouring mills, woolen factories, pork packing plants, grain elevators, and other such operations that utilized natural resources and agricultural produce that were abundant locally. The corn-hog market economy, fueled by ready transportation to outside markets, generated the little wealth that existed in the county.

While Indiana counties directly to the north and west were capitalizing on the “gas boom” and free natural energy to attract a number of glass manufacturers, Henry County languished.<sup>62</sup> Many prospective wells were sunk across the county, but to little economic advantage for their investors.<sup>63</sup> By the turn of the century, wasteful practices by natural gas companies in Indiana rapidly depleted the gas field. Few Indiana cities could now rely on this once abundant resource to attract would-be factory owners. This leveled the playing field for the undersized and underdeveloped county seat of New Castle. Stimulated by an experienced and opportunistic outsider, a well-organized and energetic group of local business leaders were able to raise a somewhat surprising amount of local capital on several different occasions to secure the relocation of

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A branch interurban line connecting to Indianapolis was also in operation before 1900. New Castle became the regional hub for a major interurban line developed in 1906 with connecting branch lines to all the neighboring county seats: Anderson, Muncie, Richmond, Winchester, Greenfield, and Indianapolis. Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 291-293 and 308-310. See also Glen A. Blackburn, “Interurban Railroads of Indiana,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 20, no.3 (September 1924), 233-234, 236-242, 251-255, and 270-271.

<sup>62</sup> Muncie, in neighboring Delaware County, is a prime example. Muncie’s population was just under 3,000 in 1870. By 1900, it had grown to nearly 21,000 thanks in large part to gas boom companies like Ball Corporation, which located in Muncie in the 1880s.

<sup>63</sup> The 1887 fall issues of the *New Castle Courier* are littered with brief notices and updates on gas wells in Henry County. A local gas company was organized, mains sunk, and pipes laid to supply a small number of homes and businesses in New Castle. The gas was eventually piped in from nearby Cadiz, because the wells around the county seat were insufficient even at such a limited scale. See *New Castle Courier*, October 28, 1887, p.7, c.1. See also “New Castle’s Improvements,” *New Castle Courier*, November 12, 1886, p.5, c.5.

factories beginning in 1899 with Hoosier Manufacturing (soon to be famous for its Hoosier Cabinets) (see Figure C).<sup>64</sup>



Figure C: Postcard of the Hoosier Manufacturing Company,  
New Castle, Indiana.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.

During the closing years of the nineteenth century, New Castle—with a population of around 3,400—also received a measure of national attention as “The Rose City” following prize winning efforts by a cooperative group from local floral companies representing the city at St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City, and other national

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<sup>64</sup> Thomas M. Randall saw an opportunity for substantial economic growth in New Castle in 1899. He was instrumental in planning and directing economic activities to get the process of attracting industry to New Castle underway between 1899 and 1902. See Heller, “New Castle Made Progress in 1903,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 242-243 (as quoted from Walter S. Chambers, *New Castle Democrat*, Industrial Edition, April 17, 1903). The McQuinn family—owner / operators of Hoosier Manufacturing—relocated from Albany, Indiana, following a fire that destroyed their factory. The relocation of Hoosier Manufacturing is the first instance where local investment from a small group of New Castle residents secured an industry from outside of Henry County. The McQuinn family (father and son) built new homes directly across the street from the HCHS Museum and became active in its operations. A “Hoosier Cabinet” room is now part of the permanent exhibitions at the HCHS Museum.

and international flower shows for its American Beauty Roses.<sup>65</sup> Chicago floral companies soon joined the growing field of locally owned greenhouses that dotted the outskirts of the town (see Figure D).<sup>66</sup> Several other small industries, with local origins, were also experiencing early levels of success or preparing to begin production by 1902.<sup>67</sup>



Figure D: Greenhouses constructed around 1902 on property once owned by General William Grose (just east of the HCHS Museum and grounds) by the Chicago concern, Fredrick J. Benthley & Co. Henry County Historical Society Collection.

In that year, the New Castle Industrial Company formally organized to prepare for and attract larger industries to New Castle. Judge Eugene H. Bundy, and the

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<sup>65</sup> “The Roses that Made New Castle Famous,” in “New Castle – The Rose City,” *New Castle Daily Times* (Special Edition), April 28, 1907, 11; and Lisa Morris, “New Castle was Rose City,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 8, 1976, 13 and 15.

<sup>66</sup> Floral industry began in 1894 with Heller Bros. (officially South Park Floral Company) and soon followed by Levi A. Jennings and William Dittman. Two Chicago firms joined them in 1901—Weiland and Bethany & Co. (the latter purchased several acres of the Grose estate and erected five modern greenhouses located directly east of the historical building grounds). It was estimated that by 1910 more than 100 greenhouses surrounded New Castle. The name “South Park” came from the location of the greenhouses, which dominated much of the former fairgrounds where the Old Settlers’ Association held its annual meetings only blocks from the Gen. Grose home. For more information on the floral industry in New Castle. See Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 319-323 and 329-331.

<sup>67</sup> Safety Shredder Company (farm implements), Indiana Rolling Mill (steel foundry), Indiana Shovel Factory, and Pan-American Bridge Company (steel foundry) were among these local industries.

organization's other members, had been actively engaged in the local industrial movement since roughly 1899. Streets were paved in the business district, utilities improved, and land suitable for factory construction purchased. Krell-French Piano Factory was the first major employer lured to the town (see Figure E). It was followed by Maxwell-Briscoe Automobile Company in 1906 (see Figure F).<sup>68</sup> From the start, the two factories promised in aggregate no less than 2,000 jobs.<sup>69</sup> By 1910, New Castle boasted of a diverse family of industries producing everything from caskets to bedsteads, pianos to automobiles. And factories producing brick, steel girders, lumber, and other materials were also present to supply many of the basic building materials necessary to construct the new factories and the ancillary building projects now flooding the area.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> June 22, 1907, was the groundbreaking ceremony for the much-anticipated automobile factory. Charles W. Fairbanks, vice-president of the United States, was present to offer a speech and lay the cornerstone. A crowd of several thousand filled the undeveloped area that had until recently been farm land. The cornerstone contained a number of documents and other items significant to the event. Before the original portion of the Maxwell factory was torn down in 2006 (leaving only the cornerstone and small portion of the facade as a memorial to the site), the groundbreaking ceremonies were reenacted and leaders from the HCHS were present to open the cornerstone and preserve its contents. These are now exhibited at the museum. The museum opened a Maxwell addition in May 2015.

<sup>69</sup> By 1907, the labor figures of the top four employers in New Castle: Maxwell-Briscoe Motor Company (2,200), Krell-French Piano Company (500), Indiana Rolling Mill Company (300), and Hoosier Manufacturing (250), totaled 3,250. This figure was nearly equal to New Castle's total population in 1900, which was 3,406. "New Castle – The Rose City," *New Castle Daily Times*, April 28, 1907, 10.

<sup>70</sup> Henry County, not traditionally known for steel or lumber production, nevertheless contained several small companies that contributed much to the period of rapid economic development that occurred early in the twentieth century. See Ernest Scotten, *Our Golden Anniversary, 1902-1952: Fifty Years of Fabrication by the Pan-American Bridge Company, New Castle, Indiana*, (New Castle, IN: self-published, 1952), "Second Year" and "Sixth Year," no page numbers; Bob Perdue, *The History of the Indiana Rolling Mill Through 1975* (Sulphur Springs, IN: self-published as part of the Rolling Mill Project, 1975), 10 and 11; and "New Castle – The Rose City," *New Castle Daily Times*, April 28, 1907, 20. Usually, such companies were located on the northwest side of New Castle adjacent to the Big Four Railroad and Pennsylvania Railroad, although the Indiana Rolling Mill was built west of town.





Figure E: Postcard of Krell-French Piano Company, New Castle, Indiana.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.



Figure F: Chrysler Corporation, formerly the Maxwell-Briscoe Automobile Company. Photograph taken ca. 1920, by Charles L. Heichert, undated.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.

The socioeconomic growth during the first decade of the twentieth century in New Castle helped provide the basis of sustainability for the HCHS. In recent years, historians pinpointed three components common to the early stages of development and sustainability for nineteenth-century private historical societies in the East and Midwest: a growing urban center, a stable but growing population, and developed cultural institutions (as referenced in Chapter One).<sup>71</sup>

Private historical societies, like the HCHS, have always been reliant on the public support of local residents for private donations, member dues, and as volunteer workers. Previous to acquiring a permanent home, the HCHS survived on member dues and the active participation of a group of history enthusiasts (made up of men and women) of substantial size for a rural Indiana county. The ability to adequately support and sustain a historical building and grounds was going to be a challenge under any circumstances. The bolstered socioeconomic climate, centered at New Castle, with the influx of thousands of new residents, influenced by a new and growing community pride, made many more resources available for the HCHS. The county now had a much larger tax base and county budget that it could draw appropriations from in support of county owned buildings (like the historical building).<sup>72</sup> Influx of new industries brought with it a number of business executives and managers who sometimes became members

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<sup>71</sup> Mason, "Trans-Mountain States," 125. See also Joseph W. Cox, "Origin of the Maryland Historical Society: A Case Study in Cultural Philanthropy," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 74, no. 2 (June 1979), 104. Stitt, "Pennsylvania," 59; Cox, "Other Atlantic States," 108; and Lemmon, "Trans-Mississippi States," 206-207. Historians were referring primarily to state historical societies. However, the formula seems to fit equally well in the case of Henry County, but on a smaller scale.

<sup>72</sup> Several of the larger industries (e.g., Maxwell and Krell-French) paid no property taxes. However, the dramatic increase in factory employment attracted new stores and businesses, increased property values, and the aggregate payroll of manufacturing establishments. In aggregate these factors raised the tax base of New Castle and Henry County. See Heller, "Large Manufacturing Plants Built" and "Maxwell-Briscoe Plant Built," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 244-248.



of the HCHS. More importantly, many of the wives of the new local elite became active in the growing women's club movement. During this transitional period, the HCHS courted greater involvement from the Federation of Women's Clubs of Henry County and the response was immediate and impactful.

Historians have documented the difficulties experienced by privately operated state historical societies organized before the establishment of a substantial urban center, a stable but growing population, and developed cultural institutions (Indiana Historical Society is a good example; but Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, and many more states fit the same basic pattern of organizing a state historical society before the necessary pillars of public support were in place).<sup>73</sup> Henry County may have fallen victim to this same trend if not for the needed socioeconomic growth it experienced beginning in 1899. Following two decades of growth, the Society faced major setbacks during the Great Depression and World War II that in all likelihood would have caused at least a temporary break in the organization's activities if not for its stable organizational foundation, based on a county-supported historical building, membership of over 300, and an established role in the local communities as the authority of Henry County's local history.

Reliance on public support necessitated a sizable population or a smaller population very aware of the importance of preserving its local history. Following the Civil War, the population of Henry County numbered only 23,000. While many surrounding Indiana counties experienced rapid population growth, Henry County

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<sup>73</sup> See Dunlap, *American Historical Societies*; and Jones, ed., *Historical Consciousness in the Early Republic*. Like the Indiana Historical Society, all the above mentioned state were private organizations reliant on private funding.

gained only 2,000 by 1900. Several new communities developed as stations along rail lines. This kept Henry among the top Indiana counties in the number of incorporated towns.<sup>74</sup> But nothing approaching city status had yet developed. New Castle, which numbered 3,400 at the turn of the twentieth century, had just recently laid claim to the county's largest town.<sup>75</sup> New Castle, even being the county seat, was quite insignificant until after the Civil War: its 1860 population being only 417. It jumped to more than 1,500 in 1870 and 2,300 by 1880 as the railroads and steam powered mills began to replace water powered mills scattered along the several streams and small rivers.<sup>76</sup>

Henry County's substantial population growth, stimulated by the period of rapid industrialization in the first decade of the twentieth century, helped provide the three key ingredients generally required in the sustainability formula for private historical societies: a substantial urban center, a stable but growing population, and developed cultural institutions. But the preservation of the Grose home as the new HCHS Museum was also a story of timing, intersecting movements crossing paths at just the right moment. The death of General William Grose, in 1900, made available the home of one of Henry County's best known civic and military leaders. His death coincided with the

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<sup>74</sup> In 1880, Henry, with eleven, was second only to Wayne, with thirteen, in the number of incorporated towns. The average for Indiana counties in 1880 was six. See State of Indiana Third Annual Report of the Department of Statistics 1881 (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford: State Printer, 1882), 192-248. By 1915-1916, Henry County, with sixteen, surpassed Wayne County (still with eleven), but remained second among Indiana counties to Lake County, which had grown substantially since 1880 (from around 15,000 to nearly 160,000 in 1920). The average number for Indiana counties was now nearly eleven. See Thomas W. Brolley, *Bureau of Statistics Sixteenth Biennial Report (Twenty-Second Volume) for 1915 and 1916* (Fort Wayne Printing Company: Contractors for State Printing and Binding, 1917), 192-214.

<sup>75</sup> New Castle surpassed Knightstown in population around 1880. Knightstown, located on the National Road, had reached its peak by the 1860s and has remained at about 2,000 since then.

<sup>76</sup> In fact a local newspaper labeled 1881 as New Castle's boom year. In reality it was simply growth long overdue. The writer noted that an association was being organized as a way to sell shares and promote the town: "Our opportunity is here. Will we improve it or let it slip out of our hands?" "New Castle's Boom Year," *New Castle Courier*, August 26, 1881. Nearly two decades passed before another opportunity availed itself.

beginning of New Castle's industrialization efforts, which provided the economic means and community spirit willing and able to support it. The passage of House Bill No. 379, in the spring of 1901, and the existence of the HCHS furnished a lawful means to preserve the General Grose home and a viable historical organization to use and care for it. The combination of all these happenings produced an essential link in the sustainability of the HCHS.

### **Custodians of the HCHS**

Once a permanent home was acquired by the HCHS in late 1901, the next step in assuring longevity and fulfillment of its mission was building a historical collection.<sup>77</sup> From the very beginning of the historical society movement in the United States, organizers understood that the keys to organizational sustainability were permanent quarters and a basic collection of historical materials.<sup>78</sup>

An act passed March 10, 1921, by the Indiana General Assembly, known as Senate Bill No. 190, significantly altered the future course of preserving and institutionalizing local history in Henry County. Although not directly responsible for this second major act affecting historical societies in Indiana, the HCHS was again the first organization to take advantage of its benefits.<sup>79</sup> Senate Bill No. 190 was passed as a supplement to the act approved exactly twenty years before (House Bill No. 379, March 1901) that made it possible for historical societies in Indiana to acquire a permanent

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<sup>77</sup> House Bill No. 379, passed by the Indiana General Assembly in March 1901, enabled county councils and county commissioners to, for the first time, appropriate county funds for the purchase and support of a historical building for its county historical society. (The passage of House Bill No. 379 and its results related to the HCHS are covered in detail in Chapter 3, part 3, "Founding of the HCHS and Acquisition of a Permanent Home.")

<sup>78</sup> Tucker, *Clio's Consort*, xii.

<sup>79</sup> "Historical News" (March 1922), 117.

home (covered in detail earlier in this chapter). Senate Bill No. 190 now made provision “for the employment and compensation of curators for the property and collections of historical societies.”<sup>80</sup> An annual appropriation taken from the county’s general fund was again a lawful option placed before the county commissioners and county council for this purpose.

Before legal provision was made in Indiana for the hiring of a curator through public appropriations, the HCHS, with a very limited budget, took other measures to satisfy the needs of the museum and its members. According to Article Five of the 1902 HCHS Articles of Association, day-to-day responsibility for the museum during the first two decades of the historical building’s existence was dictated by the HCHS board of trustees.<sup>81</sup> Article Five made provision for a custodian to have charge of the building, grounds, and collections. Wide discretion was left to the trustees concerning compensation, occupancy, and specific authorities of the newly created office. A one year term was specified with the added condition that the custodian “may be removed sooner for sufficient cause.”<sup>82</sup> A measure of uncertainty is evident from the latitude given to the board of trustees on this matter. And for good reason. The HCHS, being the first historical society in Indiana to be given the responsibility of caring for a distinct historical building under the 1901 act faced a number of challenges without the

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<sup>80</sup> *Journal of the Indiana State Senate during the Seventy-Second Session of the General Assembly Commencing Thursday, January 6, 1921*, [Regular Session] (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, Contractors for the Indiana State House Printing and Binding, 1921), 342 and 569 (passed without a dissenting vote); and *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana for the Seventy-Second Session of the General Assembly Commencing Thursday, January 6, 1921* [Regular Session] (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, Contractors for the Indiana State House Printing and Binding, 1921), 599 and 938 (passed House 67 to 10).

<sup>81</sup> Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

advantages of other in-state models to base its decisions on.<sup>83</sup> How would the custodian be compensated? What specific needs would arise as museum and library collections were amassed? What type of direct access would be required by the public to the historical building? A live-in custodian was seen as the logical first step in the process of answering such questions.

As the historical society movement slowly advanced in the Hoosier state in the first decades of the twentieth century, a number of prospective and newly formed societies sought guidance from the HCHS.<sup>84</sup> But like opportunities were limited for the leaders of the HCHS during this period. Not until the creation of the Indiana Historical Commission—a temporary state agency established for Indiana’s Centennial in 1916—did local historical societies around the state begin to receive guidance from a consistent and competent source. A brief period of adjustment was necessary before an agreeable role was defined for the custodian of the HCHS. What was first viewed as a position for

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<sup>83</sup> Less than ten local historical societies were active in Indiana by 1905, a few of which held small collections in rooms in a county courthouse or library. See “Local Historical Societies,” (Second Quarter, 1905), 98. In May 1922 forty counties had active historical societies, including two regional societies—Northern Indiana Historical Society and Southwestern Indiana Historical Society. See Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, May 8, 1922, Box 12, Folder 5, Clarence H. Smith Papers. By 1923, fifty-five counties had organized historical societies including eight that were organized between November 1922 and March 1923. See “Historical News,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 19, no. 1 (March 1923), 103-105. Not until 1918 would another Indiana county historical society acquire a distinct and separate historical building dedicated solely to the purposes of a museum. See Rabb, “The Hoosier Listening Post,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 4, 1921, 6. By October 1921, it was estimated by Lucy Elliott, of the Indiana Historical Commission, that the HCHS “was one among three or four in the state to enjoy the distinction of owing its own home.” “Historians Turn Back 100 Years,” *New Castle Courier*, October 27, 1921, p.1, c.1.

<sup>84</sup> Representative from the Wayne County Historical Society participated in Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the HCHS, April 29, 1905. See “Henry County Historical Society Nineteenth Annual Meeting” program, in HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 127. The first record of other organizations requesting information by mail came before November 1907. See Benjamin S. Parker to Charles M. Reagan, November 15, 1907, Box 1, Folder 1, Charles M. Reagan Papers. Similar contact occurred in April 1908. See HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 61. A number of local historical societies sent representatives to HCHS meetings between 1926 and 1947: Rush County Historical Society (April and October 1926 and October 1942); Delaware County Historical Society (October 1926); Wayne County Historical Society (April 1927, October 1945, and October 1947); Tippecanoe County Historical Society (April 1930, April and October 1931); and Ripley Township Historical Society, Carthage, Rush County (October 1936). See HCHS minutes according to dates provided.

a long-standing, prominent male member of the Society soon became dominated by women from the local community who may have better qualified to fulfill the needs of the organization at this early stage of development.<sup>85</sup>

Before the dedication ceremonies in April 1902, the HCHS employed Loring A. Williams and his wife, Alice, as custodians.<sup>86</sup> The Williams family was the first of four such occupations of the historical building between 1902 and 1923.<sup>87</sup> Loring A. (commonly referred to by his initials L. A.), a native of New Castle and member the New Castle Friends Church, was a well-established member of the local community.<sup>88</sup> He had recently completed a term as Henry County Clerk, 1896–1900, which, at the time, was a coveted and lucrative county office. Within the HCHS, Loring was elected secretary for four consecutive terms beginning in 1894, and the couple were members of the executive committee before being selected as custodians.<sup>89</sup> They were both proven and trusted members of the community and believed competent by the trustees to care for the historical building and its contents. According to the 1902 HCHS constitution and other contemporary accounts, the expected role of the custodian during this

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<sup>85</sup> Article five of the 1902 HCHS constitution refers to the custodian as “he.” See Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers.

<sup>86</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 80; and “An Enjoyable Occasion,” *New Castle Courier*, April 28, 1902. It is clear that both husband and wife fulfilled the responsibilities of the position. However, only Loring is listed among the officers on the reverse side of the April 1902 dedication program as custodian. See Scrapbook 58, 95.

<sup>87</sup> It should be noted that the first HCHS curator was hired in 1921, but a custodian, Myrtle Gunder, carried over until at least 1923.

<sup>88</sup> Spiceland Monthly Meeting, Men's Minutes 2nd Mo. 8 1870, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College), 480. Loring transferred his membership from Spiceland Monthly Meeting to the Methodist Episcopal Church of New Castle. Loring later joined New Castle Monthly Meeting. See New Castle Monthly Meeting, Membership Records 1886-1918, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College, 11.

<sup>89</sup> Loring A. Williams (1849–1912), a signer of the 1902 HCHS Article of Association, later served as the first financial secretary, 1906–1911, and several more terms on executive committees. His first wife, Alice C. (Bowen) Williams (1853–1905), was a member of the executive committee in 1896. Martha Williams, an adopted daughter, lived at the historical building with the family. See *Hazzard's History*, vol. 2, 979.

formative period was to provide courteous and efficient services, particularly at the semiannual meetings. These services often were related to priority efforts initiated by the trustees—planting trees and other native shrubs donated by members to beautify the grounds; hanging pictures in the assembly and collections rooms donated or on loan to the Society; and general housekeeping and repairs to the historical building.<sup>90</sup>

Loring and Alice fulfilled their duties as custodians so satisfactorily that in April 1904 they were named honorary members by the Society and granted lifetime memberships free from paying dues from that point forward.<sup>91</sup> Alice, referred to as the “gentle hostess,” did much to shape the role of custodian in her brief time serving, alongside her husband, in the position.<sup>92</sup> The members, who, as a general rule, rarely visited except at the two meetings held each year, enjoyed the domestic atmosphere the woman custodian brought to the historical building. It was Alice who created the tradition of a hostess attending over the dinner hour at meetings, which continued in an evolving nature over much of the twentieth century.<sup>93</sup>

Alice, fifty-three, died in the months prior to the April 1905 meeting and her husband vacated the position. A search for a new custodian was satisfied when Thaddeus “Thad” Coffin and family agreed to occupy the house that he had designed and constructed for General William Grose more than three decades earlier. After serving in the Civil War, Thad married and, in 1867, migrated to New Castle from his

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<sup>90</sup> "Historical Society Notes," *New Castle Courier*, April 12, 1902; and HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 97-99.

<sup>91</sup> *New Castle Courier*, May 5, 1904, in HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 117. Honorary memberships were an uncommon distinction made by the HCHS, conferred to only those individuals who provided exemplary service to the Society or in the community at large. Usually such honors were bestowed upon individuals of advanced age.

<sup>92</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 127.

<sup>93</sup> Meals were served as part of the semiannual meetings until the 1980s.

boyhood home in Ashland, Ohio. In New Castle, Thad practiced carpentry, contracting, and building until 1872 when he was appointed Post Master of New Castle—a profession he followed off and on for many years. By the time of their hiring in 1905, Thad, sixty-four, and his wife Caroline, sixty-two, had eight adult children—seven daughters and a son—ranging between the ages of eighteen and thirty-seven. The family’s first recorded association with the HCHS was the election of Eva W. Coffin to the office of secretary in 1899. Eva was only the second female to hold the office.

The Coffin family’s participation in Society activities may have precipitated Thad’s hiring as the next custodian. Thad and Caroline were part of a “collections committee” in April 1905 involved with the early process of building a historical collection for the museum.<sup>94</sup> At this time the custodian’s duties in relation to collections remained ill defined, as Benjamin Parker and John Thornburgh were co-laboring in this area in the first years of the collection-building process.<sup>95</sup> The trustees held the option to “select a member of the Society to overlook the work of collection and to have supervision thereof with power to select assistants in various parts of the County to aid in its promotion” if the custodian was not, or could not, sufficiently supply the desired results.<sup>96</sup>

Thad’s skills as a carpenter and his familiarity with the house more than credentialed the aging veteran for many of the duties required of the position. The first major structural alteration to the building was initiated in October 1905, conveniently

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<sup>94</sup> HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 128.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 81 and 107; and HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 35, 82, 84, and 151-154.

<sup>96</sup> Article Five, in Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers.



only months after Thad was hired.<sup>97</sup> It is relatively safe to assume that Thad took part in this “rehabilitation of the Historical building” (as it is labeled in the minutes), although there is no specific mention of who actually executed the work.<sup>98</sup> A wall was removed from between the front parlor and library to create a larger assembly room (see Figures G and H).<sup>99</sup> The newspaper account of the fall 1906 meeting commented on the finished project: “The recent changes and improvements in the building were noted and greatly appreciated, the addition of an auditorium being something that has been needed for some time.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 13 and 17.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 21 (see undated article, “Preservers of County History”).

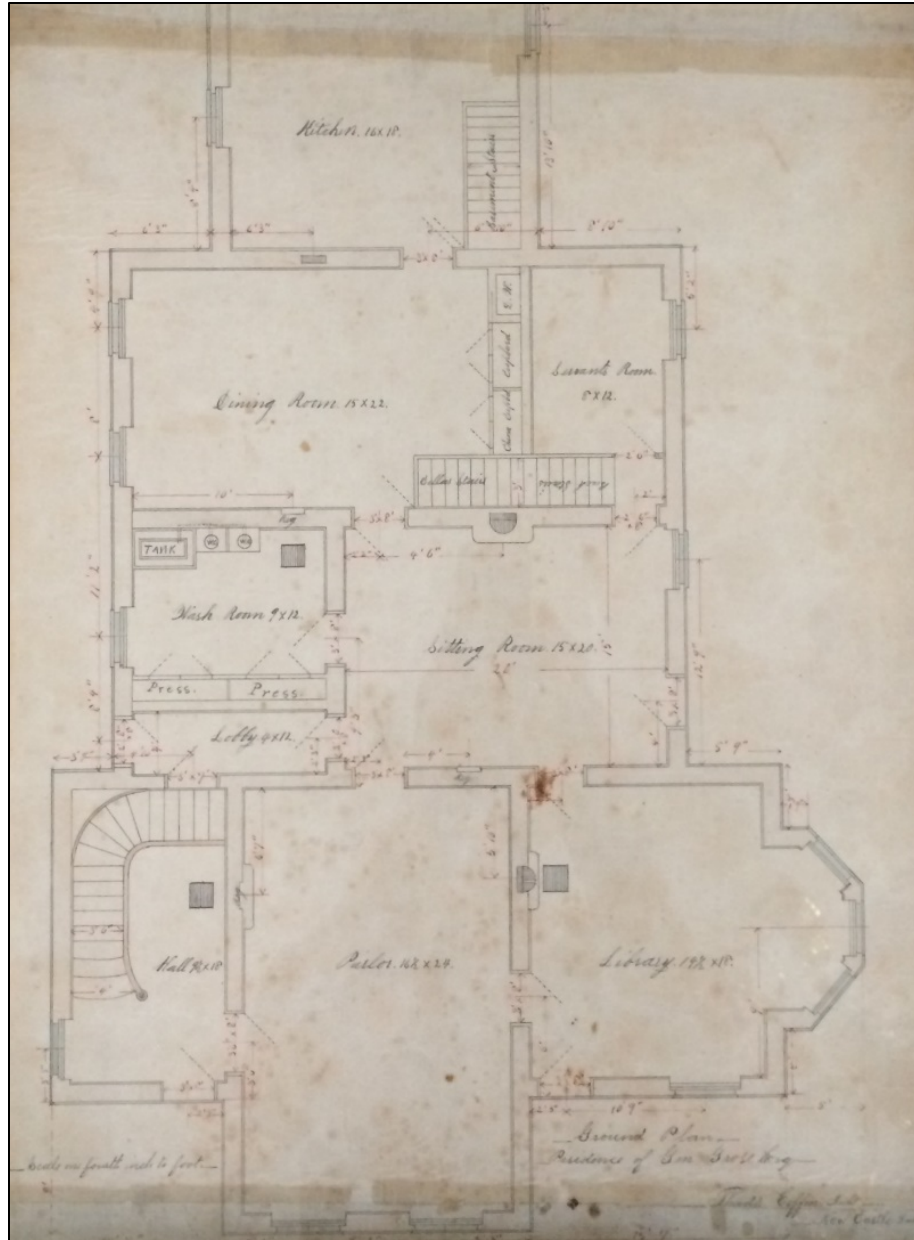


Figure G: Ground Plan – Residence Gen. Grose, Esq.  
 Original 1869 ground floor drawing of  
 General William Grose Residence by Thaddeus Coffin.  
 Original set of drawing on permanent exhibition at the HCHS Museum.



Figure H: HCHS Assembly Room, 1906 to early 1924 before a second major alteration, which removed two more interior walls, to expand the meeting place.  
Taken January 20, 1924 by Dr. Herbert L. Heller.  
Scrapbook 101, Henry County Historical Society Collection.

Four of the Coffin's seven daughters completed the family unit occupying the historical building. The "Coffin girls" were active in church related activities and the cultural institutions of New Castle. They were, in later years, characterized as "much loved and respected" citizens who "contributed in so many ways to the community."<sup>101</sup> Grace and Carrie were even small business owners in 1901.<sup>102</sup> Caroline, and her four daughters, competently replaced Alice Williams in the role of hostess and other duties

<sup>101</sup> Heller, "Coffin Girls Ran Millinery Business," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 235-236. Grace L. (1868-1939), Caroline C. or "Carrie" (1879-1968), Eva W. (1879-1956), and Dorothy C. (1882-1969) were the "Coffin Girls" living at the HCHS Museum in 1905-1908.

<sup>102</sup> Heller, "Coffin Girls Ran Millinery Business," *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 235-236.

related to collections and housekeeping. Thad's tenure as custodian lasted only until the first months of 1908 (roughly three years), but the Coffin family's connections and future impact on the HCHS were much more meaningful than this brief time may suggest.<sup>103</sup>

In the spring of 1908, a committee of three, which included Loring A. Williams, was appointed, in conjunction with the board of trustees, "to find another suitable family or party to fill the position" of custodian.<sup>104</sup> By the next executive committee meeting in late March the position was filled by James P. and Eliza K. Paskins.<sup>105</sup> The Paskins were a departure from the practice of hiring from within the organization. The Coffin family provided notice of their resignation, yet finding another long-established family from the area with strong ties to the Society may have been difficult. James, forty-six, was already steadily employed at the nearby Hoosier Manufacturing by June 1900.<sup>106</sup> It is likely that James handled general maintenance and repair jobs at the historical building, but he is never formally mentioned in the minutes following the 1908 hiring.

Eliza, forty-two, was officially the new custodian, and she remained in the position from 1908 to roughly 1918. This was much longer than the tenure of any other live-in custodian. Although it is difficult to pinpoint precisely when the family arrived in New Castle from their previous residence in Johnson County, Indiana, it is very probable that they arrived in 1899 attracted by an employment opportunity for James at

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<sup>103</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 49. Bessie Coffin, Thad's daughter, returned to New Castle around 1940 and became very active in collections and meeting activities. Other daughters and Thad's brother Arthur were also members. Thad's granddaughter, Alice Boyd Freel, who grew up in the Coffin family home, donated the "Thaddeus Coffin Desk" to the HCHS before her death in 2002. This one-of-a-kind work of folk art is now the centerpiece of the museum collection.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>106</sup> 1900 United States Census, s.v. "James Paskins," Henry Township, Henry County, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

the newly relocated Hoosier Manufacturing, which opened that same year in New Castle.

It is difficult to gauge how much responsibility for handling museum and library collections was placed on Eliza. The collections were certainly growing as more donations were received at each succeeding meeting. Accumulation of a collection “to illustrate the past history and the past and recent progress of the county” was top priority now that a permanent home was secured.<sup>107</sup> Many individuals were involved in collections activities and a few were even compensated for their work.<sup>108</sup> The custodian was present at the historical building between meetings to receive donations and grant access to the occasional visitor wishing to utilize the small and disorganized collections kept in the upper rooms of the building.<sup>109</sup> But Eliza’s main focus as custodian during her decade of service was preparing for and serving at the growing number of meetings held throughout the year at the historical building.<sup>110</sup> Standing and special committees were growing more common. The board of trustees now regularly met there. The newly established Nature Study Club held monthly meetings in addition to the larger attendance at the Society’s semiannual meetings.<sup>111</sup>

Regardless of the economic improvements happening in New Castle between 1900 and 1920, the budget of the HCHS remained exceedingly small. Annual appropriations made by the county commissioners before 1922 were restricted to

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<sup>107</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 67. In the minutes for the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting, April 29, 1909.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 82. In September 1909, Benjamin S. Parker and John Thornburgh were paid \$20 and \$30 respectively for work ordered by the executive committee for arranging, classifying, and cataloging books in the library; also for collecting, rearranging the pictures and labeling them.

<sup>109</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 6.

<sup>110</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 107-108.

<sup>111</sup> “The Henry County Historical Society 23<sup>rd</sup> [24<sup>th</sup>] Annual Meeting” program (see reverse of program for April 28, 1910), in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 109.

maintenance and repairs on the historical building and grounds as specified in the state law passed in 1901 (House Bill No. 379).<sup>112</sup> The trustees were forced to make such arrangements as were available to secure a custodian. The specific rental arrangements made with the first two custodians are unclear, but the Paskins paid ten dollars per month plus custodial services for their occupancy of the portion of the historical building not reserved for museum use.<sup>113</sup> The house was a large fifteen-room, two-story brick residence with a kitchen, full basement, former servants' quarters, and dumbwaiter. Museum and library collections were kept in only two of the six upstairs rooms and meetings were held in the now expanded front parlor or assembly room.<sup>114</sup> Much of the house was free for use by the custodian's family and other temporary lodgers.

In 1900, the Paskins, with two teenage sons, were renting a house on nearby Walnut Street.<sup>115</sup> By 1910, the boys had left home, but the James and Eliza did not live alone at the historical building.<sup>116</sup> The period of rapid industrialization in New Castle left a major housing shortage beginning around 1903.<sup>117</sup> Following the opening of the

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<sup>112</sup> *Laws of the State of Indiana...1901*, 543. For the complete text of House Bill No. 379, see *ibid.*, 542-544. The act specified that the historical society was responsible for "expenses of every kind incurred in the prosecution of its...work, except such costs for the construction and maintenance of the rooms or buildings and vaults as are heretofore provided for in this act." See also letter by Benjamin Parker published in, "Local Historical Societies," (Second Quarter 1905), 101. The average county appropriation for the HCHS, 1902-1921 (excluding the \$5,000 for the purchase of the Gen. Grose home in 1901) was \$250. See Henry County Council, *County Council Record Book 1 and 2*, Office of the Henry County Auditor, Henry County Courthouse.

<sup>113</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 6; and HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 50. Smith, speaking generally about the custodians hired by the HCHS before he was named curator in 1922, indicated that they all paid rent of some kind. Whether the amounts changed over the two decades is unstated.

<sup>114</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 6.

<sup>115</sup> 1900 United States Census, s.v. "James Paskins," Henry Township, Henry County, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>116</sup> 1910 United States Census, s.v. "James P. Paskins," New Castle Ward 5, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>117</sup> "Broke All Records," *New Castle Democrat Industrial Edition*, April 1903. See also Hamm, "Henry County's Three Migrations," no page numbers [9-10].

Maxwell-Briscoe Automobile Factory in 1907, the housing shortage was multiplied many fold. The 1910 United States Census for New Castle reveals a number of boardinghouses, new hotels, and many private homes opened to lodgers employed in industries developed since the previous census.<sup>118</sup> The HCHS board of trustees sought to supplement the organization's finances by capitalizing on the local demand by renting out empty rooms in the museum. Records show that three young men, all employed in the automobile industry, shared the large living area in the historical building with the Paskins.<sup>119</sup>

The Lincoln Street Stop on the Terre Haute, Indianapolis & Eastern interurban (T.H.I. & E. R.R.), utilized by many of the HCHS members and other guests visiting the museum between 1906 and 1930, was less than a block away from the museum, located at 614 South Fourteenth Street.<sup>120</sup> This was within easy walking distance of the factories on the south edge of town where James and the three boarders were employed. The “dinkey [sic],” an electric trolley car that operated between the downtown business district and the southern edge of town along South Fourteenth Street to service the new industries and their employees, had run past the historical building practically every day (except Sundays and holidays) since about 1906.<sup>121</sup> A very early system of local buses

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<sup>118</sup> The *New Castle Democrat* reported that even as early as April 1903: “Every boarding house [was] filled up and many new places started.” Heller, “New Castle Made Progress in 1903,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 243.

<sup>119</sup> 1910 United States Census, s.v. “James P. Paskins,” New Castle Ward 5, Henry, Indiana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*. It is most probable that the boarders occupied the several small upstairs bedrooms. It is unclear whether other boarders occupied the historical building between 1902 and 1919. By the 1920 U.S. Census, no boarders were sharing the building with the custodian and family.

<sup>120</sup> HCHS Minute Book, 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 112, April 1904 program reads, “interurban cars stop in front of building;” HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 51 and 67 (see covers of April 1908 and 1909 HCHS printed meeting programs); and *ibid.*, 98 (from April 1910 minutes).

<sup>121</sup> Heller, “Electric Trolleys of 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 291-292. The ‘dinkey’ (so named on account of its small size) was finally abandoned in 1928. The interurban system in East Central Indiana followed suit by 1931. The three major factories—Maxwell-Briscoe, Krell-French, and Hoosier Manufacturing—were all located about half a mile south of the HCHS Museum.

or “jitneys” was begun on the streets of New Castle in about 1913 in stiff competition with electric rail lines.<sup>122</sup> These modes of transportation aided the increased attendance at HCHS meetings and guests visiting the growing historical collections.<sup>123</sup>

As custodian, Eliza took on an additional duty not mentioned in relation with her predecessors. In addition to serving as hostess, she actually prepared a good portion of the noontime dinner for all the members and guests present at the semiannual meetings. Traditionally, the meal was patterned after the picnic-style lunches, popular as a time for socializing, at the old settlers’ reunions in Henry County. In the first three decades of HCHS semiannual meetings, each family brought their own “well-filled basket” with extra portions to satisfy uninformed guests and other members perhaps not able to provide for themselves.<sup>124</sup> By Eliza’s tenure as custodian, “the bounteous dinner” was provided for through “joint donations by the Society and the well-filled baskets of its members and friends.”<sup>125</sup> The dinners were “prepared and served under the skillful direction of the custodian” and “the noon hour was passed most enjoyably between the Historical attractions and those of the dinner.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Heller, “City Had One of First Bus Systems,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 294-95.

<sup>123</sup> According to a meeting programs between 1908 and 1916, the museum collection consisted of an early nineteenth-century household and kitchen collection, a picture gallery of early settlers, “fossils, aboriginal remains, and natural history specimens,” and “collection of native birds.”

<sup>124</sup> See “Program for the Henry County Historical Society Semi-Annual Meeting,” for Saturday, October 28, 1905, in Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 99.

<sup>125</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 101.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*; and HCHS Minute Book 3, 34. Much is made about the dinner hour in the minutes and the printed meeting programs. It quickly became a time for guests to view the collections exhibited at the museum. In 1906, there was some controversy over the HCHS providing the meal at semiannual meetings. This idea was emphatically put down in the printed program for the May 1907 meeting. See Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 103. After a curator was hired in 1921, members were again responsible for bringing their own meals. A “dinner committee” soon filled the former role of the custodian and changes in the dinner tradition soon followed. By World War II, pitch-in or co-operative dinners, with the Society furnishing bread, butter, coffee, cream and table service, were common. In the early 1950s, the “Carry-in-Meal” with meat, rolls, coffee, and table service provided, became the new trend. These traditions continued to evolve as meeting times were changed to Sundays and evening affairs. By the 1980s, meetings were curtailed and the meal eliminated.



The Paskins left the historical building in 1918 and, by 1920, were living in Montana with their eldest son, Harold.<sup>127</sup> The HCHS trustees promptly hired a new female custodian, Myrtle C. (Albertson) Gunder (1873–1948), as the fourth and final live-in custodian previous to the employment of a curator in 1921.<sup>128</sup> Much like her predecessor, Gunder (seen in the image below along with her daughter Hyacinth who lived at the historical building as well) was a mother of two and in her middle forties with an impressive family history. Yet Gunder’s family connections were closely intertwined with those of her hometown of New Castle and the county historical society.

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<sup>127</sup> 1920 United States Census, s.v. “James P. Paskins,” North Hingham, Hill County, Montana, accessed through *Ancestry.com*.

<sup>128</sup> Gunder continued on as live-in custodian at least until the spring of 1923, even after Clarence Smith, the first HCHS curator, was hired. See “Clarence Smith Seriously Hurt,” *New Castle Times*, April, 26, 1923. [The newspaper’s date was misprinted “April 25”] This was probably a helpful arrangement for the new curator as he was very busy with New Castle’s centennial celebration week, April 8–15, 1923, and he sustained a debilitating fall from a step ladder while hanging a flag on the historical building in preparation for the HCHS spring meeting.

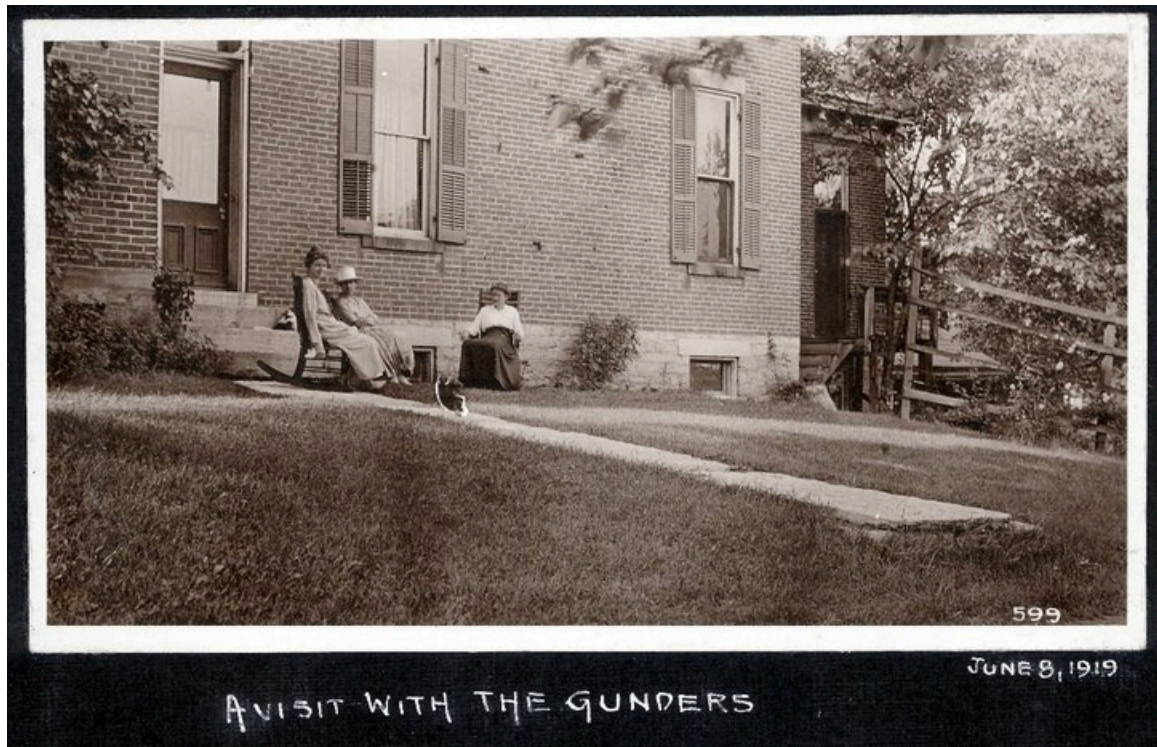


Figure I: "Visit with the Gunderts," taken by Herbert L. Heller, June 8, 1919. From left to right: Hyacinth Gunder, Myrtle Gunder, and Mary (Smith) Heller seated in chairs on the south side of the HCHS Museum. HCHS Scrapbook 101, Henry County Historical Society Collection.

Gunder may have been more involved with collections work than the previous custodian. At the 1919 spring meeting, she was appointed to a committee assigned to index and identify the museum collection—a process that took more than a year to complete.<sup>129</sup> Even with a custodian actively participating in collections activities, much more was desired by the members of the HCHS in connection with the day-to-day operation of the museum. The historical collection was expanding. Membership was

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<sup>129</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 14 and 23. The committee consisted of Mrs. Bell Bailey (chair), Arthur Osborn, Myrtle Gunder, and Allegra (Parker) Bufkin. The final report was given nineteen months later (November 1920). Myrtle also acted as secretary for two special meetings of the HCHS to discuss a new historical marker program initiated by the Indiana Historical Commission. See *ibid.*, 30-37.

increasing. And the historical society's role in the county and state was changing as was the overall historical climate and societal outlook.

Whether supervision of historical collections was undertaken by the custodian or not, the changing climate of local history following the State Centennial in 1916 rapidly altered the expectations for established county historical societies in Indiana. And to keep up with the progressive spirit ignited by the recent socioeconomic shifts that were occurring in New Castle and vicinity, change was necessary. As it is doubtful that any compensation was ever granted the custodial position except occupancy of the building, the trustees realized the difficulties in finding a qualified individual willing to take on so much responsibility for minimal compensation. For the HCHS to evolve into the organization desired by its members and needed by the surrounding communities, a new position with added responsibilities was required.

### **The Historical Movement in Indiana**

The process that facilitated the change from custodian to museum curator at the HCHS occurred, and was a part of, the larger historical movement in Indiana following the state centennial in 1916. The political climate in Indiana was not ripe for funding of any type of historical work—at state or local levels—until the approach of the state centennial. According to Ray Boomhower:

The celebration of the state's centennial in 1916 sparked renewed interest in Indiana's past, and also saw the first notable state commitment of funds to the history of Indiana with an appropriation of \$25,000 and the creation of the nine-member Indiana Historical Commission (today's Indiana Historical Bureau). The commission, aided by thousands of volunteers, sponsored historical pageants throughout the state, sparked the creation of Indiana's state park system, published the first four volumes in the Indiana Historical Collections, and helped inspire interest in an improved statewide

road system.<sup>130</sup> The centennial spirit inspired many counties and communities to begin their own historical institutions.<sup>131</sup>

The Indiana Historical Commission, and the “centennial spirit” it fostered, served as the central driving force in the rise of a state historical consciousness in Indiana.<sup>132</sup> For the first time, a state funded agency formulated wide-ranging plans that originally were “to collect, edit and publish documentary and other materials on the history of Indiana” and “to prepare and execute plans for the centennial celebration in 1916, of Indiana's admission to state hood.”<sup>133</sup> In 1915, the Commission also issued guidelines and instructions for county centennial organizations concerning the many facets of a successful centennial celebration at the county level (e.g., pageants, parades, permanent memorials, gathering historical data, finance, publicity, and cooperation with local entities).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Historical pageants were an important part of centennial celebrations in Indiana (for state, county, and organizational centennial events). Nationwide, such pageants were popular from roughly 1906 through the 1920s, with the height of the pageantry craze in the 1910s. For more information, see Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*. In East Central Indiana, historical pageants were held in 1916 for the state centennial in Henry and Delaware counties. Both counties also staged significant celebrations for their county centennials in the early 1920s. See Heimbaugh, ed., *History of Delaware County*, vol. 1, 558-560; and “The Henry County, Indiana, Centennial Pageant,” [booklet] Scrapbook 58, 125. For other historical pageants in Indiana counties during the 1920s (including several with Quaker connections in Wayne and Randolph), see “Historical News,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 17, no. 3 (September 1921), 300-301.

<sup>131</sup> Ray Boomhower, “Local History in Indiana, in *Encyclopedia of Local History*, 2nd ed., Carol Kammen and Amy H. Wilson, eds. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013), 284-285.

<sup>132</sup> This was the stated purpose of the First State History Conference, in 1919. See *Proceedings of [the First Indiana] State History Conference*, 9. See also *Proceedings of Third Annual Conference on Indiana History, Bulletin*, no. 15 (February 1922), 6.

<sup>133</sup> James A. Woodburn, “The Indiana Historical Commission and Plans for the Centennial,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 11, no. 4 (December 1915), 339.

<sup>134</sup> Indiana Historical Commission, *A history of the pageantry movement in Indiana in 1916 from the letters of the Indiana historical commission* (Indianapolis: Indiana historical commission, 1915), no page numbers, Hathi Trust Digital Library, accessed September 14, 2015, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006794667>. Harlow Lindley, professor of history at Earlham College and secretary of the Indiana Historical Commission, spoke on “Indiana’s Centennial” at the Twenty-Ninth HCHS Semi-Annual Meeting, October 28, 1915. See HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 54-55

Local historical societies in Howard, Floyd, Decatur, and other Indiana counties organized in 1916 to aid in celebrating the state centennial at the local level.<sup>135</sup> Following the end of World War I, many more local historical societies, assisted by the Indiana Historical Commission, organized in preparation for county centennials.<sup>136</sup> During this time, an annual state historical conference—held each December beginning in 1919 during Indiana’s “birth month”—a successful historical markers program, and a county by county archeological and historical survey of Indiana (in cooperation with the Division of Geology of the Department of Conservation) were also significant projects led by the state historical agency.<sup>137</sup> In April 1925, following a reorganization process

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<sup>135</sup> For a summation of the state of the local historical society movement in Indiana before 1920, see George S. Cottman’s [Secretary, Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison] address, “Co-operation between State and Local Historical Agencies,” 64-69.

In November 1923, the *Indiana History Bulletin* was officially issued by the Indiana Historical Commission, although the Commission had published a similar publication since 1919 under the title *Bulletin*. See “Indiana Historical Commission,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 19, no. 4 (December 1923), 371. Julian Boyd offered a brief national view of local historical societies, written in 1934. “Scores of local societies have been formed within the past decade, largely under the stimulus of some state society; the state societies of Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota have been particularly aggressive in this respect.” He added: “A high mortality rate exists among these somewhat artificially stimulated societies, and the recent depression has even terminated the existence or severely handicapped some of the older and more strongly entrenched societies.” Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 30.

<sup>136</sup> At the first annual state conference on history, George Cottman proposed that a state agency “with a vision...prepare a clearcut [sic] program of work for the guidance of the local society. It should be a flexible program to which a given society could work according to its opportunities, and it should be based upon a knowledge of the difficulties that are apt to exist. Such a program would serve to give purpose and direction to the work of organizations that often have only a hazy notion of what they ought to be doing.” Cottman, “Co-operation between State and Local Historical Agencies,” 66. The Indiana Historical Commission offered such assistance to the growing number of local historical societies around the state during the 1920s and 1930s through the *Indiana History Bulletin*, site visits, speaking engagement, and technical aid in collections, programs, exhibitions, research, and publishing. See fn. 83 above for information on the growing number of active historical societies in Indiana during the early 1920s.

<sup>137</sup> “Historical News,” included in the back section of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, March 1921 to September 1923, documents the many and varied activities occurring in the state historical movement. Beginning in November 1923, news concerning the local historical society movement and activities of the state historical agency was reserved primarily to the *Indiana History Bulletin*. See *Indiana History Bulletin*, published (first by the Indiana Historical Commission and then by its successor agency, the Indiana Historical Bureau) from 1916 through 2001. There exists several gaps in publication over that span of years. Many issues are now available at “Indiana Historical Bureau,” *Indiana History Bulletin* Issues, IN.gov, accessed September 14, 2015, <http://www.in.gov/history/2337.htm>; “Indiana History Bulletin,” Indiana Memory Digital Collections, accessed September 14, 2015,

that unofficially merged the Indiana Historical Commission and the growing Indiana Historical Society under one leader—John W. Oliver—the Commission was made a permanent state agency—the Indiana Historical Bureau.<sup>138</sup>

The historical movement in Indiana was a product of the confluence of the 1916 State Centennial and Progressivism—“the term applied to a variety of responses to the economic and social problems rapid industrialization introduced to America.”<sup>139</sup> Progressivism, as applied to the historical society movement in the U.S., was centered at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin under the leadership of Reuben Gold Thwaites, 1887 to 1913.<sup>140</sup> Following Progressive Era ideals, “modern” historical societies of the period were now employed as instruments of public education, as were public libraries, art galleries, and other types of museums emerging at this time. The fundamental role of nineteenth-century historical societies—as a library and repository to serve historians in their research, writing, and publishing of state and local histories—was now evolving under the changing socioeconomic pressures of the Progressive Era. The museum component of historical societies was elevated from a “cabinet of curiosities” to a tool to help educate and popularize state and local history.

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<http://cdm16066.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16066coll16>; and Hathi Trust Digital Library, accessed September 14, 2015, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000553575>.

<sup>138</sup> Ruegamer, *History of Indiana Historical Society*, 115.

<sup>139</sup> “The Progressive Era (1890–1920),” The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/progressive-era.cfm>. “The early progressives rejected Social Darwinism. In other words, they were people who believed that the problems society faced (poverty, violence, greed, racism, class warfare) could best be addressed by providing good education, a safe environment, and an efficient workplace. Progressives lived mainly in the cities, were college educated, and believed that government could be a tool for change.”

<sup>140</sup> Progressivism was particularly potent in Wisconsin on both the social and political fronts. See Clifford L. Lord, “Reuben Gold Thwaites,” in *Keepers of the Past*, Clifford L. Lord, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 58. Thwaites was also an active member of the American Historical Association. Beginning in 1904, he was a leader of the Conference of State and Local History, which, in 1940, officially became the American Association for State and Local History. See *ibid.*, 56; and “How it Began,” AASLH, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://about.aaslh.org/the-story-of-us/>. See also Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 29–30.

The museum, historical marker and site programs, traveling exhibits, historical pageants, school involvement, and efforts to secure a wider membership base representing a cross-section of the population and encourage the organization and development of local historical societies were endeavors employed by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin as a campaign to educate the masses, “the educationally underprivileged.”<sup>141</sup> This new role and function of the historical society for Thwaites was necessary “in a democracy becoming ever more democratic.”<sup>142</sup> This was a major shift in the philosophy and purpose of historical societies in America.

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, as the state historical agency, incorporated a historical library, private and state archives, a museum, a publications program, and a coordinator of all the other historical groups in the state into one program. (In Indiana, before 1925, “no two of these functions were performed exclusively by the same agency.”)<sup>143</sup> This new Progressive Era system of state and local history served as the model for historical societies across the United States. In Indiana it was no different. John W. Oliver, a young assistant director and soon-to-be director of the Indiana Historical Commission, 1918-1923, was a recent doctoral graduate of the University of Wisconsin (also the site of the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and Museum since 1900) and a rising figure in Indiana’s historical movement. Following

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<sup>141</sup> Lord, “Reuben Gold Thwaites,” 60-62 and 59.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 56-57. Boyd wrote: “Out of this [the Progressive Era] have come two of the most significant features of historical society activity in recent years: the idea of the value of a state historical body as an active member of state administration and the conception of its duty in carrying out a democratic program of education in state history.” Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 30-31. Boyd’s article, being the first of a limited number of works concentrated on the historical society movement in the U.S., has served future authors writing on this topic as an important original work of scholarship, including materials published in the last ten years. See, e.g., Kyvig and Marty, *Nearby History*; and Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*.

<sup>143</sup> Ruegamer, *History of Indiana Historical Society*, 115. Ruegamer added, Oliver was “especially appalled by the multiplicity of historical agencies in Indiana.”

Oliver's leadership, the members of the Indiana Historical Commission recognized substantial changes were needed in order to transform Indiana under the vision of Progressive Era ideals as modeled by Wisconsin's state historical society.<sup>144</sup> Following the Commission's successes in 1916, few of the planned publications on Indiana's history had been issued, local historical societies still wanted and needed coordination and guidance, the state's schools required assistance in preparing courses on Indiana history, and historical objects statewide needed protection.<sup>145</sup>

Many of the patterns and programs of Progressive Era historical organizations were adopted and instituted by the agencies involved in the Indiana historical movement. The filter-down process to local historical societies, like the HCHS, often diluted the higher ideals upheld by larger institutions in better organized and more progressive states. Although HCHS Founder Benjamin Parker, long advocated the educational advantages of a museum collection in Henry County, it was not until the rise of the historical movement in Indiana and the hire of a HCHS curator that any real progress was made in this direction. Watch-words like *education* were applied to collecting and exhibition practices at the HCHS beginning in the 1920s. Museum attendance, buoyed by school groups and a wide variety of community organizations (often women's clubs), rose dramatically in this new era of the museum.<sup>146</sup> But many of

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<sup>144</sup> According to Boyd, the influence of the Progressive Era on state and local historical societies occurred in other portions of the U.S., but was found particularly in Midwestern states where state agencies and state historical societies were consolidated as an umbrella under which a state's historical activities were coordinated. See Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies," 30-31.

<sup>145</sup> Ruegamer, *History of Indiana Historical Society*, 114.

<sup>146</sup> Beginning in 1921, Clarence H. Smith—curator of the HCHS—presented curator's reports at the semiannual meetings. These reports include museum attendance figures, names of special visitors and groups that patronized the museum between the two yearly meetings, and other museum-related activities. See, e.g. HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 187-188. The HCHS Museum's annual attendance from 1924 to 1939 averaged around 4,000. The lowest attendance during this period was 2,197 in 1927. It peaked at over 5,000 from 1933 to 1938. Attendance figures were not given for every six month period between the semiannual meeting, but the totals given in the minutes supply



the nineteenth-century Romantic era practices and traditions of the HCHS founders lingered and survived the influence of progressivism.

Legislation was a staple of Progressive Era thinking in connection with historical society museums, as “their useful functions” were now often “recognized as worthy of state support.”<sup>147</sup> Elevated by the wave of rising popular interest and the ongoing work of the Indiana Historical Commission, bills passed by the Indiana General Assembly in 1921 (Senate Bill No. 190) and 1929 offered viable solutions to major problems plaguing the growing county historical society movement through county funding: first by authorizing the hire of a curator and then by increasing the maximum amount allowed by law for the acquisition of permanent quarters to \$10,000 and the increase of a curator’s annual salary.<sup>148</sup>

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enough data to follow the changing trends in museum patronage. During the 1940s, museum attendance waned due to World War II related activities. As attendance dropped, few totals were stated in the minutes. In the April 1934 curator’s report, Smith described the country as having “gone Museum mad” as all over the country they [museums] have been springing up, if not maintained by public funds or by some private endowment for the use of the public, often individuals have started some private Museum, an entrance fee of 10 cents was usually charged.” Ibid., 188.

<sup>147</sup> Boyd, “State and Local Historical Societies,” 30. Government support for state and local historical societies was becoming more common in the Midwestern states during the Progressive Era. Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota all provided substantial appropriations for state historical agencies that advocated education as the underlying purpose of their activities. Boyd wrote, “Here history is raised to the dignity of a coordinate agency of government, assisting through historical scholarship to throw light upon vexing present day questions.” Ibid., 31. Indiana was moving towards this model aided by the interest generated by the state centennial in 1916.

<sup>148</sup> The bills passed in 1921 and 1929 built upon the historical society legislation first enacted in 1901, known as House Bill No. 379 previously discussed in this chapter. For Senate Bill No. 190, see *Journal of the Indiana State Senate... 1921*, 342 and 569; and *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana... 1921*, 599 and 938. The 1929 bill was first initiated at the Indiana State History Conference in 1928. Clarence Smith, first curator of the HCHS, chaired the legislative committee at the conference. Elizabeth Williams, HCHS trustee, visited the state senate, in session in 1929, in support of this legislation. See HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 127-129. Two 1929 letters from Dr. Christopher B. Coleman, director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, to Clarence H. Smith, HCHS curator, address the legislative process and the elevation of the curator’s maximum monthly salary. See Dr. Christopher B. Coleman to Clarence H. Smith, February 5, 1929; and Dr. Christopher B. Coleman to Clarence H. Smith, February 12, 1929, Curator File, HCHS, Smith Library. See also Clarence H. Smith, “Report of Committee on County Aid for Historical Societies,” *Indiana History Bulletin* 6, extra number 2, May 1929, 111. For the complete text of the 1929 bill, see “County Aid for Historical Societies,” *Indiana History Bulletin* 6, no. 6 (March 1929), 106-110.

State legislation during the 1920s, as was the case in 1901, significantly advanced the growth and sustainability of the HCHS. The ability to pay a museum curator by means of annual county appropriations enabled the Henry County organization to elevate and expand its operations and outreach far beyond its previous capacities. Private funding during this time was both inadequate and inconsistent in Henry County to support a paid museum curator. The need for change in regard to the day-to-day operation of the HCHS museum was not newly perceived by its members. The organization's leadership was searching for solutions to the problems caused by untrained and poorly compensated custodians since at least 1907. The main obstacle preventing change in Henry County was a lack of consistent funding. In a letter to the Indiana Historical Society, HCHS Founder Benjamin Parker inquired about the feasibility of gaining state appropriated funds to hire a qualified worker or for training those already working in collections at the county level.<sup>149</sup>

### **Hiring a Curator**

Benjamin Parker did not live to see the result of his request for government allocations to hire and train workers to direct and develop the collections and activities of county historical societies in Indiana. But in 1921, it came to fruition in the form of Senate Bill No. 190 and a promised appropriation made by the Henry County Council “that the [HCHS] museum may have a curator and the work of the society be carried on along the lines planned long ago by its founder.”<sup>150</sup> In 1921, it was reported by the

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<sup>149</sup> Rabb, “Hoosier Listening Post,” November 4, 1921, 6.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. Rabb stated that a \$1,500 appropriation was made by the Henry County Council. This figure is incorrect. \$1,500 was the maximum amount allowed under Senate Bill No. 150. The Henry County Council appropriated \$1,300 for the HCHS in January 1922 (the amount was promised the Society at

*Indiana Magazine of History* that the HCHS had the “distinction of being the first local historical society in the state to take advantage of the special act [Senate Bill No. 190] approved March 10, 1921, enabling the board of county commissioners to employ a curator to look after the work of the local historical society.”<sup>151</sup>

Clarence H. Smith, of New Castle, was hired as HCHS curator only weeks following the passage of Senate Bill No. 190. Smith, a long-time member of the HCHS, was, for this period of the local historical society movement, an ideal candidate for the position of curator. Described as “an enthusiastic local historian, genealogist, and amateur naturalist,” Smith had presented papers before the Society for more than a decade and was “elected historian” of the organization in April 1916.<sup>152</sup> (This was just in time for the Indiana Centennial celebration in Henry County but, unfortunately for Smith, the office of historian was an unpaid position.) He was instrumental in the 1906 founding of the HCHS Nature Study Club and was already active in the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) and Audubon Society of Indiana. Many of his immediate and extended family members likewise belonged to the HCHS.<sup>153</sup> About the time he was

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the annual fall meeting in 1921). See Henry County Council, *County Council Record Book 2, 1913-1927*, line 96E, 178. The County Council records concerning the HCHS (simply labeled “Historical”) were not itemized until 1928, but \$600 (labeled “expenses”) was pay for the curator, leaving \$700 for utilities, building maintenance, and other necessities. See *ibid.*, line 96E, 196. The appropriation process occurred in three basic steps. The HCHS offered an annual proposal to the Board of Henry County Commissioners, who, in turn, made a recommendation to the Henry County Council. The council held the final authority to accept or deny the commissioners’ recommendation. An annual appropriation has been made every year since 1901 ranging from \$50, in 1906, to \$44,800, in 2001. The county appropriation for 2015 was \$27,450.

<sup>151</sup> “Historical News” (March 1922), 117. Under the stipulations of Senate Bill No. 190, the board of trustees of a county historical society made a formal recommendation of a candidate for curator to the board of county commissioners. The commissioners held the authority to approve or deny this recommendation.

<sup>152</sup> Clarence H. Smith Papers, Indiana Historical Society Collections Guide, 2; and HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 59.

<sup>153</sup> Smith’s father, Robert B. Smith; mother, Catherine Smith; older brother, Robert Lynn Smith; brother-in-law and sister, Herbert W. and Mary (Smith) Heller; niece and nephew Mary Louise Heller and Dr. Herbert Lynn Heller; great-aunt, Elizabeth (Hoover) Thornburgh; cousins, John Thornburgh and Henry L. Powell; and perhaps more family members were involved in the HCHS – their names scattered

hired as curator, “Smith formed the Patrick Henry Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution in Henry County, serving terms as secretary, vice president and historian for the Indiana Society of the S.A.R.”<sup>154</sup>

Local museum curators in Indiana during the early decades of the twentieth century were a novelty of sorts, as county museums and historical societies were in their infant stages of development.<sup>155</sup> Yet, the position was understood by many as “an important factor in developing a nominal society into a live institution.”<sup>156</sup> A *sustainable* local historical society, first and foremost, required permanent quarters and a historical collection. Additional necessities included broad public support, adequate and dependable funding, and a paid individual to facilitate and manage the museum, its collections, and various other day-to-day operations and activities.

Previous to Senate Bill No. 190, only one county historical society museum—Jefferson County Historical Society—had hired a curator or “director...some one [sic] who can take the work seriously in hand.”<sup>157</sup> George Cottman, founder of the *Indiana Magazine of History* and amateur state and local historian, was secretary of the Jefferson

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throughout the HCHS minutes, meeting programs, and newspaper articles describing the Society’s activities.

<sup>154</sup> Clarence H. Smith Papers, Indiana Historical Society Collections Guide, 2. Smith also “held offices in most of the other organizations to which he belonged.” Many SAR applications for New Castle families (i.e., Greenstreet, Goodwin, Shroyer, and Peed) were researched, nominated, and even notarized by Smith between 1921 and 1951.

<sup>155</sup> In 1928 only eleven of the sixty-four county and regional historical societies in Indiana listed in the *Bulletin* had a curator. The majority of these societies received no county appropriations to pay their curator. See “Historical Societies—Activities,” *Indiana History Bulletin* 5, no. 11 (August 1928), 220–228; and “Museum Notes,” *Indiana History Bulletin* 5, no. 11 (August 1928), 234.

<sup>156</sup> Cottman, “Co-operation between State and Local Historical Agencies,” 66.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* Cottman believed perhaps there were a few local historical societies before 1919 that filled the position of curator, but no other information was provided. He may have been speaking about custodians, similar to the system used by the HCHS from 1902 to 1921, but this is speculative. What is clear is that local historical societies in Indiana before Senate Bill No. 190 lacked the private funding necessary to hire a curator or director. Until the passage of this bill, county governments were restricted from appropriating funds for this purpose.

County organization, which had been housed in the Lanier Mansion, in Madison, since 1917. Cottman, in 1919, explained that “the first step” toward hiring a curator was “the creating of an interest and the securing of a support for an experiment along this line.” He continued, “Just how this is to be done, or whether it can be done at all in the case of a given society is a thing to be ascertained by some one [sic] familiar with the community, for this is one of those problems that must, largely, be solved from within.”<sup>158</sup>

Cottman outlined the particular advantages then possessed by the Jefferson County Historical Society: “In the first place the city of Madison, itself, once the queen of Hoosierdom, now quaint and old-fashioned, a visible reminder of other days, when its citizens played a conspicuous part in the making of the state, is peculiarly a stimulus to the historic sentiment.” The Lanier Mansion, the 1844 Greek Revival home of James F. D. Lanier, was gifted to the Society by the Lanier family in 1917. “In its day,” Cottman explained, the Lanier Mansion was the “finest mansion in Indiana...still famous for its well-preserved, stately beauty.” When repurposed as a museum space, it remained “spacious, old-fashioned, ideally adapted to the purpose in hand,” and “an inspiration and an incentive to history work.” But he added “such obstacles as exist there are probably common to all the other societies.”<sup>159</sup>

The final results of the curator “experiment” undertaken by the Jefferson County Historical Society was still undetermined as of Cottman’s address before the First Annual Indiana History Conference in December 1919. However, Cottman offered

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

several telling observations that provide an apt comparison for the situation unfolding in Henry County:

Under the stimulus of this gift [the Lanier Mansion] and by the energetic efforts of the hand full who made the working nucleus of the society, money was raised to secure a director for a limited period. Thus the organization is fairly launched on an experiment that has more than a local interest as bearing on the possibilities elsewhere. Just what it is going to effect remains to be seen. Thus far I have learned that the fine historical setting we have there, added to the gift of a valuable property and the employment of a man to build up the institution, has not created much of an interest in the community at large. With a pitiful membership fee of fifty cents per year there are only about three hundred members, and this hardly supplies revenue enough for needed equipment.<sup>160</sup>

Although no organizational records from this period of the Jefferson County Historical Society now exist according to individuals associated with the current reorganized version of the Society, the brief history of the Lanier Mansion as the Jefferson County Historical Society Museum paints a fairly clear picture of the experiment's end. In 1925 the Society was no longer able to maintain the property (although its annual meetings continued at this location for several years).<sup>161</sup> With the Lanier family's blessing, the Society gave control of the mansion and its grounds to the state which promptly opened it publicly as a historic house museum.<sup>162</sup>

The residents of Jefferson County had failed to offer the public support needed to maintain the property and to influence its local government to appropriate the needed support to maintain the mansion, a task the organization found impossible to do on its own. The avenues for county support were made available by the bills passed by the

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> See "Historical Societies," *Indiana History Bulletin* 5, no. 5 (February 1928), 92; and "Historical Societies," *Indiana History Bulletin* 6, no. 5 (February 1929), 93-94.

<sup>162</sup> Carolyn Pitts, (April 5, 1993), "National Historic Landmark Nomination: The Lanier Mansion," accessed September 24, 2015, <http://focus.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NHLS/Text/94001191.pdf>.

Indiana General Assembly—House Bill No. 379, in 1901, that authorized county commissioners to supply county funds to acquire and support a permanent home for its historical society, and Senate Bill No. 190, in 1921, that further authorized and encouraged counties to provide for “the employment and compensation of curators for the property and collections of historical societies.”<sup>163</sup> But neither bill was utilized by the Board of Jefferson County Commissioners.<sup>164</sup>

According to Cottman’s 1919 assessment, the Henry County and Jefferson County historical societies shared several characteristics that ranked them in the top echelon of local historical societies in Indiana.<sup>165</sup> Both numbered around 300 members who paid minimal dues (\$.50) until 1922, when the Jefferson County society raised its member dues to \$1.00.<sup>166</sup> Each organization was housed in a fine historic home closely tied to an individual of local renown. Each had leaders actively associated with historical organizations in Indianapolis—the Indiana Historical Commission, Indiana Historical Society, and Indiana State Library. And, by 1920, each had the advantages of existing during the historical movement in Indiana and under a centralized state historical agency that provided needed assistance.

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<sup>163</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, 1921*, 599 and 938

<sup>164</sup> The Jefferson County society experienced a series of reorganizations until the 1980s when the current organization was formed. For a time, the present organization held meetings in a building near the public library in Madison. After vacating that location, it purchased an old railroad station, which is now fully restored. The Society also built a new “heritage center” on the same property located advantageously near the National Historic Landmark District of downtown Madison. As of 2015, the organization is reportedly doing well. “Welcome,” Jefferson County Historical Society, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.jchshc.org/index.php>. I also received information on the Jefferson County Historical Society through phone conversations with James Grimes, retired Jefferson County archivist, and Janice Barnes, Jefferson County Historian and genealogist at Jefferson County Public Library.

<sup>165</sup> In 1922 a member of the Indiana Historical Commission wrote: “Of the county historical societies in Indiana, none are doing more valuable work than the Jefferson County society.” Indiana Historical Commission, “Historical News” *Indiana Magazine of History* 18, no. 2 (June 1922), 212.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

The existing evidence points to a lack of public interest and support as the main source of Jefferson County's failed historical society.<sup>167</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons why a historical consciousness did not sufficiently develop in Jefferson County to support a sustainable historical organization. As pointed out in Chapter One, the patterns of cultural development were substantially different between Ohio River counties of southern Indiana and the counties of East Central Indiana. The influence of Quakerism dramatically effected the institutionalization of local history in the latter subregion. Jefferson County organized short-lived old settlers' and historical societies during the antebellum period, yet, in both cases, were unable to sustain them.<sup>168</sup>

The struggles of the Jefferson County Historical Society exemplify the extreme difficulties faced by local historical organizations in Indiana throughout the state's first century and a half of existence. Jefferson County's inability to support a permanent home and museum curator also serves as a counterpoint to the HCHS's continuous existence and gradual development during the same period. Without adequate public support and county government assistance, it is difficult to see how the HCHS could have acquired the General Grose mansion, in 1901, or hired Clarence Smith (see Figures J, K, and L) as its first curator, in 1921.

An interesting process of appropriations, missteps, and fundraising took place between March 1921 and April 1922 that, in the end, led to Smith's hiring as curator of

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<sup>167</sup> It should be noted that Jefferson County's population in 1920 was less than 21,000 while Henry County's had ballooned to almost 35,000.

<sup>168</sup> The *Indiana Magazine of History* reported: "In the *Madison Daily Banner* of January 29, 1852, we find an account of the organization of the first settlers of the city of Madison, to be composed of those who were residing in the county since 1820." "First Old Settlers' Meeting," 116. The Jefferson County Historical Society is said to have been founded in 1850, although no documented evidence was found to corroborate this claim. I received this information through phone conversions with James Grimes, retired Jefferson County archivist, and Janice Barnes, Jefferson County Historian and genealogist at Jefferson County Public Library.



the HCHS—a position he held for thirty years. But an inventory of Smith’s background, early influences, and experiences will shed some light on what led him to the position that he maintained for nearly half his life.



Figure J: Clarence H. Smith with bicycle, undated.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.



Figure K: Clarence H. Smith seated astride a horse, undated.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.



Figure L: Clarence H. Smith seated at his desk in the curator's office at the HCHS, ca. 1940.  
Henry County Historical Society Collection.

Born on July 4, 1875—a real “firecracker”—Smith almost seemed destined to be a historian.<sup>169</sup> He not only grew up in a time heavily influenced by the American Centennial Celebration of 1876, which witnessed “the arc of local history swung sharply upward as interest in the local expanded,” but also came under the influence of a Quaker family heritage that helped define Smith’s future preservation practices.<sup>170</sup> Smith was the youngest of five children born to Robert B. and Catherine Smith. Robert B., “a native of Loudoun County, Virginia, descended from a prominent Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Quaker family.”<sup>171</sup> And, like his father before him, Robert was an avid record keeper, a preservationist of family and local history. Robert preserved a collection that includes ninety-three personal diaries, many boxes of family correspondences, accounts books and other business and family records. Ten diaries and journals, as well as a large correspondence from Seth Smith, Robert’s father, and copious other assorted papers were passed down through the generations and finally donated to the Indiana Historical Society by Robert’s grandson, Dr. Herbert L. Heller, then of Greencastle, Indiana, in 1956.<sup>172</sup>

Throughout his life, Clarence Smith experienced poor health. As a young man, Smith, “because of chronic illness, spent time at health facilities in Chicago and North

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<sup>169</sup> Ricci Atchison, “Bang Announces New Additions to Historical Society,” *New Castle Courier-Times*, July 5, 1976, “Henry County Historical Society” New Castle-Henry County Public Library Clip File. Smith’s nephew, Dr. Herbert L. Heller, described him as such in the dedicatory address for the HCHS Museum Annex on what would have been Smith’s 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. The Clarence H. Smith Library was opened that day by the firing of Civil War era cannons that quickly drew the presence of local police and fire personnel.

<sup>170</sup> Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 548.

<sup>171</sup> Clarence H. Smith Papers, Indiana Historical Society Collections Guide, 2.

<sup>172</sup> See Robert B. Smith Papers; Clarence H. Smith Papers; and HCHS Minute Book 3, HCHS, Smith Library, 14.

Carolina when not in New Castle.”<sup>173</sup> Despite a series of serious health problems, he lived to be eighty-three.<sup>174</sup>

In 1894, Smith graduated from New Castle High School. He attended Wabash College for one year but withdrew due to illness.<sup>175</sup> At Wabash, Smith’s history professor, John L. Campbell, further sparked his historical interests. Campbell, appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant as secretary of the United States Centennial Commission and a commissioner from Indiana, is credited as being the “most influential person” who originated the idea of “celebrating America’s centennial with an international exhibition.”<sup>176</sup> Recorded in Robert B. Smith’s diary is a trip made by the family to the 1876 American Centennial Exposition. Clarence, age one, was left at home with two other siblings, the “faithful colored girl, Fannie Matthews,” and the children’s grandmother.<sup>177</sup>

According to Smith’s academic records in high school and college, he possessed “a high degree of scholarship.”<sup>178</sup> And his habits of preservation were already apparent as Smith documented and saved a detailed record of his expenses for his senior year, 1893-1894. (e.g., each monthly shave, \$.10, school books, \$.50 in September; Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, \$1.05 in October; shoes, \$3.00 in January; candy at fair, \$.20, and dentist’s bill, \$6.00 both in March; suit of clothes, \$18.00 in April; and so forth.)<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Smith’s health problems are discussed in numerous correspondence from members of the Indiana Historical Bureau throughout the 1920s. See e.g., Dr. Christopher B. Coleman to Clarence H. Smith, February 12, 1929, Curator File, Clarence H. Smith Folder, HCHS, Smith Library.

<sup>175</sup> Clarence H. Smith Papers, Indiana Historical Society Collections Guide, 2.

<sup>176</sup> Rydell, *All the Worlds a Fair*, 17; and Heller, “Visitors at Nation’s Centennial,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 349.

<sup>177</sup> Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 2, 350 (quotes taken from Robert Smith Diaries, 1876–April 1878, Box 5, Folder 1, Robert B. Smith Papers).

<sup>178</sup> Heller, “Expenses of 1894 High School Student,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 200.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 201.

Expenses of the Senior Year in New Castle High School 1893-94 — September through May for Clarence H. Smith			
<b>September 1893</b>		<b>December</b>	
Books	\$ .50	Hat	\$3.25
Pens	.05	Shave	.10
Scratch-book	.05	Paper	.05
Paper	.10	C. Endeavor	1.04
Hair cut & shave	.25		\$4.44
	\$ .95	<b>January 1894</b>	
<b>October</b>		Shoes	\$3.00
Trip to K-town	\$.70	S. School	.10
Shave	.10	Shave	.10
Paradise Lost	.25	Books	.20
	\$1.05		\$3.40
<b>November</b>		<b>February</b>	
Shave	\$ .10	Webster's Oration	\$ .11
Laundry	.35	Shave	.10
Shave	.10	Sunday-Sch.	.12
Laundry	.35	Laundry	.32
Extras	.50	C. Endeavor	.15
	\$ .95	Paper & Pens	.07
			\$ .87
<b>March</b>			
Engraved Cards	\$1.50	Shave	\$ .10
Trip to K-town	1.00	25 Programs	1.50
Dentist's Bill	6.00	Cards	.40
Candy at Fair	.20	Stamps	.35
Shave	.10	6 Programs	.35
	\$8.80	Stamps	.18
<b>April</b>		Class expense	1.10
Shave	\$ .10	Shoes from A	6.00
Laundry	.34	Hair cut & shave	.35
S. Book	.07	Tickets to Comm.	.50
Suit of Clothes	18.00	Church	
	\$18.51	<b>June</b>	
		Creasing Pants	\$ .25
		Flowers	.70
		Shave	.10
		Laundry	.06
		Dance	.25
		Ticket to Richmond	.80
		Shave	.10
		Church	.10
			\$12.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>for</b>	<b>school year:</b>
			\$51.76

Figure M: Expenses of Senior Year in New Castle High School for Clarence H. Smith, 1893-94 – September through May. Heller, *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 201.

Smith never married. He remained in the family home his entire life. Before his father's death in 1900, the family lived at the corner of Race and Court Streets (later changed to Twelfth Street) adjacent to the Henry County Courthouse where the birth of the HCHS took place when Smith was but a boy of eleven. "I can faintly remember the day [in 1887]," Smith recollected, "when my father came home from a meeting at the courthouse and stated that there had been an organization formed, called the Historical Society."<sup>180</sup> The family home, as well as the family business—a dry goods store and farm implement dealership—were next door to the Thomas B. Redding Building.<sup>181</sup> Redding's law offices were cleaned by Smith who looked up to the local prominent attorney and founder of the HCHS, a man nearly his father's age. After Redding's unexpected death in 1895, Smith preserved many of Redding's papers.<sup>182</sup> George

<sup>180</sup> *Proceedings of Third Annual Conference on Indiana History*, 24.

<sup>181</sup> "Where We Live" (Review of Commercial Interests), *New Castle Courier*, December 2, 1887, "Robert B. Smith," 8. Redding purchased the large brick building from Robert B. Smith in 1878.

<sup>182</sup> See Series 4: Henry County, Indiana Papers, 1806-1970, Thomas B. Redding Papers, 1855-1894, 7 Boxes, 17 folders, Special Collections and Archives, Indiana Historical Society.

Hazzard, a law student under Redding, also developed a close relationship with the Smith family.<sup>183</sup> Redding and Hazzard, both local historians, influenced young Smith in his historical endeavors.<sup>184</sup>

During the period of rapid economic development in New Castle, 1899–1920, Smith held several other jobs before his employment as HCHS curator in 1921. He tried his hand at teaching, insurance, working at the Union Telephone Company on Race Street, and for the South Park Floral Company or Heller Bros.—founded by his brother-in-law Herbert W. Heller who was characterized as a “great friend of the Historical Society.”<sup>185</sup> His employment during the first forty-six years of his life filled the general need to make a living. But his true passion was in historical research and as an amateur naturalist. Smith, in an address before the Wayne County Historical Society in 1925, recalled the path that led him to the HCHS curatorship, which he began in April 1921:

I had read my first paper before the Society in 1906 and had long been interested in its work. I saw many things that needed to be done but never felt that I could give my time to such work without some compensation. Because of a prospective street to be made back of the Society’s ground [Fifteenth Street] the County Council [in January 1921] had appropriated \$1000 for threat and expense on the building. A Committee from our organization went before the Commissioners [at the end of March or beginning of April] and they agreed to let us use \$300 toward employing a curator. No one else was wanting the job at \$60 per month and I knew it was work in which I could find delight so I assumed the duties and started in trying to bring order out of chaos. It was a stupendous job and before we realized it five months had passed [April through August] and the \$300 was exhausted. By that time I had become very enthusiastic over my work and was anxious to keep on with it. A committee of five ladies and myself went before the Commissioners [at the Regular Session in September] and asked for more money. They didn’t know if the law authorized them to use the money that way, so the county attorney was

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<sup>183</sup> Heller, “Gold Fever Strikes New Castle Man,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 201-207.

<sup>184</sup> *Hazzard’s History*, vol. 2, 1018; and Heller, “George Hazzard’s Early Life Here,” *Historic Henry County*, vol. 3, 103-105.

<sup>185</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 87. Heller’s 1909 memorial tribute was written by Benjamin Parker and printed as a fine booklet. Heller was the father of Dr. Herbert Lynn Heller, who was involved with the HCHS since his youth.

called in...we didn't get the money [and] Our activities were hampered for the rest of that year but the County Council agreed to let us have \$600 for the following year and the Society raised enough money for me to continue on the job through the year [for September through December of 1922].<sup>186</sup>

Smith possessed no formal training as a historian or curator. Local historians in the first half of the twentieth century rarely did. Smith's intimate association with the HCHS, his heritage as a collector, experience as an officer in hereditary societies, as an amateur naturalist and genealogist, and passion for local history more than qualified him as an ideal candidate for the position of local curator in 1921. During his tenure at the HCHS, Smith received nominal training and useful knowledge at the annual state history conferences held each December in Indianapolis and from regular contact with members of state historical organizations. In the 1930s, Smith also attended conferences and expositions in the East and Midwest, and made regular visits (during his allotted vacation time) to historic sites, national parks, and Civil War battlefields and cemeteries.<sup>187</sup>

Standards for local historical societies and local historians before 1950 were much inferior to today. Exhibition practices in local museums resembled their eclectic collection policies and the hodgepodge displays so popular at international and regional expositions held in the United States in the decades following the American Centennial. Subsequent to the establishment of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1884, professional or academic historians regularly criticized the work and practices of state

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<sup>186</sup> Smith, *Address before the Wayne County Historical Society*, HCHS, Smith Library, 7-8. The appropriation process was also described in the local newspaper's coverage of the HCHS. See "Ask County to Appoint Curator," *New Castle Courier*, October 27, 1922. See also HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 47.

<sup>187</sup> See, e.g., HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 187, 189, and 213.

and local historical societies.<sup>188</sup> And many such criticisms were merited. Shortcomings were apparent from Smith's lack of formal training, yet were rarely labeled as deficits among his peers at a time when most local historical organizations had no paid curator to speak of.<sup>189</sup> Smith naturally tended toward his passion and enthusiasm for collecting, genealogy, and natural history, giving less attention to cataloguing, fundraising, and community involvement—all areas of heightened importance today.

In 1921, Senate Bill No. 190 opened the opportunity for Smith to earn a modest living while pursuing his passion and wish to serve the local historical society and community of his native county. Unlike Indiana's first historical society bill of 1901, the leaders of the HCHS played no apparent role in the legislative process that led to Smith's hiring. Senate Bill No. 190 was actually initiated by the newly elected officers of another local historical society founded in the nineteenth century—the Northern Indiana Historical Society, St. Joseph County. This regional historical society, founded in 1867 and headquartered in South Bend, “had been asleep for a few years,” but displayed renewed activity in the election of new officers and by sponsoring this important historical society bill.<sup>190</sup> On March 1, 1922, the St. Joseph County Commissioners approved the society's recommendation, and hired Eva Hoffman as

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<sup>188</sup> Novick posits that “American historians constructed their system of professional norms” in a way “which would clearly distinguish professional historical work from the florid effusions of the amateur historians whom the professionals sought to displace.” Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 21. The professional historians of the AHA rebelled against the Romantic era style of history—history writing as literature or art. The Romantic style remained common at the local level into the twentieth century even as signs of progress became evident. For an example of criticisms on amateur historians and local historical societies by professional historians from the AHA, see J. Franklin Jameson, “The Functions of State and Local Historical Societies with Respect to Research and Publication,” in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1897 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 54-59.

<sup>189</sup> For examples of public comments on Smith's work as HCHS curator, see Indiana Historical Commission, “Historical News,” (June 1922), 212; and HCHS Minute Book 4, 156 and 199.

<sup>190</sup> Indiana Historical Commission, “Historical News,” (June 1922), 216.



curator.<sup>191</sup> This made the Northern Indiana Historical Society the second such organization to do so.

The Northern Indiana Historical Society is an apt example of the common struggles faced by early historical societies in Indiana. The organization was beginning its fourth reorganization period by 1921. A brief side-by-side comparison between the Northern Indiana Historical Society and the HCHS gives some perspective to the early historical society movement in Indiana. The Northern Indiana Historical Society shared space in old St. Joseph Courthouse as opposed to control over a separate and distinct historical building dedicated solely to the purposes of the HCHS; it held one annual meeting as opposed to two; and was open only three days per week instead of six.<sup>192</sup> The Northern society was one of the earliest historical societies in Indiana but experienced difficulties remaining active “after many of the guiding spirits had passed away.”<sup>193</sup> For a time, there was “a lull in the study” of the area’s local history; “The pioneers had departed, one by one, and their sons and daughters did not immediately take up the work.”<sup>194</sup> The Northern Indiana Historical Society was considered by members of the historical community among the better historical societies in the state, despite the multiple stops and starts, as few other early societies had either substantial museum collections or accessible rooms.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Beginning in the spring of 1929, the HCHS Museum was even opened for a few hours each month on Sundays. See HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 131-132. In April 1940, it was suggested that the curator be present at museum “only six days per week thereby giving Mr. Smith time to go out into the county to investigate gifts.” Ibid., 258.

<sup>193</sup> Howard. “The Northern Indiana Historical Society,” 116. Organizational histories of local historical societies are rare in Indiana. As most experienced similar periods of inactivity, organizational records were often lost. The early history of the local historical society movement in Indiana is thus difficult to follow and is plagued by misinformation before 1916.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Well aware of the legislative process initiated by the Northern Indiana Historical Society and passage of Senate Bill No. 190, the leaders of the HCHS wasted little time in hiring a curator and profiting from the bill's potential access to county funds. Passed in March 1921, it was too late in the year to gain an explicit appropriation from the Henry County Commissioners and County Council. But, as earlier stated, \$300 was allocated to pay a museum curator, at the discretion of the county council, from a \$1,000 appropriation granted the HCHS in January "for threat and expense on the building" due to the extension of Fifteenth Street, directly east of the Society's property.

In April 1921, at \$60 per month, Smith began his tenure as curator of the HCHS. For Smith, 1921 is best characterized as a provisional period. A county appropriation specifically for the hiring of a curator was not made until January 1922 and Smith was not "officially" ratified by the HCHS until the annual spring meeting, April 27, 1922, although recognition of his employment was celebrated by the leaders of the Indiana Historical Commission and Indianapolis and New Castle journalists numerous times throughout that year. A representative of the Henry County Council was present at the HCHS annual fall meeting in 1921 where he pledged "sufficient funds for the employment" of a museum curator as authorized by the Indiana General Assembly in Senate Bill No. 190 to make the museum "a real educational center in the community."<sup>195</sup> Yet the initial \$300 for Smith's monthly salary ran out at the end of August.

It is unclear whether Smith received a monthly salary from September through December 1921. Perhaps some monies were raised by the Society for this purpose, or

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<sup>195</sup> John W. Oliver, "Historical News," *Indiana Magazine of History* 17, no. 4 (December 1921), 374.

Smith simply continued on working for four months with the assurance that, as of January 1922, county funds would be made available. Regardless of the situation, Smith enthusiastically went about the work. At the 1921 HCHS spring meeting he presented a paper on the "Village of Hillsboro," accompanied by a display of coverlets produced at its large nineteenth-century woolen mill, and was actively involved with the state marker program.<sup>196</sup> Smith "made a plea on behalf of Sons of American Revolution that the society assist in the finding and marking of the graves of the Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Henry County."<sup>197</sup> He was subsequently appointed chair of a committee of three for this purpose, with two additional assistants.<sup>198</sup>

Smith also attended the Third Annual Conference on Indiana History in December 1921 held at the Claypool Hotel, Indianapolis, and hosted by Society of Indiana Pioneers, Indiana Historical Commission, and Indiana Historical Society. There, Smith was appointed to a committee on "historical activities" and was involved in discussions concerning "county centennial plans."<sup>199</sup> Smith, recognized as the new

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<sup>196</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 25 and 27-28; "Will Observe Centennial Here," *New Castle Courier*, April 29, 1921, p.1, c.1; and "Will Mark Graves," *New Castle Courier*, April 29, 1921, p.1, col. 4.

<sup>197</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 25 and 27-28; "Will Observe Centennial Here," *New Castle Courier*, April 29, 1921, p.1, c.1; and "Will Mark Graves," *New Castle Courier*, April 29, 1921, p.1, col. 4. See also "Historical News," (September 1921), 303.

<sup>198</sup> Smith also served on a working committee to plant native trees in the rear of the HCHS grounds that coincided with the extension of Fifteenth Street behind the historical building. See HCHS Minute Book 4, 26; "Annual Meeting Here Thursday," *New Castle Courier*, April 26, 1921, p.1, c.5; and "Will Observe Centennial Here," *New Castle Courier*, April 29, 1921, p.1, c.1. Throughout 1921, Smith was in contact with officials from the Indiana Historical Commission concerning historical markers in Henry County, the collection of WWI records in Henry County for publication by the Commission, a controversy over the destruction of a pioneer cemetery in New Castle proposed as the site of the new YMCA building, and several Commission members' participation in the HCHS annual fall meeting. See Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, January 25, 1921; Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, June 22, 1921; Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, July 7, 1921; John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, October 23, 1921; and John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, October 24, 1921, Box 12, Folder 5, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>199</sup> "Indiana History to be Reviewed," *Indianapolis Star*, November 27, 1921, p.4 c.1; and "Historical News" (March 1922), 116.

HCHS curator—a historical society with “the distinction of being the first...to take advantage of the special act approved March 10, 1921”—drew much attention at the conference.<sup>200</sup> This “distinction” aided the rookie curator in cultivating relationships with the leaders of the burgeoning state historical movement.

The officials of the Indiana Historical Commission were especially interested in Smith’s situation as much effort by this still temporary state agency had gone into making it a reality. Earlier that fall, Smith received complete cooperation and support from the Commission as characterized by an October 28 letter from assistant director, Lucy M. Elliott.<sup>201</sup> The letter, written one day following the HCHS fall semiannual meeting covered in the *Indianapolis Star* by Kate Milner Rabb and the *Indiana Magazine of History* by John W. Oliver, reiterated the requirements of Senate Bill No. 190 and what exactly the HCHS needed to do in connection with the county government.<sup>202</sup>

At the HCHS 1921 fall meeting, the Society committed a technical misstep in the recommendation process stipulated under Senate Bill No. 190, which might have delayed the county’s appropriation process for the coming year. The executive committee and not the board of trustees made the required recommendation of Smith to the county commissioners. Thus, under the law, a special meeting was required for this specific purpose before the recommendation could be presented to the commissioners for approval. An appropriation for 1922 was reportedly already promised by the county

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>201</sup> Lucy M. Elliott, assistant director of the Indiana Historical Commission, was named in connection with many county historical societies founded between 1916 and 1925. She visited not only the HCHS on multiple occasions, but traveled the state in support of the historical society movement.

<sup>202</sup> Rabb, “Hoosier Listening Post,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 4, 1921, 6. John W. Oliver, “Historical News,” 374-375.

council, but to avoid any future complications, every provision of Senate Bill No. 190 needed to be carried out to the letter.<sup>203</sup>

It was to these concerns that Lucy Elliott's letter was directed. Elliott was present at the HCHS 1921 fall meeting, but "knew nothing about what had been done in the county toward this movement of employing a curator, or the sentiment toward making the appropriation." In her letter, the requirements were carefully laid out—explaining exactly what was required and by whom. Elliott explained that she had "just re-read the law which provided for a curator" and carefully reviewed the HCHS Constitution and by-laws. She pointed out that in "Article V—Custodian, the authority for the Board of Trustees to make this recommendation" was present. Consulting the HCHS "laws and rules" she found that by-law number four provided for a solution to the mistake made at the previous day's meeting: "In all matters wherein the Statutes of Indiana provide or may hereafter provide, that the County Commissioners or other officers shall have joint or concurrent control of the property of the Society or the buildings occupied by it, such commissions or other officers shall be considered members of the Board of Trustees."<sup>204</sup>

Elliott's letter added, "Your forefathers were wiser than we give them credit for in some of our most egoistical moments." Now "Go to it! ... You need to have some special committee appointed at once, and I see that your Constitution provides that in the

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<sup>203</sup> John W. Oliver, director of the Indiana Historical Commission, reported the promised appropriation as follows: "As a centennial memorial of real value to the work of the historical society in the future, a member of the county council of Henry county announced that acting under the authority given to that body by the legislature of 1921, an appropriation had been made providing sufficient funds for the employment of an all-time curator, and the improvement of the home of the society so as to make it a real educational center in the community. The Henry County historical society was organized in 1887, incorporated in 1901, and by this last action has placed itself in the lead in the work of local historical societies. All hail to the Henry County historical society!" John W. Oliver, "Historical News," 374-375. See also *Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference on Indiana History*, 24.

<sup>204</sup> Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, October 28, 1921, Curator File, Clarence H. Smith Folder, HCHS, Smith Library, 1-2. For by-law no. 4, see Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, HCHS, Smith Library, no page numbers.

case of an immediate necessity that these special committees may be appointed by the Board of Trustees or President. ...I am sure that there will be no trouble if the matter is thoroughly understood, and should you need further assistance from us, we will be only too glad to help you. ...So we have run the matter to the end, and find that the Board of Trustees in this instance consists of three members elected by your Society, and your County Commissioners, and that the employment of a county curator is entirely in the hands of the Board of Trustees.” Elliott asked, “If you will send me the names of your County Council, we can again from this office call their attention to the part which they have to perform. Also, your County Commissioners and Board of Trustees.”<sup>205</sup>

Fortunately for Smith and the HCHS, three of the sitting Henry County Council members were closely associated with the local historical organization.<sup>206</sup> The political influence of these individuals no doubt came to bear on the council’s actions. But not until the final months of 1921 was the proper recommendation for Smith actually made. Following this year of uncertainty over the official status of Smith’s position as museum curator, preparations for the 1922 HCHS spring meeting (when Smith was officially ratified by the Society) were undertaken to ensure a very special occasion.<sup>207</sup>

An impressive list of special guests, including Kate Milner Rabb, Lucy M. Elliott, and Esther McNitt, were present at the Thirty-Sixth Annual HCHS Meeting to

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<sup>205</sup> Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, October 28, 1921, Curator File, Clarence H. Smith Folder, HCHS, Smith Library, 1-2.

<sup>206</sup> Ulysses T. Moore, who would hold multiple offices in the HCHS during the 1930s including vice-president, trustee, and president, Eli Harvey, trustee 1931–1932 and father of U.S. Representative Ralph Harvey who served as HCHS president, 1936–1937, and William Keesling, executive committee 1910–1912, HCHS president, 1913–1918, and trustee 1921–1925. This trend of local political influence continued throughout the twentieth century and to great advantage for the HCHS.

<sup>207</sup> The Thirty-Sixth HCHS Annual Meeting, April 27, 1922, was the same meeting at which Margaret Wood, the senior member of the Society, argued for equality concerning dues paid by men and women referenced in Chapter Two.

witness the formal announcement that Clarence Smith was ratified as the organization's first curator and the first hired under Senate Bill No. 190.<sup>208</sup> The meeting was described in the local newspaper as "one of the most successful and largely attended sessions in the history of the organization."<sup>209</sup> Coinciding with the Smith announcement was a celebration of the early success of the state marker program in Henry County to memorialize the lives of Revolutionary War veterans buried in Indiana.<sup>210</sup> A strong showing from state and local patriot societies—from the Indiana SAR and the Hugh Dinnwiddy Chapter of the Daughter of the American Revolution of Knightstown—were present to offer support.<sup>211</sup>

Mattie E. Charles—first woman HCHS president—presented a memorial that honored the life of longtime HCHS female leader, Huldah Parker, along with a renewed effort to construct a memorial to Society Founder Benjamin S. Parker: a movement that had faltered during the turbulent years of World War I.<sup>212</sup> Listed among the meeting's honored guests was Margaret Wood. This aged Quaker was characterized by one local reporter as "one of Henry County's best known pioneer women and at the age of 97, still

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<sup>208</sup> Kate Milner Rabb, *Indianapolis Star* columnist, and Lucy M. Elliott, Indiana Historical Commission, and Esther McNitt, Indiana State Library, were all members of the Indiana Historical Commission during the 1920s.

<sup>209</sup> "Large Crowd at Annual Meeting," *New Castle Courier*, April 27, 1922, p.1, c.6.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*; and HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 41.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 42. The Benjamin Parker memorial project was later turned over to the Federation of (Women's) Clubs in New Castle. See *ibid.*, 69, 71, and 74–75. Renowned New Castle sculptor, Frances M. Goodwin, crafted a bust, pedestal, and the model of a birdbath that was to be placed at the intersection of Main Street and Bundy Avenue adjacent to Parker's former residence on the southern edge of New Castle. Several hundred dollars was raised in support of the memorial, but the movement seemed to fail following the death of Goodwin in 1929. The bronze bust of Parker is currently displayed at the New Castle-Henry County Public Library in the Indiana Room. Its plaster cast is exhibited at the HCHS Museum, along with the model of the memorial. The final mention of the Parker memorial in the HCHS minutes came in October 1930. *Ibid.*, 147. See also "Historical Society Will Back Memorial to Benjamin S. Parker, Henry County Poet," *New Castle Courier*, March 22, 1922. An image of the Parker Memorial model by Goodwin is included with brief article.

takes as active and valuable a part in the work of the society as any member enrolled. She is a regular attendant at all the meetings of the society.”<sup>213</sup> John W. Oliver, director of the Indiana Historical Commission, offered the main address.<sup>214</sup> The director “told of the state policy favoring the attempt to arouse more general interest in Indiana history... [and] pointed out that the state at present has no museum or other means of preserving historical relics, and as a result, many have been taken to other states.”<sup>215</sup> Oliver “enlisted the support of the local society in the efforts of the historical commission to prevail upon the state government to erect a historical museum” in Indianapolis.<sup>216</sup>

Initiated by Smith’s curator’s report at 1922 spring meeting, future plans for the HCHS “as a means to carrying out the museum idea” were also announced.<sup>217</sup> These plans included “utilization of the whole building,” rather than only the front rooms on the second floor, “in the arrangement of interesting exhibits.” The expansion of the museum entailed remodeling several bedrooms on the second floor with the idea that eventually the entire building would be “turned over to an exhibit of articles and papers figuring in Henry county history.” Smith’s report “indicated that public interest in the society” was rapidly increasing and justified “the plan to open the home to larger numbers through county maintenance...300 persons have visited and inspected the home

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<sup>213</sup> “Large Crowd at Annual Meeting,” *New Castle Courier*, April 27, 1922, p.1, c.6. Wood died September 30, 1922, and was honored at the next spring meeting.

<sup>214</sup> Smith invited Oliver, Lucy Elliott, Kate Milner Rabb, and Esther McNitt to the 1922 HCHS spring meeting. All the ladies accepted an overnight invitation to stay at the home of Smith’s sister and a tour of New Castle the following day. Because of a prior speaking engagement at the Carroll County History Society, Oliver regretfully declined the invitation. See Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, April 4, 1922; and John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, April 8, 1922, John W. Oliver to Clarence H. Smith, May 1, 1922, Box 12, Folder 5, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>215</sup> “Ask County to Appoint Curator,” *New Castle Courier*, April 28, 1922, in Scrapbook 58, 51.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 207. Smith’s curator’s reports often became the highlight of HCHS meetings as repeated many times by the secretary in the minutes. The reports gave the members concrete evidence that the museum had “unquestionable educational value,” a new Progressive Era concept so emphasized in the first decades of Smith’s employ.



and its exhibits since the beginning of this year, a far greater number than have been received during any former complete year's period."<sup>218</sup>

Smith played a major role in many of the new and exciting changes to General Grose home (mentioned above) and local preservation efforts during his first years as curator. With Smith's assistance, Henry County, under the historical marker program, yielded many celebrated and tangible successes. Advocated and led by the Indiana Historical Commission, the marker program, after 1921, became organized under a central state-mandated agency directed "to cooperate with and advise local historical societies, clubs, and other organizations interested in locating and marking historical sites" by the Indiana General Assembly.<sup>219</sup> The program may have been hampered somewhat do to the fact that all funding had to be raised locally. But, in Henry County, Smith and other members of the historical society worked together with a group of other cultural organizations and municipal and county government officials to accomplish many lasting efforts toward the preservation of local history. The most prominent and lasting of these are the Wilbur Wright Birthplace, Wilbur Wright Memorial—at Memorial Park (as part of the Centennial Celebration of New Castle in 1923), and the grave markers of Revolutionary War veterans buried in Henry County.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> "The History of the State Historical Marker Programs," Indiana Historical Bureau, accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.in.gov/history/ProgramHistory.htm>.

<sup>220</sup> The first actions taken in regard to the Wilbur Wright Birthplace occurred in April 1918. The process of acquiring the property, located in Liberty Township, was ongoing throughout the decade. Aid from the Indiana General Assembly was sought and, in 1929, the state purchased the site. HCHS minutes from this time are littered with references to these activities. The Wilbur Wright Memorial was unveiled Sunday, April 15, 1923, in Memorial Park, New Castle, as the crowning event of New Castle's centennial week. For more information, see *New Castle Courier*, April 5-16; Indiana Historical Commission, "Historical News." (June 1922), 201-202; New Castle's centennial program, Scrapbook 58, 140; and "Wilbur Wright Memorial," *Indiana History Bulletin*, volume 6 number 6, March 1929, 110-111. For an example of an unveiling ceremony for Revolutionary War veterans in Henry County, see Rabb, "Hoosier Listening Post," *Indianapolis Star*, June 17, 1924.

Smith's plans for further renovations to the HCHS Museum accompanied the successes in the historical marker program. In the fall of 1922, the Society approved a plan to dedicate "a vacant room on the second floor" as the General Omar Bundy Room "to be reserved for World War relics."<sup>221</sup> The following spring, an expansion of the first floor assembly room was endorsed by Smith and the Society trustees to provide more meetings space for the semiannual meetings (see Figure N).<sup>222</sup>



Figure N: Henry County Historical Society new expanded assembly room, ca. 1938.  
Clarence H. Smith, museum curator, seen at the window.  
HCHS Founders' Plaque is mounted above the fireplace.  
*New Castle Courier*, May 4, 2002.

<sup>221</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 48. Gen. Omar Bundy, son of HCHS Founder Martin L. Bundy, was often heralded the "hero of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood" for leadership of the Second Division American Expeditionary Forces in France during WWI. "Gen. Bundy's Revolt Told," *San Antonio Light*, January 28, 1940.

<sup>222</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 67.

The 1920s was a time marked by a growing economy in Henry County and an expanding historical consciousness around the state. In Henry County, local centennial celebrations, of the county and county seat, helped concentrate attention on local history. During this decade, the HCHS thrived as never before under the direction of Clarence Smith. The organization played a major role in the local centennials and a number of other historical programs that were simultaneously catching on in other counties around Indiana, including historical marker programs, dedication of public memorials, the teaching of state and local history in public schools, and the “museum movement” to “extend the educational value and interest in state and local history.”

Throughout the twenties and into the thirties, themed semiannual meetings were the norm at the HCHS. Papers were prepared and presented by members on subjects such as coverlets, samplers, quilts, early mills, photography, local art, and many other popular historical topics of the period. Special themed exhibits were displayed that consisted of objects collected from around the county and state.<sup>223</sup> (Many were on loan for a particular exhibition.) Special guest speakers pertaining to the special themes were also common features of the programs.

In the early twenties, the members of the Indiana Historical Commission identified a serious problem in the local historical society movement in Indiana: “no society seems to know what is being done by any other Society. The different societies have been organized at different times, and under the inspiration of different impulses,

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<sup>223</sup> A large coverlet exhibition was held at the HCHS in the fall of 1922. Stemming from this event, Smith and other HCHS members assisted Kate Milner Rabb with a book on the history of coverlets and coverlet weavers in Indiana. See Kate Milner Rabb, *Indiana's Coverlets and Coverlet Weavers* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Publications, 1928); HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 41-52; and *Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference on Indiana History*, 24-26.

and no where [sic] is there any uniformity in organization of plans.” One potential solution to this problem, caused in large part due to a lack of communication between local societies and lack of active local interest, was engineered by the assistant director. Elliott’s plan required each active local society (a total of forty in May 1922 and growing) to respond to a questionnaire that would detail each organization’s history and current status, membership (numbers and “names of men and women prominently identified with the movement”), number of meetings each year, and any other information “that might be interesting and suggestive.”<sup>224</sup>

On receipt of the information contained in the questionnaires, Elliott intended “to send to each of the societies the information so gained. In other words, we may be able to establish some method of contact among the different societies where none now exists, and in this way gain some very helpful suggestions for future work.” Elliott’s letter to Smith closed with her characteristic force and enthusiasm: “ARE YOU WILLING TO CO-OPERATE? If so, you can do it in the way suggested above. I await your answer.”<sup>225</sup>

Although Smith responded immediately and favorably to this suggested strategy, it is difficult to determine the plan’s overall effectiveness.<sup>226</sup> The *Indiana History Bulletin* during 1923-1924 often contained a section entitled “Historical News” or “News from Historical Societies” that included brief updates on local societies reminiscent of the information requested in Elliott’s questionnaire.<sup>227</sup> But, in the fall of

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<sup>224</sup> Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, May 8, 1922, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, May 17, 1922, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>227</sup> After 1924 and Dr. Christopher Coleman’s elevation to director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, sections entitled “Historical Societies” and “Museums” became a part of the monthly *Bulletin*. Although a more regular and systematic way of sharing information between the state’s local historical societies it is difficult to measure its overall effectiveness.

1923, Elliott was again seeking similar data from the local societies. An adjustment in the plan, probably due in part to the failure of many organizations to respond the previous year as well as the addition of new local institutions, was to acquire reports from the local societies before December 1 to compile into a “summary of the year’s work, and the separate reports can be published” in the Proceedings of the Fifth Indiana History Conference, held December 7 and 8.<sup>228</sup>

Elliott had another motive to gather current information on Indiana’s local historical societies in 1923 that now included added inquiries—“the number of papers and subjects of each; the number of public programs; the number of markers placed...the plans for a historical museum...[and] the society’s cooperation with the library and schools of your community.” She explained to Smith that Indiana would send a delegate to the American Historical Association annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, December 29. And the Commission wished to furnish the delegate “with an accurate report of the number of local historical societies in the state and their activities.”<sup>229</sup>

Another method of spreading information and creating a sense of uniformity among Indiana’s local historical societies was through speaking engagements by members of the state historical movement and annual excursions sponsored by the Society of Indiana Pioneer. In the twenties and thirties, speakers from many parts of Indiana involved in the state historical movement enlightened HCHS members on subjects of state history and anniversary celebrations related to Indiana’s past. Author Ross Lockridge, Jr. made speaking appearances at the HCHS on two occasions to

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<sup>228</sup> Lucy M. Elliott to Clarence H. Smith, September 9, 1923, Clarence H. Smith Papers.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

increase awareness about the sesquicentennial of the capture of Fort Sackville and Vincennes (October 1926) and Indiana's role in the Old Northwest (October 1931).<sup>230</sup> Other speakers spread news of historical activities occurring at the state and local levels. Dr. Christopher Coleman, director of the Indiana Historical Bureau (formerly the Indiana Historical Commission), spoke on the "Activities in Indiana of Historical Societies" (April 1926) and "Past, Present, and Future of Historical Societies" (August 1938).<sup>231</sup> A representative of the Indianapolis Children's Museum even offered a glimpse into the educational work geared toward youth (April 1935).<sup>232</sup>

Historical tours of different regions of Indiana were annual events intended to create popular interest in state and local history and create a measure of consistency among the local historical societies through site visits by state historical officials. In October 1932, the annual Society of Indiana Pioneers tour chose East Central Indiana for its destination. The group arrived at the HCHS in the forenoon to tour the museum and inspect its collections. Smith, and other local residents, then accompanied the nearly forty member tour to other sites in Henry County: Memorial Park (site of the WWI and Wilbur Wright memorials) and the Indiana Epileptic Village, just north of New Castle.<sup>233</sup> The tour continued into Wayne County visiting Cambridge City, Centerville, and Richmond.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 101 and 161-162.

<sup>231</sup> Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 147; HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 231. See fn. 226 in Chapter Two for a brief description of the Indiana Historical Commission's evolution into the Indiana Historical Bureau.

<sup>232</sup> Scrapbook 58, HCHS, Smith Library, 165.

<sup>233</sup> The Indiana Epileptic Village was less of a historic site and more a place of interest for socially conscience Hoosiers. For more information on the site, see Rebecca L. Loofbourrow, "The Indiana Village for Epileptics, 1907-1952: The Van Nuys Years" (master's thesis, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2008).

<sup>234</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 167-168.

In the closing years of the 1930s, as the economic pressures of the Great Depression again intensified and U.S. involvement in the war in Europe became more probable, interest in the local past waned in Indiana.<sup>235</sup> The effects of national and international events weighed heavy on the HCHS. Membership numbers plummeted and the Society's treasury was adversely affected. Although annual county appropriations remained steady, issues with "unpaid bills" and "money needed to complete many of our projects" were constant refrains. In 1936, at the "Golden Jubilee" to celebrate the historical society's semicentennial, financial secretary Elizabeth H. Williams reported that the balance in the treasury was only \$.23. Williams summed up the situation with a somewhat positive and humorous spin: "We seem in our finances like the old mule driver who was lost" and, after "various inquiries found he had neither gained nor lost mileage, exclaimed 'Well get along mule, we seem to be holding our own.'"<sup>236</sup>

The Society's financial crisis was a direct result of a dwindling membership in the context of a severe economic depression. In 1925 membership totals peaked at 318 (218 paid dues or "in good standing").<sup>237</sup> By the close of 1933, the number of paid members sank to below 50.<sup>238</sup> No further membership totals were again found in the

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<sup>235</sup> The only HCHS semiannual meeting missed from 1902 to 1950 was the meeting scheduled for October 24, 1929—Black Thursday. No mention of the cause for this deviation was given in the minutes or, for that matter, any direct reference to the stock market crash or Great Depression. However, the economic effects were quite evident. Only a blank page marks the place of the missed meeting. See *ibid.*, 134. Headlines in the *New Castle Courier*, which regularly covered HCHS meetings in the afternoon edition, read "Stock Market Panic Appears to be Checked," "Prices Rebound After Bankers Hold Meeting," and "Wall Street has Dark Day with 14,000,000 Shares Sold." *New Castle Courier*, October 24, 1929. Four days later, on Black Monday, the second and more devastating crash occurred.

<sup>236</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 207.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 178. Only the number of new members were given after 1933. Between 1930 and 1940, an average of four new members were recorded each year. Measures were taken by the Society to increase membership during this time. In April 1931, a motion passed to reinstate delinquent members at only \$.50. In April 1935, member dues were lowered to \$.50. See *Ibid.*, 154 and 196. It is difficult to determine if the lowered dues had any positive effect since no figures were given. Based on collected member dues after 1935, total paid memberships may have risen as high as eighty-eight. But this is

minutes before 1950. If not for the annual county funding, the bleak situation may have resulted in a temporary lapse in the local society if not complete disintegration.

Some assistance came to HCHS in the form of a New Deal agency, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration or FERA, to do work on the museum building. FERA—a work relief agency that immediately preceded the more successful Works Progress Administration (WPA)—held for one of its objectives the “repair and construction of public buildings.”<sup>239</sup> Work to transform the carriage house on the grounds of the HCHS into a pioneer summer kitchen exhibit space was undertaken by FERA in 1934.<sup>240</sup> Additional work was announced at the Forty-Ninth HCHS Semiannual Meeting in October 1935, by President Louise (Millikan) Stanley. The HCHS’s third female president explained to the members that “F.E.R.A had promised to paper and repair the assembly room and generally put the building in good repair.”<sup>241</sup>

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based on incomplete evidence. Failure of the interurban system may have also contributed to lower attendance and membership. Elizabeth Williams resigned the office of financial secretary in April 1937 due to the failure of the New Castle Richmond line earlier that spring. This failure probably affected many elderly members of the Society who never learned to drive an automobile, even if they could afford to own one. See *Ibid.*, 215. For a brief account of the end of interurbans in Henry County, see Richard P. Ratcliff, *Henry County at the Millennium*, 14-15.

<sup>239</sup> “The Federal Emergency Relief Administration,” University Libraries University of Washington Digital Collections, accessed September 24, 2015, <http://content.lib.washington.edu/feraweb/essay.html>.

<sup>240</sup> HCHS Minute Book 4, HCHS, Smith Library, 188. As part of Smith’s April 1934 curator’s report, he told the members: “It is hoped soon to have begun the work of building the long-talked-of stone fireplace in the outer shed and the fitting up of that room with the kitchen utensils, which will make one of the most complete rooms in the Museum. That will enable us to change the present basement kitchen into a room where we may set up tables and relieve the present crowded conditions for seating at our annual dinners. With cooking stoves and fireplace the outside kitchen will be made most comfortable. This change will also enable us to convert the room on the main floor containing kitchen utensils into a ‘show’ dining room.” See also *ibid.*, 191.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 201. The trustees report in May 1936 called attention to the “renovating of the assembly rooms and halls in the papering and painting and general cleaning of the building. The desire is to make the building cheerful and habitable and to preserve and keep it in good repair.” At this meeting a representative of the WPA gave a report of historical work undertaken by this bureau of the New Deal as FERA was eliminated as of December 1935. *Ibid.*, 208 and 210.



As the decade came to a close and martial events in Europe escalated, members of the HCHS held out hope for peace.<sup>242</sup> But by the spring of 1942—at the first Society meeting following the attack on Pearl Harbor—patriotic fervor was in full swing. Tributes were paid to Henry County’s first “two heroes of the present war, killed in action, Francis (Bud) Hannon, a sailor who went down with the *Oklahoma* at Pearl Harbor; Major Dudley Strickler, killed in action with General MacArthur on Bataan.”<sup>243</sup> Similar war-related activities consumed the attention of the local members for the duration of the war. War-related factory work, which was now taking place at many of New Castle’s industries, affected several of the woman officers of the HCHS. Society President Crystal Copeland obtained a leave of absence from a local war plant making supplies for the Navy, to give the annual address in April 1943. Copeland “stressed that despite the turmoil, God still rules the universe.”<sup>244</sup> Recording Secretary Margaret Shelley expressed her inability to further serve as an officer of the HCHS due to the urgency of her war related work. Shelley asked that her name be withdrawn from nomination.<sup>245</sup>

Like other larger historical societies in the United States, WWII was a trying time for the HCHS. Even the nation’s oldest and most prestigious society, Massachusetts Historical Society, “limped along during the war years” and was ““merely marking time”” as there was “not a single new programmatic initiative in these years.”<sup>246</sup>

According to the leaders of the Massachusetts institution, there was “no illusions about

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<sup>242</sup> At the fall meeting, October 26, 1939, a resolution was passed by the HCHS that read: “that when we meet again the clouds of war now hanging over the world shall have dispersed.” *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>243</sup> HCHS Minute Book 5, HCHS, Smith Library, 22-23.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>246</sup> Tucker, *Massachusetts Historical Society*, 345.

the perilous state of the Society. It was a weak institution, barely holding on.”<sup>247</sup> A very similar feeling pervaded the halls of the HCHS. The historical movement in Indiana was severely weakened by the decade-long depression and the push to form lines of communication and unify the local societies by the Indiana Historical Bureau netted few lasting results. The Indiana Historical Society and Bureau moved the greater part of their attention toward publishing state history and were no doubt distracted by momentous events occurring in relation to the war.

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

## Conclusion

There is little doubt that the Great Depression and the Second World War were the primary circumstances that led to the decline of the HCHS in the 1930s and 1940s. But were there other weaknesses in the organization's practices and organizational structure that contributed to this precipitous decline? In the early years of the Society, there was trepidation over the organization's success and even survival. Many nineteenth-century historical organizations did not survive more than a few years. Efforts were heightened by the pressing need to gain public support for the new society and its quest for a permanent home. The organization's plans were formulated by Society founders, like Benjamin Parker, and once one objective was achieved, additional goals were ready to be taken up and the work continued forward. After a permanent home and county funding was assured, new long-range goals that required the collective efforts of Society members—building a historical collection and the hiring of a museum curator—occupied much of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Following Smith's hire as curator, accompanied by a robust local economy, the work moved forward. But with two stark contrasts. Much of the work was accomplished primarily by one individual and no pressing goal lay in the Society's future.

The early success of Progressive Era ideals in regard to historical societies may have also played a role in the weakening of the HCHS's organizational strength and lack of future long-range planning. There was no fault in the nature of these progressive ideas. Converting historical society museums from cabinets of curiosities into tools for public education, and the multitude of improved museum practices that were at least

partially instituted by Smith with the aid of officials from the state historical movement, were all positive steps in the direction of a more effective organization. But such ideas were introduced primarily by persons from outside the organization and not formulated from within. As regular contact with officials from the state historical agencies decreased during the 1930s, there seemed to be a lack of ownership within the HCHS. Meetings became drab and monotonous, adopting the atmosphere of a social or literary club instead of a historical organization focused on its local past. Fewer scholarly papers were presented and fresh efforts to publish a new county history were continually rejected. Little original research appeared in the presentations before the Society by local members and the level of dedication, mastery of the language, and a genuine love for the work seemed well below much of the Romantic-era writing found before 1910.

The institutionalization of local history in Henry County, based on a historical consciousness gradually constructed during the nineteenth century, was the result of a recipe comprised of many seemingly divergent ingredients: the American Centennial in 1876, industrialization, Quakerism, popularity of Civil War history and commemoration, and a state historical movement and the simultaneous development of other historical organizations following the Indiana Centennial in 1916. The historical consciousness in Henry County, as well as the influence of collective memory, pushed the local historical society movement to many early accomplishments that served as an organizational foundation providing long-term sustainability and cementing its role in the community as the final authority on the county's local history.

The circumstances and the ever-changing historical and cultural trends in America continually affected the course of the HCHS. But, the stable foundation, built

firmly upon annual county funding and a permanent home, enabled the HCHS to weather numerous setbacks and struggles; most significantly, the Great Depression and WWII. This same foundation also enabled the Henry County organization to excel as the “arc of state and local history soared during and after the bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976. <sup>1</sup>Yet the underlying source of the HCHS’s successes and survivals can be traced back to the county’s settlement period: the construction of a historical consciousness and regional ethos in the Old Northwest, and the early patterns of cultural development, when the Society of Friends, with its heritage of record keeping and preservation, settled much of Henry County.

The historical consciousness and importance of preserving local history so prevalent in connection to the HCHS is well encapsulated by Society Secretary John Thornburgh included in a commentary of the Twentieth Annual HCHS Meeting, in the spring of 1907. The thoughtful secretary wrote: “History is history. What we may say and what we might do today, may be of great value to those who, a hundred years from now may read the account of the proceedings of the H.C.H.S.”<sup>2</sup> The act of looking ahead with a sense of what in the present may be of historical value to individuals in the future is as essential to an organization’s historical consciousness as being cognizant of the importance of preserving the local past. And it was exactly this type of historical consciousness that was captured in the original mission statement of the HCHS in 1887: “to collect and preserve all matters of valuable county history... of interest to the present and future generations of our much-beloved county.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Kammen, “Local History in United States,” 549.

<sup>2</sup> HCHS Minute Book 2, HCHS, Smith Library, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Article II, Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society (1887), in HCHS Minute Book 1, HCHS, Smith Library, 9; see Appendix C: HCHS Mission Statements.

**Appendix A: Indiana Yearly Meeting Membership Totals 1834 and 1888:**

**Wayne, Henry, and Grant counties**

Membership: Indiana Yearly Meeting						
Name		1832 Census <sup>1</sup>			Name	1888 QM Report <sup>2</sup>
County	Monthly Meeting (MM)	Orthodox	Hicksite	Total	Quarterly Meeting (QM)	Orthodox
Wayne	Whitewater MM	956	293	<b>1249</b>	Whitewater QM	1,349
	New Garden MM	703	6	<b>594</b>	New Garden QM	1,170
	Milford MM	676	156	<b>832</b>	Dublin QM	1,437
	West Grove MM	401	101	<b>502</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,956</b>
	Chester MM	304	99	<b>403</b>		
	Springfield MM	774	14	<b>709</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3814</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>4289</b>		
Henry	Duck Creek MM	487	92	<b>579</b>	Spiceland QM	1,903
Grant	Mississinewa	259	0	<b>259</b>	Mississinewa QM	975
					Northern QM	1,408
					<b>Total</b>	<b>2383</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>8374</b>	<b>1430</b>	<b>9804</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,198</b>

MM = monthly meeting  
 QM = quarterly meeting

<sup>1</sup> Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), Meetings for Sufferings Minutes, 10th Mo. 8, 1834, 10th Mo. 5, 1835, Indiana Yearly Meeting Archives, Friends Collection, Earlham College

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in Richmond, IN, 1888 (Richmond, IN: T. E. De Yarmon, 1888), 28.

**Appendix B: Henry County Churches, 1860, 1870, and 1875**

<b>.Henry County Churches: Statistical Table, 1875 <sup>3</sup></b>		
<b>Denomination</b>	<b>No. of Congregations</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>
Methodist Episcopal	19	1414
<b>Friends</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1748</b>
Christian	12	1136
United Brethren	8	400
German Baptists	4	350
Presbyterian	3	378
New Light	5	382
Wesleyan Methodist	2	140
Roman Catholics	2	375
Lutherans	1	60
Baptists	4	180
Universalists	1	30
Evangelists	1	30
Spiritualists	1	30
Union	2	100
<b>Totals.....</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>6753</b>

<b>Churches in Henry County in 1860 &amp; 1870 <sup>4</sup></b>			
<b>Denomination</b>		<b>No. of Accommodation</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>
Baptists	3	1100	1500
Christian	11	1400	4000
<b>Friends</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3950</b>	<b>5000</b>
Lutherans	1	800	400
Methodists	24	7070	8500
Presbyterians	4	1200	1500
Universalists	0	500	0
New Light	3	0	1000
*German Baptists			
*Wesleyan			
*Spiritualists			
<b>Totals.....</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>16020</b>	<b>21900</b>

\* Mentioned in text without specific data.

<sup>3</sup> *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Henry County, Indiana, 1875*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Elwood Pleas, *1871 History of Henry County, Indiana*, 103-03.

## Appendix C: HCHS Mission Statements

Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society, 1887

The original mission statement, or “purposes,” of the new Society as taken from Article II of the HCHS’s constitution stated, “to collect and preserve all matters of valuable county history from the earliest white settlements, the personal histories of the pioneers and all prominent men and women of the county, all matters of interesting experience, anecdotes, adventure and personal and neighborhood reminiscence, the growth and development of public improvement of all kinds, of morality, Christianity, educational interests, of agriculture, horticulture, mechanics, machinery, etc., etc.; to gather and preserve information as to the natural resources of the county and its aboriginal and prehistoric animal, mineral, and vegetable remains; its natural woods, grains, grasses, fruits and vegetables of all kinds; its animals, birds, reptiles, and fishes, and all other matters of interest to the present and future generations of our much-beloved county.”<sup>5</sup>

Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society, 1902

The revised Articles of Association, enacted in 1902 when the HCHS was officially incorporated due to the county’s acquisition of permanent quarters. The document included a new (and much condensed) mission statement in Article I; “The objects and purposes of this Society shall be for literary purposes and the collection and preservation of the history, both civil and military, of Henry County, Indiana, including biographies of men and women and the natural history of said County and of all cognate subjects bearing upon the history of said County, including the history of the State and Nation.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Constitution and By-Laws of the Henry County Historical and Biographical Society, in HCHS Minute Book 1, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Articles of Association of the Henry County Historical Society booklet, Constitution and By-Laws Folder, Henry County Historical Society Archives Collection, Clarence H. Smith Genealogy and Local History Library.



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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Benjamin J. Badgley

### **Education**

M.A. History, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2017  
Museum Studies Graduate Certificate, Indiana University at Indianapolis, 2015  
B.A. History, Ball State University, 1996  
B.A. Political Science, Ball State University, 1996  
Minor: American Studies

### **Professional Experience**

Collections Intern, Indiana State Museum, July 2013–May 2014  
Public Programs Intern, Indiana Historical Society, August 2012–July 2013  
Executive Director, Henry County Historical Society, Sept. 2010–Sept. 2012  
Assistant Reference Librarian, New Castle–Henry County Public Library, May–  
Sept. 2010

### **Research and Training**

Historic Preservation  
Museum Administration  
Museum Exhibit and Design  
Archives and Records Management  
Museum Evaluation  
Historical Event and Tour Planning  
Educational Programming  
State and Local History

### **Conferences and Presentations**

Presentation: “The Founding of the Henry County Historical Society Museum:  
the Preservation of a Local Historic Landmark” at Indiana’s Statewide  
Historic Preservation Conference, April 23, 2015  
"Arts of Detention" Traveling Exhibit, *Guantánamo Public Memory Project*,  
2012 to present: <http://gitmomemory.org/about/traveling-exhibit/>  
Judge for Indiana History Day, Central District, South District, and State  
Contests, 2013

### **Professional Affiliations**

Henry County Historical Society, 2010 to present  
Indiana Historical Society, 2012 to present  
Spiceland Preservation and Tourism Society, 2014 to present  
Association of Indiana Museums, 2011  
Indiana Landmarks member and Affiliate Council, 2010–2012