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THROUGH THE YEARS

News goes to bat

Area papers' coverage reflects enthusiasm for America's favorite pastime

By PHYLLIS SCHOONOVER

Marshall County has a rich baseball history. James (Rifle Jim) Middleton was born near Argos in 1889. By 1916, he was pitching for the New York Giants after spending several years in the minor leagues at Springfield, Ill., and Davenport, Iowa. He played for several other teams, including Detroit when Ty Cobb was the manager. He played for a number of teams after Detroit and ended his career in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1929.

Art Carbiener played for the Evansville team at the beginning of the 1903 season. When he was dropped from that team, Fort Wayne picked him up, and he proved to be one of the most consistent pitchers in the league. He suffered from a sore arm during the 1904 season. He was unable to get his arm in shape during the off-season and retired from Fort Wayne in 1905.

Other men from this area played in minor leagues. Curtis Wachter was given a tryout with Chicago in April 1897. "Cap Anson expects to give the young man a fair and square trial behind the bat and engage him if he shows up fast enough." Since he played on local teams after that, it may be assumed that he didn't make the team at that time.

The baseball teams associated with towns seem to have been "semi-pro," and good players from other towns were frequently induced to play for a local town. When the papers covered the games, they usually included the names of the umpires and sometimes gave their hometown. Unfortunately the papers very seldom gave the first names of any of the participants.

The Aug. 9, 1894, Argos Reflector carries a story about a game between Plymouth and Culver Military Academy. It is denounced as "the rockiest game that was ever played in these parts.... Plymouth evidently went there to win, and from what the Argos visitors say, this end was accomplished not so much through skillful playing as through the unfair decisions of the umpire. Now why can't Plymouth stand up and play a fair, square and manly game, without the aid of boxers, loaders and browbeaters?"

The Aug. 1, 1895, issue of The Plymouth Republican carries an account of a game at Columbia City under the headline "Horsswoggled!" The umpire "allowed four men on two different occasions to make the entire circuit of bases on a passed ball that went into the crowd and was picked up and put in a spectator's pocket."

The Aug. 8 paper carries an account of two games with Winamac which Plymouth won. Two new men "from the lake" were added to the team. The paper carries a notice of a game on Aug. 9 at Nappanee and indicates the round-trip fare on the B&O Railroad was $1.15. It was hoped that a good crowd of people would go with the team. The issue of Aug. 15 carries the story of Plymouth's defeat by a score of 26 to 8 by Nappanee. The 20 errors made by Plymouth undoubtedly contributed greatly to its team's defeat. The Plymouth Maroons defeated the Bremen Blacks on Aug. 22 at the Marmont Fair to even the score at one game each.

Aug. 26 was the start of a baseball tournament. The Maroons defeated Warsaw in the first game, 14-10. Nappanee also beat Warsaw in the second game, 12-3. The third game between Nappanee and Plymouth was called because of rain, with Nappanee leading 3-2. Bremen was scheduled to play Winamac in the first game on the 28th, with Plymouth and Bremen in the second game for the championship of Marshall County. Because of the rain, these games were postponed until Sept. 6.

Marshall County Historical Society Photo

The 1915 Plymouth Clippers were one of the community teams that played baseball in Marshall County in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

THROUGH THE YEARS is a Michiana history column coordinated by Renee Kurtzwell from the Northern Indiana Center for History. For more information about the column, write the NICH, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend, IN 46601.

The Sept. 5 issue carries the account of a game between the Maroons and Peru on Sept. 2, which the Maroons won, 11-10. In addition, there is an account of two games with Columbia City. The Columbia City team was invited to play in a tournament, but its manager refused to play, saying, "Kindly tell Plymouth ball club to earn a reputation; then talk to US." A more liberal offer was made, and the team came without their manager. Plymouth defeated them twice on Aug. 31, 16-4 and 5-4.

Frequently the only information about teams was in the "local happenings" columns among items of who was visiting whom. Argos, Bourbon, Bremen, Plymouth and Tippecanoe all had teams, as did Hibbard and Twin Lakes. The Hibbard items in The Plymouth Republican carry news of the Hibbard Banner baseball team. It defeated the Twin Lakes Mud Hens on July 7, 14-11. The Twin Lakes items indicate that this was the fourth meeting of the two teams and the only one which the Mud Hens had lost — something which the Hibbard correspondent omitted. At the Marmont Fair, Hibbard defeated Grass Creek, 8-7. Evidently, the Hibbard team was well regarded, as it received several invitations to play baseball in other towns.

The Bremen Crescents of 1904 had a very good season, winning their 10th straight by defeating Nappanee, 1-0. They defeated the Walkerton Greys at Bremen on Aug. 28, 5-1, and took the second game at Walkerton on Sept. 3, 3-2.

The Bremen Blue Sox are listed in the county directory in 1905, with O.E. Fries listed as manager. The May 11, 1905, issue of The Bremen Enquirer gives an account of the opening game against the Walkerton Greys. "Earl Carbiener pitched a remarkably good game for so early in the season, striking out 15 batsmen." The Culver Greens were the opponent for the second game, which Bremen won, 5-2.

Other towns also had teams. The Tippecanoe Hay Makers played in 1905 and were defeated by Nappanee, 8-0. No names of people playing on the team are given. The Argos Reflector of July 27, 1905, carries an account of a game between Fort Wayne and Tippecanoe which was played at Argos. This was the second meeting of the clubs.

This is an excerpt of an article that appeared in the Summer 2001 edition of the Marshall County Historical Society Quarterly. Phyllis Schoonover is a volunteer who researches and writes the articles that appear in the quarterly.

1930 population census at Niles Public Library

By BARBARA S. HARMON

The 1930 Federal Population Census for Michigan is available for viewing at the Niles Public Library. The library is the first in the area to announce that it has the census available.

According to Ann Flora, local history and genealogy librarian, the 106-roll census is a first edition copy and was ordered last September from the National Archives. It arrived in early April, and staff and volunteers have been busy indexing and cataloging the rolls to make them available to the public. Flora said that she ordered the rolls out of last year's budget and wanted a first edition copy to ensure it would be the best quality available.

The library is fully staffed and trained to help researchers with the newest census tool.

It is located at 620 E. Main St. in Niles. The hours are from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. The library is closed Sundays. Further information is available by calling (616) 683-6545, Ext. 7.

Meanwhile, major genealogy Web sites have been scrambling since April 1 to see just who can get the most information posted and get a chunk of that money you are willing to spend to find those elusive ancestors in states not common to this area. Is there a way to get those records quickly and easily?

That is difficult to determine at this point, but you might want to hang onto your wallet a little longer.

Heritage Quest, a major distributor of genealogical data, takes the lead with the announcement last week that it is hosting the new Nara 1930 Census Microfilm Locator on their Web site at www.heritagequest.com/html/featured.html.

You can use either the geographical search tool or the soundex search method. Once you have completed your search, click on the related document link, and order the actual population schedules from the Web site or order by phone at (800) 760-2455, 24 hours a day.

You also may purchase a soundex title for any of the 12 Southern states. The census schedules are available in either CD-ROM format or on traditional microfilm. The soundex records are available in microfilm format only.

Now comes the catch: Due to overwhelming demand, please allow up to 4-6 weeks for delivery of the census records. Orders from last November are currently being processed, and the 4-6-week timeline is applicable, according to a sales representative of the company. The Web site clearly states, however, 6-8 weeks for delivery. Does the company have them all digitized and ready for shipment, or does the notice on its home page that says "Reserve your 1930 census records now" tell us it might not be worth the wait? Was the sales rep elusive on this question? All she would say was that orders are being processed in the order in which they are received. There is one advantage in that the site does offer rental, as well as purchase of the films, if you become a member.

Ancestry.com announced that it would be making online census schedules available immediately following the April 1 release date. However, a check of the Web site recently showed it has only the states of Delaware and Utah and the District of Columbia available. More will be added weekly, with completion anticipated in a few months, according to sources there.

So don't rush out and subscribe to its online census information expecting to view every state. Good things come to those who wait. Who knows that better than a genealogist!

Meanwhile, Ancestry.com's announcement that it has added several Indiana newspapers to the online Historical Newspaper Collection may ease your discontent. A total of 130,000 pages dating from 1851 to 1923 include the Fort Wayne News Sentinel for 1903 and 1906; the Fort Wayne Journal for 1921; the Weekly Sentinel for 1907, 1912 and 1913.

A significant addition to the list is the 1861 edition of Dawson's Fort Wayne Daily Times. Anyone researching Allen County or the immediate surrounding area may find something of interest here.

Write to Barbara S. Harmon at P.O. Box 634, Granger IN 46530, or e-mail her at Bharmon@aol.com. Any meeting notices should arrive at least two weeks before publication.

FROM OUR FILES

1902

A strike at Singer Manufacturing Co. that had pitted workers against management since February ended, with employees set to return to work at 7 a.m. April 22. The Tribune reported April 21, 1902.

1927

Billings Leong and S. Lee, proprietors of the Eastern Star Inn, 117 N. Main St., were sued for copyright infringement by Leo Feist Inc., New York music publishers. The Tribune reported April 21, 1927. The complaint alleged that Leong and Lee allowed a song written by the music publishing company to be performed at the hotel, causing financial damage to the publisher and the holder of the copyright.

1952

The Studebaker Corp. planned to call back more than 1,500 idled workers, The Tribune reported April 21, 1952. The callback was contingent on the continuing operation of the nation's steel mills.

1977

South Bend Mayor Peter J. Nemeth said the implementation of a police merit system was out of his hands and would have to be settled by the Common Council after the Fraternal Order of Police voted to reject changes to the plan, The Tribune reported April 21, 1977.

Featured sections

Monday – Food
Tuesday – Family
Wednesday – Health
Thursday – Faith
Friday – Weekend
Saturday – atHome
Sunday – Punch Intermission

South Bend Tribune

Orphan train's history among upcoming events

MICHIANA ROOTS

■ Looking for obituaries from Niles? The Niles Community Library has produced a compact disk titled "The Niles Area Obituary Index." The CD has nearly 60,000 entries of residents from Niles and the immediate area of Berrien County User requirements include Microsoft Excel. The CD is available for $30 and includes an upgrade every six months at a reduced price with your receipt. To place an order, call (616) 683-6545, Ext. 7, or write to Niles Community Library, Local History/Genealogy Room, 620 E. Main St., Niles MI 49120.

■ Want to know more about the Newberry Library (312-255-3510) in Chicago? The summer schedule includes new-member orientation, an overview of the collections and tips on effective use of the library's resources on May 11. Reservations are required.

■ Kathryn Barrett will present "The Children are Coming: A History of the Orphan Train" at 6 p.m. July 11. Admission is $10 or free for members. Reservations may be made by calling (312) 255-3510.

■ The Westville Historical Society will feature Holly Jenks of the Pioneer Cemetery Association at 7 p.m. Monday at Westville Public Library. Jenks will talk about the efforts of the Pioneer Cemetery Association to protect historic cemeteries.

For corrections, call 235-6171

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