



# GRANT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER JULY 2011

JULY 20, 2011  
Marion Public Library  
Room B, 7 p.m.

BOARD MEETING, 6:15 p.m.

Program: Boom Town 1892  
"Shooting The Well"  
John Ruley

Mr. Ruley was born in Marion in 1942, was raised on a dairy farm in Mill Township and graduated from Mississinewa High School. He studied Industrial Engineering in college and received his BBA degree in 1971. His family has lived somewhere in Mill Township since the mid 1800's.

John's program starts with the drilling for salt water by the early settlers and then on to the history of drilling for oil and gas development in Indiana. He also includes a demonstration in his presentation.

The GCHS has received the following invitation:

*Moselle Humbert 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday*  
*Date July 10, 2011*  
*Time 2 to 4 P.M. Reception*  
*Place First Christian Church*  
*1970 N. Wabash Rd*  
*Marion, IN 46952*  
*Hosted by Kathy and Richard Humbert*  
*RSVP 674-5898*

## OCTOGENARIAN CLUB AND MUSEUM

In the early 1900's people in Marion and throughout the county were becoming aware of their heritage. At that time there were approximately 300 people in the county who were 80 years of age or older, and this group included the early pioneers of Marion. These people personally knew Meshigomesiaa, had built log cabins, remembered the first train that came to Marion, and could probably give first hand accounts of all of the significant events in our county. They formed the Octogenarian Club and had their first meeting on September 1, 1903. The primary purpose of this club was to raise interest in local history and promote the formation of a Grant County Historical Society. Any resident of Grant County who had passed an 80th birthday could be members, and most meetings were held in Matter Park in August. Some meetings were held out at the Soldiers Home (now VA Healthcare System).

The sixth annual meeting held on August 18, 1909 in Matter Park was a special one, because it was decided at this meeting to raise funds to erect a pioneer log cabin in the park to help people remember 'the good old days'. Members brought axes, froes, mallets, wooden gluts, and other period tools to do the work. Wall logs were cut at Lugar Creek and poles were hauled from Greene Township. The logs were sycamore, hackberry, hickory, elm, and maple. It was estimated that ten thousand people came to the park to celebrate the construction of the cabin. The building was done under the direction of Stephen D. Fite who was an octogenarian himself. The cabin was complete in three work sessions.

The Octogenarian Cabin became a museum to house the relics of Grant County history. It was a major attraction at Matter Park, and eventually was enclosed by a protective shelter that is no longer standing. This attraction stood near the back of the park near the present large shelter house and Mildred Dilling Bandshell.

I remember visiting the cabin as a child and recall the strong, musty odor that permeated the building. The cabin eventually fell victim to dry rot and was destroyed. I recently spoke with my next door neighbors who are in their mid 70's and were long time antique dealers. They recall attending an auction many years ago when the contents of the cabin and museum were sold by a local auctioneer, and they believed that this had been done without the knowledge of the historical society or city or county offices. Important historical artifacts were divided and dispersed, never to be in a public collection again.

Written by: P.J. Culley  
Source: "The Golden Age Of Marion" by Steve Bunish

Grant County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1951  
Marion, Indiana 46952

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