



GRANT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2011

FEBRUARY 16, 2011
Marion Public Library
Room B, 7 p.m.

"The History of Marion's Newspapers"

Ed Breen

Ed Breen, formerly an Editor and Photographer with the Chronicle-Tribune, Historian, and present Radio Personality on WBAT, will present the history of the newspapers in Marion. This program will be informative and entertaining. Don't miss it.

BOARD MEETING, 6: 15 p.m., ROOM B

A nominating committee will be appointed to prepare a ballot for the annual meeting in April.

Great News! The YWCA called that they would like to give us several boxes of materials that we can sort and determine what to keep in historical files. I know that there are pictures that need to be ID'd and some that will need to be scanned. If you have an interest in helping with this project, let Juanita or Sue know and they will set up a work area and time. Both the former YWCA president and the society are excited about the possibilities of this offer.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March: Bob Finney will present a program on the history of Jalapa.

April: Annual Meeting at Sunnycrest UMC. Speaker, historic interpreter and musician Kevin Stonerock will become a showboat barker on a steamboat from the 1880's. "The Steamboat's A Comin"! You won't want to miss it.

President's Corner

This last week's weather has everyone talking about the weather even more than usual. There have been a few snow blasts before that made this one look smaller than we had anticipated. Remember April, 1955. Then there was February 1977-78, the back to back monsters. Our GCHS speaker for this month was a C-T photographer at that time. 1980 stranded hundreds of students at their schools. Our daughter was a writer at the C-T at that time. When she showed up at Southwood to do a story, her teenage brother refused a ride home thinking staying at school would be more fun. 2007 dumped lots of snow on us as well. Several people have been asking "Where is the global warming as the winter blast is coming this week?". Well, I don't know but I do know that if we wait a few days, something different will get our attention, meanwhile keep your ice scrapers and snow shovels handy. If you have a snow photo, bring it to the meeting for our "Snow Show" share time before and after the meeting. Juanita Rapp

THE YORK INN

The York Inn was a symbol of the Gas Boom era whose flame burned bright and then was vanquished. The inn was the brainchild of three entrepreneurs - George Mason, Mr. Wiley, and Mr. Butler. Butler came to Marion in 1880 from Wabash where he operated a carriage business. Mason was a local resident and Wiley came from the East. The three men joined forces to start a well known real estate and excursion business.

The York Inn was built from 1890 -1891 in Marion at the corner of Roseburg Pike (16th St.) and Buffalo Avenue. The inn was constructed to house the influx of thousands of people associated with the Gas Boom. The location was chosen for its proximity to a belt railroad which ran east and west through the area, and for a planned industrial park nearby.

This inn was an example of the finest luxury features available at the time. It was a wooden structure almost a block long, a quarter block wide, and four stories high. A circular dome resembling an onion dominated one corner of the building, and verandas encircled the entire first floor. The building contained sixty rooms, a bar, billiard rooms, bath and toilet rooms, offices, a dining room that could seat 150 people, and a dozen chandeliers. Oak woodwork, sideboards, and mantels enhanced the walls.

Brussels carpet went up the stairway to the second floor where it continued through the halls and stairways of the third and fourth floors. The rooms were so luxurious that they were considered to be fit for royalty.

The opening of the inn on April 14, 1891 was a gala the likes of which were never seen again in Marion. A special train brought more than four hundred 'excursionists' from as far away as New York. A reception, a ball with a New York orchestra playing, and a huge feast entertained guests for the three day opening celebration. Dignitaries such as the Indiana governor, Mayor George Moore, Congressman

George W. Steele, Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Sweetser, and Lucy and Alice Goldthait were in attendance.

However, the wild success of the opening of the inn was not a portend of its future. For about two years the York Inn was a financial success for its owners. In 1893 the Gas Boom began dying out and factories began to close. Another hotel operator by the name of Andrew Archibald bought the inn and operated it for a short time before selling it to the Monroe Gold Cure where it became the York Inn Sanitarium.

The building was sold several more times before being purchased by local merchant Lee Hall. He had the inn dismantled in 1901 and the building materials from the inn were used to build three stately homes on the west side of Washington Street between 9th and 10th Streets.

In spite of its early demise, the York Inn contributed to the growth of Marion and helped to put our factories, railroads, schools, and other opportunities on the map and in the limelight.

P.J. Culley

(Sources: The Golden Age of Marion by Steve Bunish, and Marion: A Pictorial History by June R. McKown)