



Morgan County Historic Preservation Society
July 2003
P. O. Box 1377
Martinsville, IN 46151
<http://www.mchps.org>

Preservation News

Apologies This newsletter is reaching you a bit late due to the change in secretaries that came in April 2003 Annual Meeting and the lag time that is always required to learn the previous secretary's : Terry Bell, who has served you so expertly for the past two years, has stepped down and left the position to Joanne Stuttgen. Please join all of us in thanking Terry for her valuable contributions.

New president Joe Mills leads the organization into several new courses of action. Read more below. Del Chafey serves as vice president. She is a dynamo and keeps MCHPS involved in many exciting activities. Mark Stuttgen continues as treasurer but is seeking a replacement after three straight terms. Round out the board are Del Chafey, Randy Marsh and Jackie Marsh, and John and Pam Badger.

As part of Joe's plan for the year, each board member has taken on a special project briefly discussed in this newsletter. Please contact them about getting involved. Your assistance is welcome and always needed.

William Macy Farm vs. INDOT

Joe Mills (342-0391) mills@rnetinc.net

Joe had only just been named president when his fortitude for the job was tested by INDOT's plans to expand SR 42 between Monrovia and Mooresville. Impacted is the historic William Macy Farm, about

one-half mile west of White Lick Creek. Approximately 35 feet of the owners' front yard, heavily wooded by 150-year-old trees, will be taken. MCHPS and its local sister organization, Morgan County History and Genealogy Association (MCHAGA), have been working very hard with owners Don and Joyce Robinson to prevent this from happening. The goal is to have the entire property declared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, thus forcing protection of the property. The battle has been a tough one, as the state preservation office considers the changes to the house significant enough to deny eligibility. With the support of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, we have decided to proceed with preparing a nomination, knowing that a real fight lies ahead of us. Meanwhile, INDOT is learning

just what a tenacious adversary they have in the Robinsons, who refuse to give up their front yard. A public informational meeting scheduled by INDOT for 18 September has been postponed without explanation. If INDOT is retrenching, it should also be confident that the Robinsons, MCHPS or MCHAGA have no intention of retreating.

Our research has been rewarding. One of the exciting discoveries is the property's association with early experiments in soybean roasting. It was here in the late 1950s that Harry Truax invented the Roast-A-Tron, a roasting machine that allowed the small farmer to convert raw soybeans into hog feed. Researchers from Purdue and Arkansas State University assure us that Truax's Roast-A-Tron was revolutionary and, indeed, still in use today.

Stay with us on the William Macy Farm vs. INDOT battle. We plan fireworks.

Check out our website!
<http://www.mchps.org>

Martinsville City of Mineral Water Sign

Tina Chafey (342-6082 or 349-1949)

As you should already know, restoration of the neon sign on top of the Norman T. Cunningham Block at the northwest corner of the square is nearing completion. Tina Chafey and Elmer Reynolds have been doing double duty as members of MCHPS and Martinsville Remember When, the committee organized to direct the project. Tom Tackett and his son, Jason, have repaired and painted the sign structure. The neon has been replaced by Bonnie Bray, and Gerald Gray has donated his services as electrician. Together, the team put the historic sign back together. A recent test lighting blew a fuse, but the kinks will be worked out of the system by the grand lighting ceremony after dusk on 4 October. A much-anticipated part of this year's Fall Foliage Festival, the lighting ceremony--and the all-day party that will precede it--must not be missed. Wear your preservation colors proudly and be there to witness this historic event.

Bridges

Del Chafey (324-6082) delbertchafey@gm.com

After the Burton Lane Bridge collapsed over Indian Creek in May 1998, Del was active in rescuing and relocating it to the county highway garage, where he participated in inventorying its many parts. He has now re-entered the bridge preservation scene with vigor. Larry Smith, the county's highway engineer, assures Del and MCHPS that he is eager to see the bridge gain new life somewhere in Morgan County. He is exploring the possibility of using federal Transportation Enhancement Assistance (TEA) funds—a subject that Del is also boning up on. This will obviously be a long and probably bumpy ride, but Del's grip is a solid one.

Hastings Schoolhouse

Joanne Stuttgen (349-1437) stuttgen@insightbb.com

The Great Tornado of September 2002 destroyed this one-room brick schoolhouse located on Hacker Creek Road just off SR 37 south of Martinsville. Although she hasn't done it yet, Joanne will arrange for a series of salvage days in the cool weather of fall to rescue brick, poplar beams and other materials from the pile of rubbish. She'll be calling all members to help. Please say yes when she asks you!

Hall School & Wilbur Schoolhouse

Randy Marsh (996-3980)

With the closing of Hall School scheduled for 2005, many Monrovia-area residents are looking for a viable alternative use for the building. Randy is part of the ad hoc committee meeting to explore future possibilities and a National Register listing for the property. He is also involved with the just-launched effort in the community of Wilbur to restore the 1876 Wilbur Schoolhouse, listed on the National Register in 1991. Used as the Wilbur Community Center for many years, it gradually fell into disrepair that forced its vacancy. The plan is to once again use it as a community gathering place.

Morgantown Historic District

Joanne Stuttgen (349-1537) stuttgen@insightbb.com

On 2 September, Joanne met with the Morgantown Town Board to discuss nominating the downtown commercial blocks to the National Register of Historic Places. The board was receptive to the proposal and intends to consult with property owners and merchants. The designated area contains approximately 38 properties, including residential and commercial buildings ranging in age from about 1875 to 1940. The Morgantown Historic District would be the fifth and final district in Morgan County to be listed on the National Register.

Education

Joe Mills (342-0391) mills@rnetinc.net

The mission here is to get the word out about preservation activities in Morgan County. Joe has sent a letter of introduction to the various units of local government and plans to meet with them in the months to come. Also in the planning stage is a workshop on attracting and keeping members. Other topics will be fundraising and cultivating and maintaining a presence in the community. Our instructor will be the public relations director of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. This

workshop will be open to all not-for-profit groups in the county. Stay tuned for more information.

Old Jail (Hummingbird Heaven and Jailbird Antiques)

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has renewed the lease of the Old Jail to Hummingbird Heaven and Jailbird Antiques. Renovation of the original Sheriff's office on the east side of the building is underway, and it will soon be a pleasant kitchen for the tea room that will be added to the business in early October. Hummingbird Heaven will continue to provide hummingbird items of all kinds, with antiques available in the upstairs rooms.

The lingering problem with leaking box gutters, and the resulting fluorescence and crumbling of the interior plaster walls is a constant reminder that the building is far from secure. The Board is preparing a grant application for funds to repair the gutters and will submit it to the state preservation office in October. It is expected to be a \$25,000 project. Of this amount, half must be provided by MCHPS. We submitted the same proposal last year and just missed out on the cut. Hopefully, this year we will move our way up on the list and into the money.

Something new this year came in the form of a tax bill. With recent changes in the state property tax system, MCHPS will pay property tax on 49% of the building beginning with the 2002 tax year. This percentage represents the total space used by Hummingbird Heaven and Jailbird Antiques.

For office use only:

date rec: _____ exp: _____

comp y n reason: _____