

SPENCER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

c/o Spencer County Library
Rockport, Indiana 47635

Issue # 28
September 1992

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OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY

Dear Society Members,

Thank you for another year of Spencer County Historical Society support. With your help, the History-Genealogy Room has continued to acquire history and genealogy material. Rebecca Middleton has faithfully shared information with many of you, and is willing to help out if you have specific questions. If you have not renewed for 92-93, please consider.

The Society is in the process of reprinting Goodspeed's 1885 History of Warrick, Spencer, & Perry Counties. 837 pages detailing the earliest times to 1885. Price of the book will be \$45.00 plus \$5.00 for mailing. Available at the Library in October.

Sunday September 6, at 3:00 PM the S.C.H.S. will dedicate the new "Rockport Tavern" Historical Marker at the end of Main Street. Afterward the Rockport Civic Association will have an ice cream supper at Rocky Side Park from 4-7 PM. Hope you will attend.

Officers elected for upcoming year are: Steve Sisley, Pres. Joyce Brown, Vice Pres., Pauline Rimstidt, Sec., Leta Alley, Treasure, & Erma Purviance, Reporter.

The President

What was a Presidential election like in 1860, here in Spencer County with a local boy seeking office? Abraham Lincoln

Taken from Le-Rendez-Vous America, A daily journal kept by Jacque Martin, 1853-1868.
1860* Sept. 19th

If I were a good painter, I would try to portray a feast, the first since I've been here, given several days ago at Santa Fe for members of the Republican party. Two days ahead of time they cleared a good spot in the forest, then they built a stand for the orators, made benches out of thick planks for the ladies and placed long tree trunks to serve as benches for the men. A table two hundred feet long was set up for the ladies, and two others, just as long, for the men. All was slapped together with axes. For the cooking, a ditch three feet deep, four feet wide, eight feet long. They kept up a fire for twenty hours, until it was all good coals, then, the night before the festival, they killed three oxen, twelve sheep and several calves. The oxen were quartered, the calves cut in half, the sheep left whole; this meat was put on spits and was grilled all night. That roast-beef was delicious. The day of the party, the guests came from the whole region, both Americans and Germans. Crowds of horse-men, amazons, mothers on horseback, with one child behind and another at their breast, carts pulled by horses and oxen;

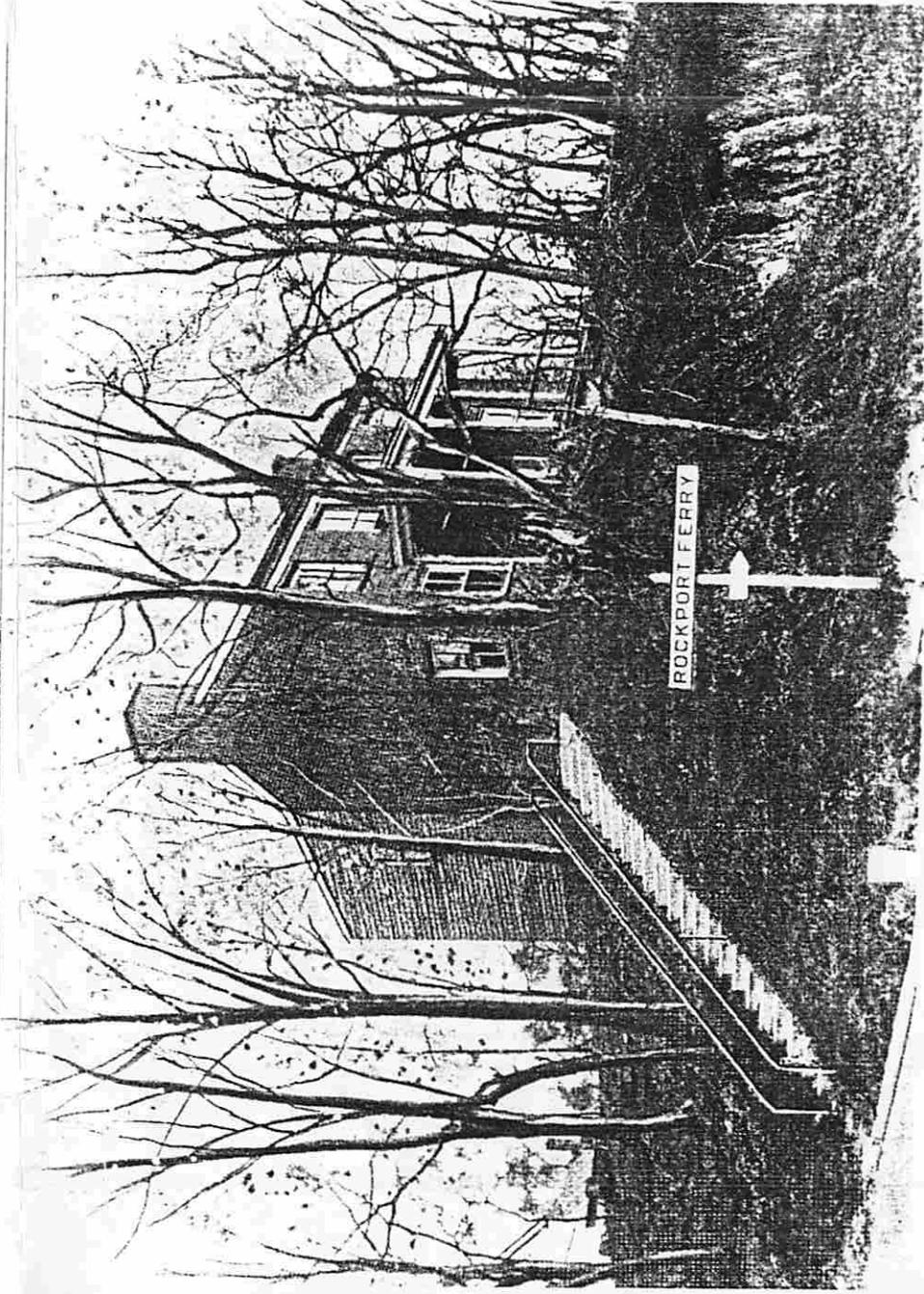


everyone greeted each other and shook hands without ever having met before, and introduced each other. Mr. So and So, Mr. So And So. At ten o'clock, Mr. Wealth gave a two-hour speech, listened to with attention, in absolute silence. During this time, people carried stretchers loaded with bread and meat to the tables. In the houses they had roasted chickens and turkeys, made cakes and cookies for the ladies. At noon, everyone took out his knife and ate his meal. At one o'clock, an orator spoke in German, then another, until four o'clock, in English. Then everyone climbed back on his cart, his horse or his feet, gave several hurrahs, and, at nightfall, Santa Fe was empty. It all took place as if we had been in church. I was struck to see all the ladies listen attentively for six hours to political speeches. About four thousand people attended the meeting. This custom the Americans have of always taking their wives and children with them on such occasions prevents many fights. The law forbidding the sale of fermented liquor at these festivals also has its good side.

The Republican candidate for president is well known by several of my neighbors, he spent his youth five miles from Santa Fe, on a farm that I know, and made his living as a farmer and by splitting logs for fences for his neighbors. Everyone speaks of him as a very good and honest man."

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THE ROCKPORT TAVERN OR INN later called THE SARGENT HOUSE.



EDITOR'S NOTE; The Rockport Tavern-Inn was built by Daniel Brown. According to The Rockport Sequicentennial Book and T.C. Basye Post Card, built in 1832. The Missing Chapter by Bess Ehrmann gives the year 1836. Brick was made across the street south and the frame part added later. The History Of Warrick, Spencer & Perry Counties states Daniel Brown was an early "hotel keeper" prior to the 1830's. Bess Ehrmann's Back Trails Of Indiana indicates Brown's Tavern was a log structure on the bluff.

The following is an account of Abraham Lincoln's 1844 visit to The Rockport Inn & The Spencer County Courthouse. Taken from The Rockport Journal, February 12, 1904.

"Squire J.L. Steward, one of our oldest residents, who has married hundreds of Kentucky runaway couples, was an errand boy at the above tavern when Lincoln stayed there and remembers the visit well, he then being about fourteen years old. Speaking this week of the memory he said: 'It was along in the early fall when Lincoln came to town riding through from Illinios horseback, stopping in the upper part of the county before reaching Rockport. I remember very well my first sight of him, he was so gangling, tall and awkward. He had on a brownish suit of clothes and an old fashioned cap. Of course, he hadn't gotten famous then but attracted attention.

The afternoon of the day he was here, he spoke in the Court House that stood in the corner of the yard where the cannon rests. There was a good sized crowd to hear him, and he spoke on Protection. I was just a boy but went along with the rest of the people. The next day he rode away.'"

Taken from THE HERALD of Friday, November 1, 1844, with James C. Veatch as editor;

"Mr. Lincoln of Springfield, Illinios, addressed a large and respectable audience at the Court House on Wednesday evening last upon the Whig policy. His main argument was directed in pointing out the advantages of Protective Tariff. He handled that subject in a manner that did honor to himself and the Whig cause. Other subjects were investigated in a like manner. His speech was plain, argumentative and of an hour's duration.

When he closed Mr. John Pitcher arose and delivered a speech in his forcible and powerful manner. He exhibited the democratic policies in an unenviable light, at least we thought so."

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1831 SPENCER COUNTY MARRIAGES

<u>GROOM</u>	<u>BRIDE</u>	<u>OFFICIAL</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Cphoon, Joseph	Simpson, Mary	Shelton Gentry	MG 1-2
Prosser, Lionel	Miller, Ruth	Joseph Arnold	AM 3-3

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

1831 SPENCER COUNTY MARRIAGES

<u>GROOM</u>	<u>BRIDE</u>	<u>OFFICIAL</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Hesson, Benjamin	Tooly, Elizabeth	Shelton Gentry	MG 3-5
Neighbours, Wm. R.	Myers, Eliza	John Greathouse	JP 3-17
Telsning, Hardon	Coombs, Mariah	Thos Sumner	1-27
Humphrey, James	Tanner, Ann Jelico	J. B. Greathouse	JP 2-26
Edwards, Wm.	West, Sarah	Wm. Stark	JP 4-7
Wight, James	Hornback, Cely	Wm. Barclay	4-18
May, James	Thomas, Francis	John Greathouse	JP 4-26
Edwards, Owen E.	Hurst, Levicy	J.B. Greathouse	JP 5-13
Young, Andrew F.	Myres, Martha	J.B. Greathouse	JP 6-6
Murry, Sidney	Purdy, Nancy	J.B. Greathouse	JP 6-26
Burden, Wm.	Smith, Matilda	J.B. Greathouse	JP 9-1
Wethers, Wm.	Flat, Frankey	Wm. Stark	JP 10-2
Hedges, Wm.	Tucker, Susanna	John Young	10-27
Brady, Absolum	Brown, Melinda	Jas. Nanney Sr.	12-5
Jeffers, Wm. H.	Hawhee, Elizabeth	Thos. Sumner	12-15
Snook, Wm	Arnold, Sylva	Joab E. Hill	12-28

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MORE REMINISCENCES, By "Old Timer" of Early Days in Luce Township
ROCKPORT JOURNAL, MARCH 17, 1905

In the year of 1831 or 1832, Yarrow C. Dodds and his bother-in-law, George Young, both of Laconia, Harrison County, Indiana, landed here with a store boat and concluded to remain, building a storehouse and naming the place Enterprise. The goods were moved from the boat into the store and a woodyard was started by them. At the death of Mr. Dodds the firm went out of existence.

After them in 1839 came Wm. Allen and James D. Allen, who had a big store and built the first steam grist and saw-mill in Luce township-probably the first in the county. That firm was wound up by the death of the senior partner, Wm. Allen. They were succeeded by Samuel D. Smith, who continued until he closed out in 1849 to jion the crowd of gold hunters in California, a Mr. Newmaster following him, who in a short time went from here to Newburg.

In the fall of 1852 the writer landed at Enterprise and found no store here, all mercantile business being done at Point Isabel, later at Taylorsport. We well remember our

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first visit to that little town of Taylorsport where we found two store, one owned and successfully conducted by Samuel Logsdon, father of Hon. Hiram Logsdon, of Evansville, and Dr. W. T. Logsdon, of Wichita, Kansas. At the time I am writing about there was only one post office in Luce township, that was at Enterprise. We remember that in 1853 or 1854 there was a post office opened at Taylorsport, making two in the township. Well do we remember that old mail carrier by the name of Woods, father of the present janitor or custodian of the court house, carrying the mail on foot from Rockport to Newburgh, patiently trudging along with missives of business, love and sorrow. No steam heated and electric lighted mail wagons in those days. At the times I am now mentioning the towns of Eureka, Richland, French Island City, and Hatfield were in the woods or cornfields. In 1853 again we succeeded in getting another store. Henry M. Barnhart, who was living on the farm now belonging to Mrs. Elizabeth Cain, came to Enterprise and ran a very nice store for a few years, then put his goods on a store boat and went South. Some of the boys of the old Twenty-fifth Indiana, found him in Fort Donelson among the prisoners captured there. After Barnhart left here Till and Jack Abshier ran a store for a short time and left.

Then in the fall of 1856 Warren W. Clark and Terrence Wood dropped into our town with a store boat, and finally put their goods out on the bank, building a nice large storehouse in 1857. After them came Thomas McCright who was merchandizing here when the war broke out. Between 1860 and 1866 came A. Dodds, John S. McKenney; J. P. and J.H. Jones, then Dodds' & Cap Young doing business under that name; then Wm. Stevenson and Wesley Frazier, who in turn were succeeded, we think, by J.A. Mattingly, he selling out to a firm by the name of Mitchell & Crail, of Louisville.

Of all the business men here mentioned we guess John S. McKenney made and took away more money from Enterprise than any one who ever engaged in business here. His plate was right side up, and, as he caught the war time trade his progress was assured. He is said to have left here with \$40,000 some of it made by handling tobacco.

In the year 1855 or 1856 I.W. and John Richardson opened out the first goods sold in Eureka, that being the first goods sold back of Enterprise and Taylorsport. Along about that time Jim Lemmons and Thomas Lang were running stores at the new town mapped and known as French Island City, on the corner of the home place of Mrs. Elizabeth Myler and Fred Crowder. Just before the breaking out of the war Joshua McKenney began merchandizing at what was later laid off and is now Richland. The first store house he began doing business in, he told the writer, he fitted up by arranging shelves in his father's wheat garner. Josh was a mover and later on did as large, if not the largest mercantile business in Luce township. All our older people remember him in the days when he was almost all there was of Richland. And last but not least, our old friend, James Hatfield, bought and laid off Hatfield engaging in mercantile business and buying tobacco. He made lots of money. It was said in those days and we think it truthful that Jim Hatfield was the best poor man's

