

# The Newcomer

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Newton County: Indiana's Youngest County

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## Pun'kin Vine Fair Celebrates 100 Years

Compiled by Beth Bassett

"Residents of Newton County have long enjoyed the fun and excitement of a county fair. In September of 1882, just 20 years after the county was organized, a "Patrons and Farmers Agricultural Fair" was held near Herriman's Tile Factory in Washington Township. This Fair continued annually through 1887. Coincidentally, the site was the woods and pasture just east of the former County Home, near the ground of the present fair. Read the Fall, 2013 Newcomer for more history on the Patron's Fair.

"In 1920 and 1921, a Newton County Fair was organized by members of the County Farm Bureau. Held in the Livery Stable and on a street in Brook, it was called the "Newton County Stock Show." At these early fairs, there were no grandstands or buildings; exhibits were set up in tents, and bleacher seats were brought from Indianapolis to provide seating for the small crowds. The fair was a bona fide "social event" and was talked about for months before and after the actual fair dates. Mr. Hamilton Jackson, the first Chairman of the Newton County Stock Show, was assisted by several members of the Whiteman family.

"As the 1920 Fair, termed a "splendid success," was followed by an equally successful 1921 Fair, with crowds and interest far exceeding expectations, it became evident that a larger site, where growth and expansion would be possible, would be necessary. On the last day of the 1921 Brook exhibition, various breeders and other interested individuals met and a committee of seven was appointed to select a location. Only two offers were received: Lake Village, and the Newton County Home through the Board of Commissioners. After much discussion, the committee agreed on the County Home site. The Fair was skeptical, but after two years, all 100 memberships were sold!

"Thus, the third annual Newton County Fair was held at the County Farm in 1922. Officers were: President - Rolland Ade, Kentland; Vice President - J.A. Wolgemuth, Lake Village; and Secretary-Treasurer - Clyde Herriman, Kentland. Also serving as directors were Lyle Constable, Goodland; James Hendry, Kentland; Charles Fleming, Brook; and S.E. Molter, Goodland. The stated objective of the Fair was "To encourage and foster the livestock industry in Newton County, Indiana, as well as the various branches of farming, agricultural, and domestic economy."

### Pun'kin Vine Fair

"How the name "Pun'kin Vine" originated is open to debate. Some of the "old timers" say that at the time the first fair opened, there were "Pun'kin" vines all around the gates as you entered the fairgrounds. Others say that remarks were made that the fairgrounds were only fit to raise "Pun'kins." Who is right or wrong doesn't seem to matter now. After all, there is only one Newton County "Pun'kin Vine Fair."

### Fair Weather

One of the more memorable bad weather fairs was held in September 1926, when continuous rains caused the carnival wagons and trucks to become so mired in the mud, they were unable to be moved until the following spring.

During the 1981 fair, the parking lots were turned into muddy, rut lined lakes. Tractors had to work through the night pulling out trapped motorists and the County Highway Department hauled in tons of stone. According to the Newton County Enterprise, the parking areas were "something approximating the consistency of oatmeal

In the spring of 1988, high winds tore off almost 75% of the Grandstand roof. Repairs were made: a new roof was put on and the Grandstand was shortened 24 feet before fair time.



In 2018 the Fair Board sponsored a logo design contest for the 100th Anniversary. Here is the winning design by Kenny Applegate.

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# President's Thoughts

By Kay Babcock

What is History? The Webster's New World Dictionary says: an account of what has or might have happened, esp. in the form of a narrative, play, story, or tale.....

We tend to want to know the date, the place, the details, who was there, why did it happen. But did you notice in the definition - or might have happened - a tale.

You might ask, what is she trying to get to. I want you to take the time to listen.

Listen to Grandma or Grandpa or Aunt Irene or the WWII vet next door. Their story might be the truth that they know from being there - D-Day, for example.

Did your grandparent live through the Depression? Did they use everything, wasted nothing? Did they make dresses using feed sacks. Listen to those stories.

My husband's family has the handwritten story of Aunt Sadie's story of Pride, the little shepherd dog, that the family had to leave when they came to America. It was part of the Henderson's family tree, compiled in 1960. "Aunt Sadie" was Sarah Henderson, born in 1861 in Haddington Shire, Whittingham, Scotland, and died in 1948. She lived in Goodland, and was their first librarian. She married Albert Arrick in 1906. The story of "Pride" is shared with you here.

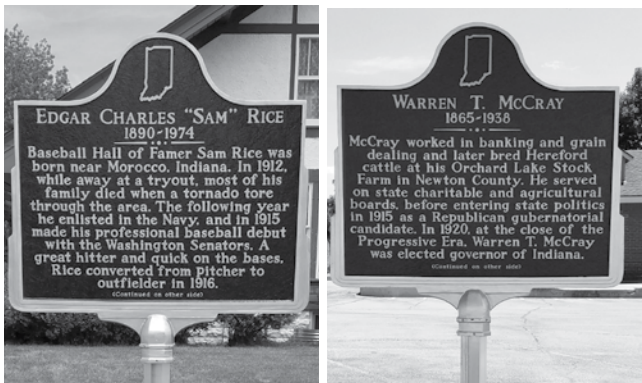
We have another written by his Grandma Mary Mead, she entitled "My Childhood Memories".

These are family history, but do you have family stories? You know those, the ones that edge on being stretched and added to as generations tell and retell them? These are the tales, they are important for your family history too. Retell them, write them down and share them with family members. It may take some of those young ones several years to appreciate them but it will come. Don't lose them.

The Society has been busy with dedications of Historical Markers: Sam Rice in Morocco, Gov. Warren McCray in Kentland and, later, Taft and Ade at Hazelden.

We hope to see you at the Newton County Pun'kin Vine Fair. It's an historical one, come and enjoy. Take the time to stop and look at the window at our Building in Kentland; it is a display of fair memorabilia.

Remember your history....



The Sam Rice marker can be viewed off S.R. 14 on the south side of the Scott Lucas House lawn in Morocco. The McCray marker is at the Cast Park in Kentland.

## Our Little Shepherd Dog - Pride

As I remember her, she started life at our home as a very small "beastie" more like a kitten than a puppy, so young that Mother got up in the night and warmed milk for her. I think I was about 3 yrs older than Pride was, as I was 5 when we moved to another farm nearer the village where we went to school and church. The country is very rolling in places near Haddington, much like Hills and Dales near Lafayette. There were breaks sometimes in the mile between the two places where we could see when someone was walking. Once my sister came to visit us that way, so when Pride saw Mother looking that direction she figured Sister Helen must be coming who was met by Pride on the way in and escorted with grins all the way. I never saw a dog that did so much grinning. Then when your Mother and Aunt Jane came to this country, Father went to Glasgow with them and saw them safely on the vessel.

So Pride was left at home without any duties; so she hunted till she found where Mother had put Father's every day clothes and took possession of them and lay on them. The only thing we could coax her to eat was a piece of meat. After my sisters were settled in the U.S. and liked it so well, my mother concluded the best thing to do was to move the family there before any more left her, so we decided to move here in 1873. Then Pride became our problem. It would cost as much to take her as one of the children, and she couldn't stand hot weather. It caused her to have fits and as this was June, we would find the hottest weather to greet us. So a shepherd needed a dog and came bought her. He came a short distance on the train as the depot was near his place. I can remember when the man came to take her. Father went with her and saw that his fields were near the depot. So he told the shepherd to put a string around Pride's neck the next day when he went among the sheep. But he thought that was foolish as they had to go on the train to Haddington. So he didn't. As it happened a train stopped as they were going thru the sheep in the field-on its way to Haddington-so Pride didn't stop to say goodbye and ran, got on the train-way under the seats-and they couldn't get her out. So the train went on to Haddington, there she got out and was at our door to greet us next morning. Of course, we children were delighted to see her, but Father made us stop making a fuss over her for he said she wasn't our dog any more. So Pride found a pair of his shoes under the table and lay on them all morning. The man came for her in the afternoon and took her away and that was the last we saw of her. But sister wrote she came back three times after we were gone, but I guess she finally concluded we had gone for good, and never came back.

So that is my story of our dog and I hope it will give the children pleasure to read it. She was a thin hairy black dog not shaggy or curly as we normally see shepherd dogs. Written by Aunt Sadie (-)

### About this Issue ....

In celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Newton County Pun'kin Vine Fair, I hope you will enjoy reading about the history of our fantastic fair, and share your memories with your family and friends!

Special thanks to Rich Miller for his documentation of the grandstand events for the fair. Rich spent many hours going through the Newton County Enterprise for each year's fair events. I utilized John Connell's history published in the current fair program book and last but not least, the writings of Karen Van Duyn and Janet Miller for the program for the 75th Diamond Jubilee Celebration in 1970. They uncovered a great variety of interesting news notes and personal recollections.

The facebook page for the Newton County Pun'kin Vine Fair has a gallery of photos beginning in 2017 that is amazing, some of them utilized here.

- Beth Bassett, Editor

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A March 12th ice storm in 1991 knocked out power to much of southern Newton County for 14 days and gave the Fair Association the opportunity to replace 12 power poles and upgrade the camper wires. The wind that followed a week later destroyed the horse barn.

In 2000, the Northwest Indiana Symphony were scheduled to perform in the grandstands. However, Mother Nature decided the county needed a bit more rain and the entire Symphony set up had to be moved to the Sheep Arena for their performance. Skeptics thought fair board members foolish for attempting such a move – but they were not aware of the tenacity of those who accomplished the feat! The show went on.

In 2015, wet conditions at the fairgrounds did not deter the performance of Cole Swindell to a crowd of over 2,000. The fair board decided to not allow parking on site and set up a shuttle service from the Kentland Industrial Park. With the help of the North Newton School Corporation and their drivers, along with the Kentland Police Department and Newton County Sheriff's Department, the night went on. Due to bad weather the queen pageant was moved from the fairgrounds to the Trinity Methodist Church in Kentland.

### The Midway

News notes from 1925 found that on the Mid-way one can get anything from a hot dog to a life insurance policy, a glass of red lemonade or an automobile; you can get your fortune told at half a dozen tents, and if you are not careful one can get a good skinning at other layouts. There are eating houses galore, several run by local people, and rides, and baby racks, and blanket emporiums. The old corn game is running full blast, and so are a half hundred mouths at other concessions, trying to coax a few dollars into their tills. But it all goes at a fair.

Two features that are especially appreciated are the large rest tents provided by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Newton County Farm Bureau. These are a blessing to tired mothers and children.

In 1955, Friday was School Day a day which children looked forward to from one year to the next.

1959: Monday, August 3 was the first bargain ride night with the new carnival, Drago. With a coupon from the paper, a fairgoer could pay \$1.00 at the box office and get 12 rides – that made the cost of rides less than 9 cents each!

In 1985 Yost of the Enterprise reported: "The annual Newton County Pun'kin Vine Fair is underway, and the crowds have been excellent during our visits. This year's carnival is a new outfit, and seems like a good one, though we judge these things from a safe dis-

tance, and have since our unpleasant encounter with the Octopus ride in 1962. There also seems to be a greater variety of food stands, and as is obvious, we have not kept a safe distance from these facilities."

### Fair Schedules

The Board of Directors not only adapted the facilities to meet the changing needs of the fair, but also the schedules and events. As lifestyles change and interests arise, adaptations are made to the fair to keep it convenient and interesting to the public it serves.

1920 fair week, October 13-16, was basically a stock show.

1922 fair week moved forward to September 26-30. It kept creeping earlier in September each year until it reached Labor Day weekend in 1946.

1956 the fair remained a four-day event for many years in response to the needs of exhibitors and fairgoers, a fifth day was added.

1958, the big jump came when it moved to August 4-8 with no conflict with the school opening or the State Fair.

1994 the fair is seven days long with two days of Pre-fair activities.

Present day, the fair officially runs for six days, Monday-Saturday, with three days of pre-fair activities.

### History Gleaned From Newspapers

News from September 1925: "Most successful Fair ever held! Yes, the Newton Coun-

ty Fair was a success. The Weatherman was in a good humor during the complete exposition, and folks from near and far stormed through the gates every day to completely shatter all previous attendance records.

"A new floral hall was built on the grounds this year and this is filled to its utmost capacity.

"Among the larger exhibitors in the agricultural department is Sunnyside Farm, Otto Hood, Harry Warr, Harry Sell, Rufus Whitmire, Connie Anderson, Strole Bros., Carey Hagen, Abner Whaley, Lem Molter, and many others.

"Rules and regulations: All horses, mules, and cattle will be required to take part in the parade at any time management so orders."

### 1930 Airplane Rides

"Officials of the Fair Association announced that Captain Aretz of the Shambaugh Flying Field, Lafayette, who had established an enviable reputation as an aviator, furnished passenger planes at the fairgrounds to accommodate those who wished to take airplane rides in reliable planes piloted by experienced and qualified pilots of Indiana. It was hoped at the time by the Association that the patrons of the fair would be pleased with this arrangement."

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Top photo, First Premium Ribbon from the Newton County Fair, 1920. Donated to the society by Howard Washburn. Bottom photo, No. 6 Membership Certificate sold by the Newton County Fair Association from 1920-1921. All 100 memberships were sold.

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### Child Born at Fairgrounds

"The only known child known to be born on the fairgrounds was William Newton Stanley, born to fortune tellers in 1935. In 1938 his parents celebrated their 12th year with the fair and William Newton's third birthday."

### 1935: General Rest Room

"In addition to provisions for the children, a general rest room for men, women and children, in charge are the Methodist ladies of Kentland, who will be available at all times.

"And now a word of praise is due the officers and directors, upon whose efforts the Fair's success depends. These men have worked hard for weeks in preparation for the annual four-day show, and they should all feel a deep sense of pride in the results of their labors."

### 1940s

1940 was the first year that the fair lasted more than four days. The Saddle Horse show was scheduled for Sunday afternoon and evening. Many local businessmen participated in this event and preferred to be at work the first of each week, thus the Sunday schedule.

In 1941 there was another first. There was a miniature daily newspaper on the grounds. The *Enterprise* prepared the sheet under the name of the "The Little Enterprise." The paper carried some of the highlights of the fair, along with a race program and scorecard.

These were hard years on the community, but discussion of the fair attendance was ably stated by Ward Bartlett in the *Newton County Enterprise* column, "Through the Lens" in 1942. "One guy came in town from the fairgrounds and told us that he could see very little difference in the size of the crowd from previous years, and yet some contended that few would be interested in fairs with a War to fight. The American people of today realize there is a war to be won, but still very little harm in good clean entertainment with the sorrows which they must endure."

The county Legion tent housed an attractive display honoring fallen servicemen of the county. In 1945 there were 1828 Newton County people in service. Harry Blaney, Commander of the Morocco Legion Post was responsible for this display.

Victory Bonds were awarded 4-H livestock winners along with their usual cash prizes.

The Red Cross had an interesting exhibit at the fair showing work done by volunteers in sewing and knitting kit bags for the Armed Forces. Our county was asked to make 400 kit bags and grandstand donations of \$155 were a big boost to the fund.

Armed Forces Recruiters set up their booths at the fair with hopes of getting many

new recruits.

In 1945, the *Enterprise* wrote, "Everything is in readiness for the Fair next week. To persons who have never attended this event, some of the attendance figures generally draw a laugh. Anyhow when you tell a person that 25,000 souls will attend a county fair in a five-day period it does sound a bit "fishy." But come out and see for yourself is the best proof we know."

In 1945 a plane crashed at the fairgrounds. It was reported, "A Chicago pilot and his passenger from Watseka, Illinois, were able to walk out of the plane that crashed in front of the grandstand. Both were taken to the Iroquois Hospital for treatment and then released."

During the 1975 fair a busload of 38 patients and 3 staff members from Norman Beatty Hospital were entertained at the fair by Tri Kappa Sorority, Kentland. After their long ride, cake, punch, cigarettes and name tags were given to them. They were furnished \$1.25 each spending money by the Newton County Mental Health Assn. They played Bingo with everyone winning

a prize and were treated to the Pork Producers Pork Chop Supper. Tinsley Amusements very generously furnished tickets for them to enjoy the rides.

The Freckle Contest in 1975 also paid off. Queen JoAnne Gibson and Heidi Stenz made the following selections in the Freckle Contest: 1st - Danny Hooks; 2nd - Tammy Deardurff; 3rd - John Schoonveld; 4th - Alan Schoonveld; 5th - Amy Ritchie; 6th - Joe Williamson

In 2005, A shuttle transportation around the fairgrounds was offered by the Newton County Community Services. This helped everyone get where they wanted to go and increased access to all parts of the fairgrounds for all the patrons.

News reported that in 2015 a statewide bird-ban on co-mingling flocks due to the Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) outbreak. 4-H members completed projects by poster, barn information session, record sheets and egg classes. Fourteen members participated. The Newton County Poultry Barn is one of the few counties using live chickens (from one flock) for showmanship.



The crowds gathered early in 1939 for the horse races. Here is a shot of the grandstands 30 minutes before the races began.



1949 Harness Racing fans. The three gentlemen pictured are from Brook: front, James Fleming of Brook, center Winfred Beagley and Frank Dewees back.

## Fair Entertainment Through the Years

Perhaps the only initial entertainment of the very first fair events were the stock shows and the contests between the women of the county showcased in the newly built Domestic Arts building in 1925. Horse races were also exciting venues – showcased in 1927 with three days of racing. That same year the first entertainment was listed as a Vaudeville Show and music. The early entertainment venues in the grandstands were elaborate, showy affairs. Some troupes stayed all week and performed three different shows.

### 1930s

The 1930s showcased a variety of vaudeville acts, and in 1931 music was provided each day by a different band. The Goodland Band, the Morocco Boy Scout Band, the Kentland Band, and the Brook Band.

The first appearance of the WLS Barn Dance in 1932. Radio's most popular entertainers appeared at the Newton County Fair. Fan favorite radio stars included Georgie Gobel, The Three Little Maids, The Hoosier Sod Busters, Pat Buttram, Prairie Ramblers, and Patsy Montana. This show was a steady attraction throughout the 30s.

### 1940s

In the 1940s, a horse pulling contest was featured for the first time and free acts each night highlighted the entertainment. Two firsts in entertainment – a Mule Pulling Contest and a Saddle Horse Show were also featured. Music Reviews, a Circus, Horse shows and racing highlighted each year.

### 1950s

For the 1950 fair events were scheduled on fast time to cooperate with the schools and a school day was held on Friday of fair week. Wednesday afternoon and evening Ward Beam's International Championship Auto Daredevil Contest was the headliner. Thursday night featured famous TV and radio performers, The Harmonicats, and America's favorite organist, Ken Griffith. Trapeze and high wire acts returned in 1955.

During the 1956 fair the Midwestern Hayride was the headliner and on Thursday and Friday evening's top attraction was an Ice Revue. That's right – an ice show right here at the fair. "Stars on Ice" was billed as "one of the greatest arrays of music, comedy, colorful costumes, beauty and grace ever to appear in this area." The troupe came to Newton County directly from triumphant engagements in Honolulu and the new and beautiful Statler Hotel in Los Angeles. Imagine challenge of building an outdoor ice rink in August. The ice show returned for three days in 1957.

In 1958, the first Fair Queen contest was held. Twelve contestants vied for the crown, but it would be Joy Sell who was crowned the first Miss Newton County Fair.

In 1958 with the first tractor pull, and in 1958 it was sponsored by the fair board for the first time.

### 1960s

The schedule was pretty stable by this decade, creating a very comfortable and familiar feel to the fair. Some special events such as the Northwest Indiana Shetland Pony Show and the reintroduction of Harness Races in 1967, absent from the events calendar since 1958. The Queen pageant became a main attraction, and at one time hosted by a WLS disc Jockey.

Auto thrill shows seemed to be the main attraction during the 60s. Acts included Joey Chitwood; All Girl Stunt Drivers; Johnny King Auto Thrill Show; and Dan Fleener Hurricane Hell Drivers, who appeared from 1965 to 1969.

In 1967 the first teen dance was held along with a 4-H night and fireworks. For the first time in 1969 a Demo Derby was scheduled for Saturday night.

### Special Events for 50th Celebration

The largest pumpkin pie was featured in competition – 54" in diameter and weighed 43 pounds. A pizza oven was necessary to bake the winner to perfection. Some of the other entries weren't much smaller.

The weather came up with something special – a big windstorm and plenty of rain. Some of the tents had to be put up again after the storm.

The antique tractor displays and a threshing exhibition reminded fairgoers of their agricultural roots. A glimpse of the past was also offered by the Fashion Revue which featured garments worn in the period between 1900 and 1970.

The queen contest featured the Indiana State Fair queen and Mrs. Jennie Hopewell at the organ.

Harness racing featured a special half-mile anniversary race with a purse of \$350 closing out the card of races.

A giant fireworks display topped off the festivities.

Frank Strole, superintendent of the Agriculture department, was one of the oldest exhibitors at the fair, having shown livestock from the first fair. He was also one of the oldest members of the association.

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George Gobel, 1932

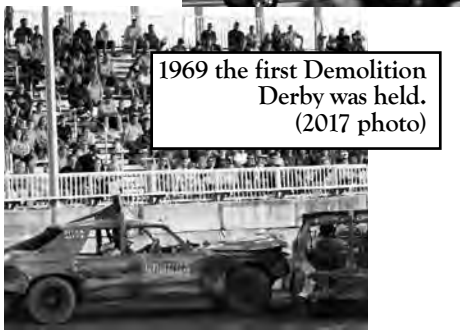


Joy Stowers, the first Miss Newton County Fair, 1958



1960s Joie Chitwood and the Hell Drivers

1959 the first Tractor Pull was sponsored by the fair board. (2017 photo)



1969 the first Demolition Derby was held. (2017 photo)

In 1977 the first Truck Pull was held. (2017 photo)



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A special newsletter, "The Pun'kin Vine Gazette," was published and distributed sat the fairgrounds. It contained the story of the first fair held on the streets of Brook in 1920.

### 1970s

Tractor Pulls, Demo Derby, Harness Racing and the Teen Dance entertained fairgoers in the 70s. The 4-H night and fireworks also continued each year. The Luehrs Rodeo debuted in 1970 and Hotler's Wild Animal Show in 1973 and 1975. In 1976. Monday was set aside for Church Night. That same year a special Bicentennial Program was presented on Sunday night, followed by fireworks. Dan Fleenor and the Hurricane Hell Drivers reappeared on Wednesday in 1979 along with an afternoon and evening Circus on Thursday. Hot air balloon rides were offered to those daring to take to the sky.

The fair celebrated the Bicentennial with a parade that was colorful and excellent for representing persons and ways of our history. The parade began with the "Spirit of 76" with Marshall Whaley as flag bearer, Grant Whaley with drum, and Sherry Claussen, fife. Following was Orv Hamacher, Dr. Schoonveld, Harley Clark and Pete Stath. Among the guns they were carrying were an 1812 flint lock and 1860 Civil War musket.

### 1980s

The decade of the 80s carried the familiar events such as the Tractor Pull, Demo Derby, Queen Pageant, Harness Racing, and 4-H night. The first FWD Truck Pull was held in 1981 and continued as a standard into future decades. A Snowmobile Pull began in 1981 and continued through the late 80s.

In 1985, the Indiana State Fair hot air balloon took to the sky at the Newton County Fair. The balloon, which is more than 80 feet high and 50 feet in diameter was a thrill ride for some, and for spectators, watching flight preparations and seeing the balloon take to the sky was a great way to spend some time.

Also, in 1985, the "Pun'kin Vine" Fair's Showcase of Talent was a success. A near capacity audience enjoyed 22 acts. Master of Ceremonies Alan Washburn set a fast-paced tone for the Revue, and the varied acts that followed presented the judges quite a challenge. Producer/Coordinator was Morris E. Cornell. Committee members were Mrs. Calvin Kindig, Mrs. Robert East, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Washburn, Robert Lane, Joe Shide and Ben Geesa.

### 1990

Entertainment for the fairgoers in the 1990s was much the same as the 1980s. In 1996 a Mini-Queen contest was held that would evolve into the Little Miss and Mister Contest of today.

### 2000

The new century brought "big name" entertainers to Newton County. The first being the Charlie Daniels Band in 2001.



For those who follow country music, many of the names that appeared in our fair grandstands during this era would move to the upper echelons of their industry within a few years.

A bit of switching around in nights of events was about the biggest change of venues during these years. Earth Night was introduced showcasing environmental issues offering local suggestions to better our communities.

Those displaying their antique tractors and implements each year proudly paraded them to crowds assembled in the grandstands as well in the antique tent area.

A Combine Derby was held in 2010, and events along the midway such as the People's Choice Cook-Off several years.

In recent years, the Free Stage has brought local talent and bands to fairgoers each night of the fair.

There is always something for everyone - at the Pun'kin Vine Fair!



The Free Stage, introduced in the past few years showcases local and area musical talent. (2018 photo of Austin Lee and his friend Jonah.)

## Fair Volunteers Behind The Scene

Perhaps the greatest tradition of the fair is volunteerism. From its beginning with an interested group of seven men, the fair has continued to have county-wide support from many people committed to making it a success.

The following article about the first fair held on these grounds appeared in the September 28, 1922 issue of the *Newton County Enterprise*:

"When the lights were turned on at night, the grounds resembled a real midway, and gave to the directors and managers a feeling of pride and satisfaction.

"Yesterday there was a good sized crowd in attendance, and everyone expressed surprise on the magnitude of the Fair considering the short time in which it was arranged and the handicaps that had to be overcome for the want of buildings, the making of a new race track and the inexperience of those in charge. It was the consensus of opinion that the site was ideal with its splendid shade and central location, and within a few years they could see growing out of the present effort a splendid agricultural fair."

As the fair grew, the board of directors was expanded to meet its needs. In 1930s the board was increased to seven members and three County Commissioners. By 1960 there were nine members, three commissioners, and a county agent on the board. Perhaps you remember this agent, his name was Russell Zell and his influences were felt far beyond the sixties.

In 1980, associate directors were added to the roll, making a board of nine directors and two associates. In 1985, two more associate directors were added, and this was increased by two more in 1994. In this way the board has been able to continue present programs and constantly improve both the grounds and the services provided to fairgoers.

This spirit of helping went beyond the borders of Newton County to the Indiana State Fair. Floyd Hoover not only served on our fair board, but also served eight years on the State Fair Board as well. He served as president of that distinguished organization in 1967. He set a fine example of service which was followed by Ross McKee who joined the Indiana State Fair Board two years later, serving from 1970-1977.

Possibly the most unique aspect of our fair leadership is its stability. While volunteers came and went, the fair board officers offered consistency of direction that steered a course to the future. These people, along with the many directors with which they have

served, are the heart of the fair and deserve our appreciation and recognition.

### Board Presidents

1922-1957	Rolland Ade
1957-1966	Paul Weston
1966-1983	Leonard Storey
1983-1984	George Holley
1984-1991	Rich Miller
1991-1995	John Frischie
1995-2000	Don Olson
2000-2008	Scott Carlson
2008-2015	Rick Dawson
2015-present	Tim Burks

In 2004 the Fair Board voted to divide the position of Secretary/Treasurer into two positions. Carol Carlson was elected Secretary in 2004 and Marci Hall became the Treasurer. In 2014 the Fair Board voted to combine the position secretary and treasurer once again.

### Secretary/Treasurer

1922-1926	Clyde Herriman
1926-1954	Tony Schuh
1954-1986	John Connell
1986-1992	Bob Lane
1992-2014	Marci Hall, 2004 Treasurer - first woman to break the ranks.
2004-2014	Carol Carlson, Secretary
2014-2015	Ann Shale
2015-2018	Carol Carlson
2018-present	Drake Babcock

## A Few of the Many Volunteers Over The Years



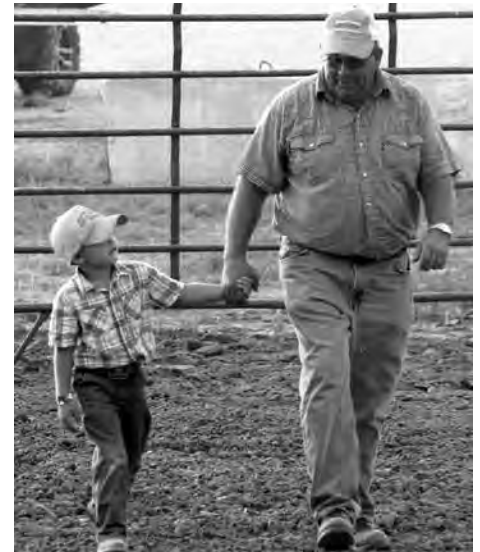
Joan and Harley Clark



Left, Norm Eckstrom, seated center Jim Smith and Tim Shuster



L-R: John Whaley and Don Washburn.



Scott Carlson (right) and grandson Lyle Harrington.



Mara Davis and Little Mister Candidate.



Kyra Harrington



L-R:Rick Dawson, Tim Burks, Tyler Wilson, Norm Ekstrom, Hugh Clark and Rich Miller.

## Following In Footsteps and Stepping Into Future Generations

Many of the fair board and directors have a family legacy of volunteering for the fair through multiple generations. For example two Miller families-Rich, Janet and daughter Marci from Washington Township and from Colfax Township Dave, daughters Deena, Devin and granddaughter Gracie. Although these Millers are not related, both are legacy volunteers. It was Walt Miller, Rich's father and Shirley (Bassett) Miller, Dave's mother who initiated their love for the fair. So that makes three generations - so far! I am sure there are several families that can attest to this legacy as well, but I thought it quite a coincidence that they both had the same last name! - Submitted by Beth Bassett



Left to right: Janet Miller, fair office worker for more than 40 years; Marci (Miller) Hall, former Sec.-Treas., Rich Miller, former President. Far right, l-r: Deena (Miller) Eastwold, Gracie Green, Dave Miller, former Swine Barn Superintendent, and Devin (Miller) Green. Marci, Deena and Devin are all 10-year 4-H members.

## 8 The Newcomer



### And They're Off! Harness Racing At Pun'kin Vine

An aerial view of the start of a harness race during the 2017 fair.

One of the first types of entertainment of the first fair events were horse races, with 3 days slated in 1927. The track was the first improvement on the fairground and, since the beginning has been a well-attended event. They were so popular that they ran two afternoons with sometimes over 100 horses entering.

In September 1925, sixty-three racehorses and thirteen races had been provided for, the management found it necessary to add two additional events in order to place all the horses.

In 1935 a tragedy occurred when Dynamite, a black running horse, crashed through the fence on the northeast turn. He was dead within a few minutes suffering a ruptured blood vessel. The rider was not injured, fortunately because he left his mount when he saw that the horse was beyond control.

The reputation of the track was outstanding, "The racetrack, owing to the peculiar mixture of soil present, is regarded by horsemen as one of the best and fastest tracks to be found anywhere."

Our racing event was covered in both 1937 and 1938 by "Horseman," a turf magazine. A photo of President Ade and Secretary Schuh was part of the double-page spread picturing officials of successful State and County fairs of the Midwest.

In 1945 local businesses, as well as the courthouse, closed their doors on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons so folks could attend the running of the harness races.

In 1955, Newton County was one of the few county fairs in the state that presented harness races. In 1958 the first edition of the fair to be without harness racing and this lapse continued until 1967 when the tradition returned with a full-blown card of twelve races and the modern technology of a starting gate and photo cameras for the first time.

Steve Kindig, harness racing superintendent in 2005, told the *Enterprise* "he believed that this year promises to be as exciting as past years as the Hoosier horsemen and their rivals from surrounding states bring their pacers and trotters to the gate!" The fair's harness races were part of the Indiana Harness Racing circuit which, along with purses of up to \$2,100 per race, improves the entries and competition for the Newton County races.

In the "travelIN" Spring 2019 publication dubbed the fair, "the biggest little fair in Indiana." They interviewed Barbara Wilfong, who has been associated with the fair's harness racing program for many years. Her husband Lynn, who announces the races, have been steeped in the traditions of harness racing for decades. "They are not called jockeys," Barbara told them, "They're drivers and they sit on a sulky, a two-wheeled cart."

"The article continued: "There were 13 races held in 2018 with 70 horses competing in those races in one day at Kentland. A total of \$39,000 in purses were awarded to owners competing in those races. During 2017, there were nice races, with 48 horses competing, paying out \$27,000 in purses. The amount really depends on the schedule of the races, how close it is to the other fairs, etc.

"The Newton County Fair has always been extremely welcoming to horsemen coming to participate in their racing program," stating Jessica Barnes, Director of Racing and Breed Development for the

Indiana Horse Racing Commission. "They have provided breakfast for horsemen and create a welcoming and fun environment. The Fair Board puts in a lot of hard work to ensure that the races happen smoothly, and we are thankful to their longstanding dedication to the harness racing program in Indiana."

### 4-H: Values Taught By Good, Honest Competition

If one had to choose a single word to describe the Newton County Fair, that word would be "tradition." The sense of pride in the successes of the past has prompted the fair to preserve those activities which form its very foundation.

The entire fair began as basically a stock show in 1920, and by 1922 the competition was first rate. In 1922, the *Enterprise* reported, "If the fair serves no other purpose it will demonstrate that Newton

County has become one of the greatest stock counties in the state, if not in the nation. A walk down through the cattle and hog pens will substantiate this statement. Under the cattle tent Governor McCray is showing seven head of Herefords, including Lincoln Prince, grand champion steer at the Illinois State Fair last week."

This type of competition and striving for excellence set the tone for the fair exhibitors to come, especially the ladies who began competing with each other in domestic areas. While the open class stock shows diminished from their role as sole purpose of the fair during the 50s, other classes were developed and other types of entries sought.

Eventually, the fair realized that there were exhibitors that were not being fully served as evident in this article from the 1938 *Enterprise*:

"Newton County 4-H Club members enlarged their activities this last spring from that of previous years. A nucleus of the organization had been held together during the past six years largely by the efforts of the Newton County Fair officials and the local volunteer leadership. During that period the county was without the services of a County Extension Agent and office. The Newton County Fair officials have been responsible for holding this group together by offering classes in their premium list and this spirit of competition reflecting the same in the 4-Her's as in business."

4-H now holds the position of importance to the fair that we originally held by the Governor and his cohorts so many years ago, and the values taught by good, honest competition still remain part of the fair tradition.



Horses and their riders. A fair standard from the beginning. Here a 4-H club member competes in 2016.





Fairground aerial view, 2017

## Fairgrounds Continue To Improve - Change With The Times

The racetrack of that first year was quickly joined the next year by a grandstand.

In 1925 a Floral Hall was built.

1931 was a big building year with the addition of three racehorse barns, holding 56 stalls; a draft horse barn, holding 28 horses; a hog house with 46 pens; an agricultural building and an office. Also, by this year, three churches of the county: Christian Church of Kentland; Christian Church of Brook; and Russell Chapel of Morocco had erected their own buildings on the grounds to serve meals and refreshments.

1937 a new section was built onto the grandstand adding several hundred seats.

1938 a new girls' 4-H building and boys' 4-H tents were added.

1938 the old Floral Hall was greatly enlarged and remodeled under a WPA project and would house the Women's Department and girls' 4-H. A new judging area was fenced off at the east end of the Midway and bleacher seats were erected shortly after for the spectators. Flood lights were installed on the roof of the grandstand to light the track and a special power transformer was installed at the west end of the fairgrounds to take care of the swing revue.

In 1965, new facilities were added in order that fair patrons could watch judging and livestock auctions in the comfort of a covered building with permanent bleacher seats.

YEAR	IMPROVMENT
1950s	Beef Barn
1960s	4-H Building
1965	Sheep Barn and Arena
1970s	Horse and Pony Barn
1973	Commercial Building
1980	Stage in front of the Grandstand
1981	FFA - Ag Building
1982	New seating and flooring installed in Grandstand
1984	Swine Barn Renovation Domestic Arts Building Renovations
1988	Grandstand Roof Repair Built North Newton Music Booster Pavilion
Late '80s	Gravel roads were blacktopped
1989	Grandstand Box Seat Renovated
1990	Rabbit/Poultry Barn Replaced
1991	Horse & Pony Barn Replaced
1992	Concrete Stage removed. Track improvements made.

1993	John Connell Memorial Building - Secretary Office Beef Barn
1995	Norm Ekstrom Show Arena
1996	Sheep Barn Addition and Renovation
1997	Horse and Pony Arena Connell Building Landscaping
1999	Restroom; Show Arena Addition
2000	Electrical Upgrades
2004	New Restroom at the Horse and Pony Area
2006	Renovation of Restroom at the Grandstand
2007	New Antique Tractor Building
2011	Grandstand Renovated
2013	Harness Race Barn
2015-16	Improved Water Lines
2017	New 4H Building
2018	Extended Goat Barn
2018	Resurfaced the drives

## 1891 Fishing Expedition

*Newton County Enterprise*, August 27, 1891

"Just as might have been expected, the Editor of the *Enterprise* was evidently bribed with dog fish which he thought was trout, to say nothing about the fishing party that came from Kentland to the Kankakee week before last. We suppose they told him they had an exceedingly pleasant time camping out, fishing and etc., possibly they did. We propose to tell some things we know about that crowd, and what they did; a brief history of their camp life shall go thundering down the ages along with one of Spottswood's (editor) three column editorials on the tariff question.

"As the advance agents passed through the country with the load of tents, bathing suits, baggage and bait, the solemn countenance of the driver, mysterious and wonderful make up the load, caused excited comment along the line. Jim Moffett said he was satisfied that it was another new political party going to Ohio to vote.

"When Morocco was reached, they thought all the pack peddlers had formed a trust and were moving to Pogue's station; Ira Drake, being in Morocco, hastened out through the ridges warning the citizens to keep their children indoors.

"At Lake Village they thought a band of Russian refugees had just driven across to avoid paying poll tax; Jake Hess wanted to capture the whole outfit and confiscate the goods, but the wise counsel of Uncle John Stoner prevailed, and they were permitted to move on unmolested.

"Great and dense volumes of smoke were seen towering over the treetops at the river, and the villagers were alarmed lest Chicago should surround them, the whole country soon become enshrouded with mystery and smoke.

"On the ninth day a scout was sent out with instructions to investigate and report, he groped his way in a smoky darkness that hid



the noon day sun, and cautiously advancing near the river, this is what met his vision.

"Tents, immediately in front of which was a smudge of wonderful smoke producing power, tired children were industriously providing faggots, leaves and peat from the marshes to keep it going, in the vain endeavor to stupefy the billions of mosquitos hovering around. Close at hand you will notice a lone fisherman anxiously watching for a nibble, for two days has occupied this log, all the time vigorously tapping, slapping; no fish in the tent, women and children perishing for food and being devoured by mosquitos, his heart had almost failed him when along came.

"Notice the joyous expression and elastic step of "Lee" as he proudly marches into camp, then look at Frank, with what contempt he surveys his string of minnows, tired and ejected he follows into camp and wish it were not so.



"A series of ear-splitting shrieks from the river, caused the eagles to stop in their flight, and all hands, armed with the first weapon



on which their hands chanced to fall, hurried to the rescue - a sea serpent with eyes like coals of fire, had attacked the female members of the camp while in bathing; bounding through the underbrush and wild blackberry bushes, the scared dears went into their tents, while Tom Beckner fired twenty-six rounds from his Winchester at the crooked stick floating in the water, ere he discovered what it was.



"Pfrimmer had been absent from camp all day, a searching party was sent out, about four miles downriver, in the bulrushes, he was found reciting an original poem, the "Animal Fair," and the completion of each interesting stanza was marked with a 'ker plunk' as the audience one by one fell off of its bank.

"After people generally became aware that nothing, more serious than a fishing party from Kentland had invaded the country, quiet was restored all along the line, but we want it understood, that there is not a fish in the river big enough to intimidate us. Signed/Scout."

**Newton County**  
**Census Records,**  
**Cemetery Transcriptions,**  
**Marriage and**  
**Death Indexes**  
**The Newcomer copies**  
**and so much more**  
**can all be found**  
**on our website:**  
[www.ingenweb.org/innewton](http://www.ingenweb.org/innewton)

**Historical Headlines and Happenings**

Morocco Courier, 1950s

1950	
January 12	Lake Village Gets Beacon Light for Airport
January 19	"Ralph" the Story of Bogus Island Reprinted
February 2	Morocco Gets New Street Lights
February 19	NY Central Discontinues Passenger Service
February 23	Lake Village Has New Street Lights
March 16	Morocco American Legion to Install Bowling Alley
March 23	NY Central Restores Passenger/Mail Service
April 13	Ice Storm Hits Area
April 27	Roller Rink Opens at Ade
May 4	Dr. Purkey Office to be Built
May 18	Lazy-L Dude Ranch Installs Landing Strip
June 28	Cyclone at the Martin Farm
August 31	30th Fair Starts on Labor Day
October 12	Installation of Bowling Alleys begin at Legion
October 19	"Home of Hoosier Hospitality" Slogan for Centennial
December 14	Bowling Alleys Open at American Legion
December 28	Railroad Salvage Opened by Ken Blankenbaker
1951	
January 11	Willow Slough Project Discussed
January 18	New Morocco Street Lights Turned On
February 15	Moroko Theatre Celebrates 15 Years
February 22	Old C.A.S. Depot Removed
April 12	Paul Cunningham Promoted to Station Agent at Conrad
April 26	Lowell Ford Appointed Sheriff of Newton County
May 17	Morocco Changes to Parallel Parking
July 26	Boulevard Stop Signs to be Purchased
October 11	Bookcases in Each NC Library Dedicated to W.O. Schanlaub
1952	
January 10	Moroko Theatre Adds Soda Bar
March 27	Willy Cars Available at Deardurff Motor Sales
June 5	Milt Storey to Head Implement Firm
June 26	Centennial Profits Will Remodel Old Gym
July 31	Flying Saucers Sited in Morocco

1952 con't	
August 21	Fishing Contest Held at Bogus Island Lake
September 4	Formal Dedication of Willow Slough
October 23	200 Hunters at J.C. Murphey Lake
1953	
February 19	Tom Deardurff Opens Barber Shop
March 5	City to Provide Garbage Collection
April 2	65 MPH Speed Limit Set for Indiana
August 13	Morocco To Have New Factory Permonite - 100 People to Hire
August 20	300 Apply for Jobs at Permonite
September 24	Beaver Conservation Builds Cabin Ade Community Building Opens
November 5	Open House at Permonite, Opens Monday
November 12	Schultz TV and Appliance Move to SR 10 from Rainford Building on US 41
November 19	Ade Home to be Restored
1954	
January 7	New Stops Signs Erected
February 4	Indiana Bell Wants to Buy Phone System
March 11	NY Central Coal Docks Abandoned
August 5	Telephone Service to be Improved
November 4	Morocco Bank Opens New Building New Highway 41 To Open Soon
1955	
May 26	Memorial Trees Planted at Murphey Cemetery

*Continued on page 12 >*

**Do You Know?**  
By Janet Miller - Answers on page 15

How much do you know about the Newton County Fair? This is its 100th anniversary! See if you can answer these fair questions. Sorry, no blue ribbons!

1. The fairgrounds has two entrances. The North entrance is off of County Road 1150S and the South entrance is off what road?? How did this road get its name?
2. Each year since 1958 the fair has selected a Fair Queen. Who was chosen the first fair queen?
3. In 1993 a new secretary's office was constructed at the fairgrounds. It was named after a man who served many years as secretary to the Newton County Fair. Can you name the man and how many years he served as secretary.
4. What building on the fairgrounds was once an octagonal shaped building?
5. Do you realize you could become a Newton County Fair Association member to support the fair? Do you know the cost of this membership?

## 12 The Newcomer

Headlines In History Morocco Courier < Continued from page 12

1955 con't	
June 30	Dorothy Arbuckle Honored at Book Signing "After Harvest Festival."
August 11	Public Telephone Booth Installed at State/Clay
September 15	Cecil Bingham Purchases Purdy's Store
September 21	Ground Broke for Christian Church Educational Center
October 6	New Gas Station Opens at 41 and SR 114
October 20	Allen Meyers Buys Royal Blue Store
October 27	Dr. Williams Taking Dr. Larrison's Practice
November 24	Brook Reporter Purchases the Goodland Herald
December 1	New Lake Village Exchange Coming in 18 mos.
December 15	Fire Destroys Salvage Store-Biggest Fire to Happen
December 22	Railroad Water Tower Dismantled at Morocco Blankenbaker To Rebuild Salvage Store
1956	
January 19	Paul Gulley Operates Standard Oil Co. Northwest Corner US 41 and SR 114
February 9	Moroko Theatre Closes
February 23	Flashers to be Installed at US 41 and SR 10
March 8	Christian Church Educational Center Dedicated
March 29	Railroad Salvage Reopens
April 5	New Athletic Field Proposed West Side of Morocco
May 3	Lawrence Bannon to be New Principal at Morocco
May 31	Lake Village Phone Exchange Makes Debut
June 28	Dr. Williams Departs, Dr. Brady of DeMotte Takes Practice
July 19	Playground Equipment Installed at Recher Park
August 16	Newton Fair Has Ice Show
October 18	Athletic Field Dedication Morocco Accepts Bell Telephone System
November 15	Morocco Hatchery Moves to East of Old 41 - Now Morocco Feed Service
1957	
January 3	Morocco New Police Car:'57 Ford V-8 Interceptor
January 10	New Gas Station North of Morocco, Cities Service
February 7	Moroko Theatre to Reopen. Brandt and Pufahl New Owners
February 28	Triangle Inn Opens with Cities Service North of Morocco
March 28	Dr. Leon Kresler to Begin Practice in Kentland
April 18	Watts Brothers Cities Service at US 41 and SR 114

1957 con't	
June 6	Moroko Theatre Closes
June 20	Dew Drop Inn Opened by Mittie Watt at Tindall's Service at Enos
June 13	5th Year Anniversary for Custard Stand in North Side of Brandt's Garage
August 1	American Legion Builds Addition
September 12	Fund Drive Begins for Swimming Pool in Morocco
October 3	J.C. Murphey Retires as Lawyer After 52 Years
November 7	Contract Awarded for New Phone Building
December 27	Hill Top Tavern Has New Owners
1958	
January 16	Garbage Disposal Stopped Brook City Dump Will Fill Soon
January 30	Morocco May Have Dial Phones Soon
February 20	Phone Company Installs New Dial Phone System
	Morocco Lions Club Want East Entrance to Slough
March 6	New Telephone Numbers Assigned for Morocco
April 3	Veterinarian Dr. J. N. McPhail Practice Reaches 50 Years
April 10	Church of God Opens in Mt. Ayr Lake Village NY Central Depot Moved To Kankakee State Park
April 17	Phone Dial System in Place
June 26	Full Kindergarten in Morocco - Thelma Howell First Teacher
July 3	County Fair Dates Changed to August
July 31	Deardurff's Radiator Shop Opens in Morocco
September 18	Colfax School Burns
November 13	Groundbreaking Held for New Hospital at Brook
1959	
January 29	Lazy-L Offers Bob Sled Rides
April 2	Reorganization of Schools Discussions Held
April 23	Deer sited near Morocco
June 4	Eddie Iwinski is the 1959 State Roller Skate Champ
July 16	Overnight Postal Service Comes to NW Indiana
July 23	The Bears Practicing at St. Joseph's College
July 30	Widening of 41 Between Morocco and Sumava to Start 1960
September 22	Swimming Pool to be Built in Morocco in 1960
November 19	Mt. Ayr Elevator Burns

# Salt: Mary Kay Emmrich

by Jeff Manes - Originally published October 2011

"They're my people; I could never write down to them." – Raymond Carver

Ray Carver, dubbed the American Chekov, was referring to the laborers and service workers about whom he so often wrote.

If Carver had condescended to his characters, he would've condemned the first 40 years of his life. Carver grew up on a small river town of 700 souls.

Mary Kay Emmrich is library director in Lake Village. She lives in Morocco with her husband, Roger; they've been married 12 years.

Emmrich, 56, is the daughter of the late Harold and Hallie Martin, the former owners of the Hilltop Tavern in Morocco.

Emmrich is a southpaw who has a razor-sharp sense of humor that I adore. Her niece, who has hazmat training, refers to Mary Kay as "Auntthrax."

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"My parents moved from Raub to Morocco when they bought the Hilltop in 1966," Emmrich began.

*High School?*

"North Newton, Class of '73."

*Did you participate in extracurriculars at North Newton?*

"I filled beer coolers. My parents were strict because their biggest fear was that people would say, 'Yeah, Mary Kay is a wild thing, but what do you expect? Her parents own a bar.' I was kept on a short chain. I rebelled later on, but we won't go there."

*What did your dad like to call the Hilltop?*

"The Bucket of Blood; it was a farmer's bar. Papa always said if there was dirt under the bar stools, there was money in the register because of the farmers had been in."

*I recall "Mustard" Hangar bringing some homemade head cheese to the bar; he bartered it for beer.*

"You can see pieces of eyeballs and other body parts in that stuff."

*The Hilltop served nice meals.*

"We always had sandwiches, but on Friday and Saturday nights, we served fish and a variety of steaks. I probably made more potato salad by the age of 21 than most women make in a lifetime.

"Jeff, everybody thinks the world is divided between Democrats and Republicans or men and women, but the division is between Miracle Whip and Hellman's (mayonnaise)."

*I know you're a Democrat; do you prefer Miracle Whip?*

"I'm a Hellman's woman."

*We were raised on the cheap stuff Miracle*

*Whip, oleo, Karo syrup ....*

"Nothin' better than French Toast and Karo white syrup – holy moley!"

*Your maiden name, Martin, is the most common surname in France.*

"Yes, my father's father came here from Quebec; Dad's mother's family came from Sweden."

*College?*

"I went to Indiana Central College, which is now the University of Indianapolis. Then, I came home and worked at People's Drug Store in Morocco for about a year and a



**Mary Kay Emmrich, Director of the Newton County Public Libraries, located in Lake Village, Roselawn and Morocco.**

half, and then attended Ball State University where I earned my degree in English and minored in geography.

"I had a teaching license so I taught for four years to pay for the four years of college, so I could borrow for the next round."

*Next round?*

"I went back to Ball State for its American Library Association Accredited MLS program; that's where I got my Masters of Library Science Degree. They don't have that program anymore, so I'm one of about 40 people who graduated from Ball State with an ALA-MLS. We belong to a little group called Great Defunct Library School Graduates.

"I borrowed money from Kentland Bank to go to college. Remember, this was the '70s; interest rates were outlandish – 15%. I'd mess with the banker, 'What if I don't pay?' He'd say, 'You can't do that; we'll put you in jail.' I'd say, 'OK, but there is not car or house you can repossess.' He'd say, 'Don't talk like that.' What was he gonna do, perform a frontal lobotomy on me?"

*Mary Kay, when did you become library director here?*

"In '94, after Mary Rybarski passed."

*This little town had some great librarians when I was a kid: Mary Rybarski, Rhoda Kuster, Dorothy Arbuckle ...*

"I've had job offers elsewhere, but it's the patrons who keep me here. Lake Village is a comfortable fit. I love Lake Village."

*This new building is really nice. Do you know when the old library was built?*

"In 1961; Angelus and Helen Kocashis donated the land for the library."

*Good family. A lot of Lake Village boys worked in the cut-flower fields for Angelus. Didn't he also donate the black granite stone that graced the front of the old library? The one that had "Lake Village Memorial Township Library etched into it?"*

"Yes, the granite stone was moved to the lobby of this building; I'll show it to you."

*Plans for retirement?*

"When I do, I'm moving to 'The Village.'"

This northern portion of Newton County is more diverse. Once you get south of Indiana 114, it becomes Wonder bread out there."

*A few of your favorite authors?*

"Kurt Vonnegut, Tom Robbins, Raymond Carver ...."

\*\*\*

Kids from Lake Village and Sumava Resorts who are my age and older didn't have kindergarten, but some of us did have story hour at the Lake Village Memorial Township Library. A lady named Mrs. Louden served as raconteur.

Mrs. Louden wasn't a librarian; she was simply the old woman – in her 90s – who lived in a dilapidated chicken coop near the library. Mrs. Louden had been part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; I believe she was American Indian.

After our interview, Emmrich took me across the street so we could pay a visit to a woman I've known all my life. Doris Hendryx used to clean the library and was a good friend of my mother who worked as an assistant librarian in Lake Village. It was nice to get a hug from Doris.

Worn memories of a wonderful library in a small river town.

And, the new library in 'The Village' is just a wonderful, thanks to Mary Kay Emmrich and her excellent staff.

Some things never change.

*Originally published October, 2011. Reprinted from "All Worth Their Salt, The People of NWI, Vol. II."*

# Home is Where Your Story Begins

George and Lucille Cole of Lake Township. Compiled by Beth Bassett

## Cole Marionettes

Visit Morocco Elementary

Written by Larry Schanlaub

and Donna LaCrosse, Morocco Courier 1979

"Children in the Morocco Elementary School received a rare treat on Wednesday when they were entertained by the Cole Marionettes who presented their famous puppets in a performance of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

"The Cole Marionettes were first introduced for public enjoyment by Lucille and George Cole of Lake Village. The Coles have more than a hundred puppets carved from wood in their possession and give performances in a radius of 150 miles in perimeter of Chicago.

"Lucille and George design the clothes for the puppets, and they write the scripts for the shows. The clothing for the characters are fitted and sewn by women in the community who are adept with a needle and thread.

"Mr. Cole, now 73 years young, no longer manipulates the puppets during a performance unless it is an absolute emergency. However, he was on hand for the Wednesday showing to assist with the backstage activities.

"The complete "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" cast was stolen, in broad daylight, following a performance in the Chicago area earlier this year and a completely new cast had to be produced for future shows. When something like this happens, a crew of workmen are busy for days and weeks in order to duplicate the characters and have the show ready for viewing.

"When asked about the operation of the puppets, he said there were five couples working for the Cole Marionettes. Therefore, five performances could be presented in five different locations at one time.

"There is a system in operating strings," said Cole. "Each puppet is operated differ-



Left, George and Lucille Cole on stage with one of their marionettes.

ently and the couples creating the action are actually maneuvering joined weights on the end strings."

"The couples are trained to operate the strings of the puppets and they must learn to speak in different voices. "It is not unusual for one person to talk for five different puppets in one show," said Cole. The number of voices used in each show would depend on the performance being presented.

"One of the easiest actions to perform," said Cole, "is flying." It is so easy to make a puppet fly that the operations have to work hard to keep them from flying!"

"The Cole Marionettes Shows are quite popular for all ages and the performances Wednesday will long be remembered by the wide-eyed youngsters who enjoyed every minute of the shows."

Indeed, one of those wide-eyed youngsters was yours truly, in the mid-sixties at Morocco Elementary. The Cole Marionettes

may have performed many shows, but the one that I remember to this day is "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." We were asked to bring a dime to school to help pay for the show, which my parents provided. The day of the show, the entire school enjoyed the show in the gymnasium - seated on the floor, facing the stage. The lights dimmed and the show began. A wonderful memory for me.

George Lorell Cole was born in Wisconsin to Professor Lorell and Gertrude (Holeton) Cole. He studied art and music and learned woodworking under his father, Prof. Lorell M. Cole, at Millikin University, Decatur.

Lucille (McCray) Cole was born in Moweaqua, Ill., in 1908, and grew up in Decatur, where she attended high school. After graduation, she worked as a medical and dental assistant before meeting and marrying George, in 1930. From records, I could only find that they had one daughter, Merry Mirth,



"A Mid-Summer's Night Dream," features the Cole marionettes, 1938. "Jack and the Beanstalk" marionettes created by the Coles.

who continued with the Cole Marionette traveling puppeteer troupe after her father's death in 1986. Lucille passed in 1991. They are interred at the Lake Village Cemetery.

George made his first puppet after reading a magazine in a barber shop in 1934. He had one dollar left and spent 20 cents of it to purchase a copy of the magazine to try it. He gave the marionette to a niece but continued to carve them. He enjoyed carving so much that he began making more marionettes and expanded his hobby into shows.

The couple embarked on a career that spanned more than 50 years as puppeteers. George carved all of the one-third scale marionettes, with their elbows and knees made of wood and fiber. Each were hand-painted and carved to look lifelike and yet portray distinguishable features to a child in the back of an auditorium.

Lucille made their costumes and for their first performance, a friend wrote a script based on Edgar Allen Poe's story, "The Gold Bug." Later, Lucille would write the scripts when they began presenting their own productions based on famous children's stories for the 45-minute shows.

An article that appeared in a 1943 edition of *The Decatur Daily* of Decatur, Illinois, the Cole Marionettes performed "Beauty and the Beast" in the auditorium at the Roosevelt school there. Children's tickets were 17 cents and adults were 28 cents each. They performed three shows, 1:45; 3:15 and 8 p.m. They were a favorite of the town and the paper stated:

"The Coles are expected to be welcomed back by large audiences. "Beauty and the Beast" has such fast action at one point that

Mr. Cole operates three controls, one in each hand and one in his mouth. With the right hand he operates the father of Beauty, having him jump nimbly on a horse. With his left hand he manipulates an onlooker; and with the control in his mouth he controls the father's horse."

The article continues, "The 10 characters in "Beauty" are one-third life size, and Mr. Cole studied mechanics to learn the balance and joinings necessary to give them motion. If a character needs a change of costume, two identical puppets must be made. There are two each of Beauty and her father, for this reason. Father raises his eyebrows and drops his jaw.

"Merry, 7, probably is Chicago's youngest professional puppeteer. She works on a bridge in front of her parents, passing marionettes from one to the other when necessary, and speaks a few lines when a folding bed has to talk."

In 1945, they group had four troupes, performing close to 100,000 times, each of which gave 12 to 14 performances a week at schools, shopping malls and organizations. Children, to Mr. Cole, were a great audience, and few persons have performed before more live audiences of children.

A lifelong circus enthusiast, George Cole created "The Cole Circus," a popular marionette variety show touring for more than 40 years.

"My father was active running the troupes and giving shows himself right up to his death," daughter Merry has said. They had 18 shows in their repertoire, including "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Jason and the Golden Fleece," which they performed



Note the inscription under the death dates on the Cole tombstone at the Lake Village Cemetery.

mainly for grammar-school assemblies.

As their shows grew in popularity, the couple decided to train others in puppeteering, opening a puppet workshop that made enough puppets to supply a troupe of puppeteers.

I do not know when they moved to Lake Village, Ind., after living in Oak Lawn and Palos Hills. The couple trained students out of their home, and at one point had as many as eight subsidiary troupes performing throughout the Midwest.

A google search provided info for this article that included the obituaries of Lucille and George Cole. From there a facebook link provided some great photos. Ebay was offering "Wildman," the gorilla puppet used in their "Circus" show for \$550.00. I also found a link to the Puppeteers of America Audio Visual Library. I will look into obtaining their collection of Cole Marionette films. Many members of our community worked with the Cole family and it is my hope that some of them will share their memories with us.



Puppeteers backstage in 1979 at Morocco Elementary. Photo by Larry Schanlaub.

## Answers to Do You Know?

By Janet Miller - Questions on Page 11

1. The South entrance to the Newton County fairgrounds comes off of Punkin Vine Road. In the early 1990's when Emergency 911 came to our county, this road was named Punkin Vine Road because of its proximity to the Newton County "Pun'kin Vine Fair".
2. The first fair queen was crowned in 1958. She was Joy Sell of Washington Township. You might know her as Joy Sell Stowers of Rensselaer. Joy was the leader of our local Community Band for many years.
3. The fair office was named after long-time secretary John Connell of Brook. He served from 1954-1986, a total of 32 years. The block building west of the current fair office that was demolished this spring was the former Secretary's Office. John would have loved the current building—if nothing else, the air conditioning.
4. The Domestic Arts Building was once an octagonal shaped building. The sides were opened and the building was lengthened to its present size. We are unsure when this happened. If anyone has any insight to this question please contact the Newcomer editor.
5. You can become a Newton County Fair Association member to support the fair for a one-time fee of \$15.00. This is a lifetime membership. If interested stop by the Secretary's Office and sign up!

# Historian's Corner

By Diana Elijah, Newton County Historian  
Voglund's Fifth Generation Daffodil Farm

Dan Voglund's great-great-grandfather settled the farm in 1873. He was a civil war veteran and had been a prisoner of war. The farm is located in Section 1 and 36 in Washington Township, just north of the Iroquois River. At the same time, he bought property in Kentland, and he brought the daffodils planted there to the farm.

Years later, Dan's father had visited Land Between the Lakes in Kentucky where he saw many old farmsteads with daffodils growing, so he continued to add them to the family farm.

Many friends, neighbors and family come to the farm annually for a fish fry and proceed to plant daffodils the last Sunday in October. From 25-26 people eat fish and then take about 45 minutes to plant about 3,000 daffodil bulbs - "now that's an interesting equation," Dan noted. Dan now uses an electric auger to dig holes for bulbs instead of a shovel - quite a time-saver.

There haven't been many plantings, as they found that when digging to plant new bulbs, they were digging up established bulbs. In Dan's early years of planting he was always looking for a good buy. He found a nursery that would sell 3,000 bulbs for \$100 - which is a wheelbarrow full. He states that it is difficult to find bulbs now. He recently stopped at a Nursery and found tulip and daffodil bulbs, sitting outside in the rain. He went in to inquire and the owner told him if he took 6,000 daffodil and 20,000 tulip bulbs he could have them for free. The tulips are in southern Indiana on a property of his wife's and the daffodils are stored, waiting for this year's planting day.

Dan's mother Jeanette loved flowers too and early one morning on the farm was having a cup of coffee and looked out the window to see his Aunt Esther picking bouquets of the flowers to take to her friends. So, the love of the cheery yellow blooms runs deep in the family tree. When my Bible study gals and I visited there last year, it never occurred to me to pick because they are so beautiful - I wanted to save them for others to enjoy!

Dan sends out over 400 postcards alerting admirers of the season's blooming time frame. One year 550 people came to admire them. The scenery has provided many a background for local prom photographs as well.

If you haven't visited the blooming daffodils at the Voglund farm you have missed nature's true beauty and glory. Dan certainly does a wonderful job tending his "Garden of Eden." I would like to thank Dan for allowing some time for this interview and sending along photographs for publication.




# The Newcomer

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