

Third Graders Tour Rushville and the Museum

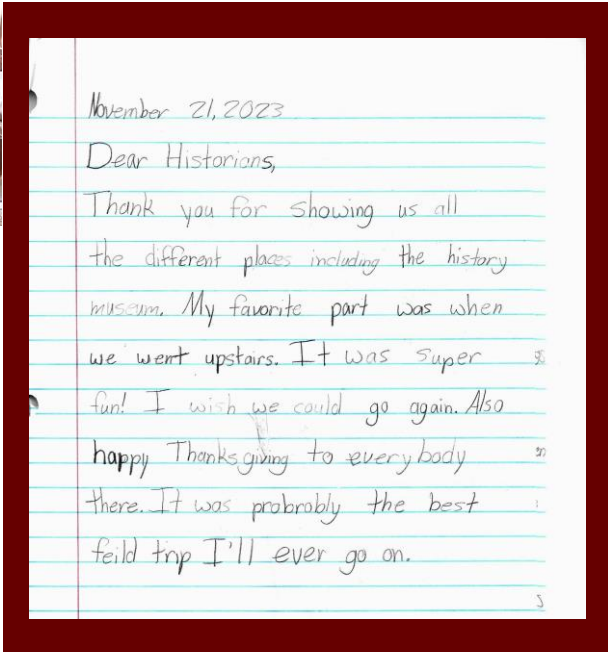
During October and November, the Historical Society had the opportunity to host field trips for all Rush County third graders. Each tour event consisted of a half-day bus tour of Rushville and a half-day tour of the museum.

Students enjoyed a package lunch between the morning and afternoon sessions. John Wilson and Carol Holzback were tour guides for the bus tour which included Hackleman's Cabin, William Laughlin's tombstone at the south city cemetery, the Amphitheater, Memorial Gym, the old Sexton city hospital, and the Courthouse.



Museum docents hosted the students at the museum and carriage house. Students enjoyed grinding coffee beans, learning about the Kennedy bridges, hearing a brief history of long-ago school days, and Wendell Willkie's run for the White House.

Come and enjoy the past!



Rush County Historical Society Board Members

Bob Bridges
Jeff Houser
Kristen Hass

Carol Holzback
Ron Jarman
Marilyn Yager

Barbara Drake
Charlie Fields
Carol Yager

Lou Starkey
Becky Webb

Corporate Sponsors

We appreciate the corporate sponsors of Rush County Historical Society. Thank you for all your support!

Pizza King of Rushville

Moster Mortuary

Calendar Events

April 11	Spring Dinner*, 6pm, New Salem Lions Club
April 13	Work Day at museum, 9am-noon
May 5	Open House, 2-4pm
May 19	Ladies Tea, 2pm at museum
May 22 or 23	Conner Prairie trip, details tba
June 2	Open House, 2-4pm
June 15	Work Day at museum, 9am-noon
June 30-July 5	Rush County Fair, Community Bldg. Display 5-9pm
August 4	Open House, 2-4pm
August 10	Work Day at Museum, 9am-noon
September 1	Open House, 2-4pm
September 9-10	Hackleman Cabin Event for Rush County Elementary Schools
September 12-13	Hackleman Cabin Event for Rush County Elementary Schools

Notification of changes to the RCHS Constitution

*We will vote at our spring dinner to make a change in our constitution. We would like for members to consider changing the number of board members from 12 to 9 members.

Annual Fall Dinner

The Rush County Historical Society fall dinner meeting, hosted at the Rushville Elks, 9 November, 2023, was well attended and appeared to be well enjoyed. The program presented by retired teacher and board member Carol Holzback was about the history of Rush County Schools.

She and Marilyn Yager have an extensive knowledge about this. As you can imagine the educational system in Rush County has changed greatly from the early 1800's to today.

Believe it or not at one time there were approximately two hundred schools in Rush County not just the one township school that everyone imagines.

The presentation was enhanced by the fine display of county school sports nostalgia to include school sweaters, yearbooks, and notepads among other things. Does anyone remember wearing cords?

Rush County Historian, John Wilson, brought the group up to date on some of the several ongoing projects under way in the county including the covered bridges.



Jeff Houser signed copies of his new book Apache Country: A Cambodian Odyssey, about his fight for survival for four days having been shot down in Cambodia in 1971. He is scheduled to be the speaker at the next Rush County Historical Society spring dinner meeting at the New Salem Lions Club at 6:00 p.m. on 11 April 2024.

Officer Spotlight—Lou Starkey, President

I am a lifelong resident of Rush County. I started school at Milroy and then finished high school in Rushville. I went to Ball State University and graduated with a double degree in psychology and sociology. I returned to college and got my master's in education. I taught special education in Fayette County for over 40 years.

I married Phil Starkey and together we had four children: John, Dan, Lauren, and Katie. I am proud to say they are all successful adults, especially since they gave me eight grandchildren. I get to spend a lot of time at ball games watching them play various sports. After retirement I became active on several boards. I am the president of RCHS. I am treasurer of the Rushville Library Board and vice president of the Rushville Parks Board. On summer concert nights you can find me selling beer tickets for the concerts. I am also active at St. Mary church and serve on a couple of committees there, as well.



When I am home I enjoy reading, especially historical fiction and nonfiction. Other hobbies include baking and gardening. Summer pastimes are traveling and sitting by my koi pond just watching the fish swim back and forth.

Officer Spotlight—Kristen Hass, Vice President



Kristen (Gratzer) Hass was born and raised in Rushville. After graduating from Rushville Consolidated High School in 1993, she went on to pursue her Bachelor's Degree in Education from Franklin College.

Since graduating from Franklin in 1997, she taught kindergarten at Morristown Elementary for 7 years before opening Little Stars Learning Academy in 2004. Little Stars is celebrating its 20th year this year!

Kristen is married to Mark Hass and together they have a daughter, Ava. She enjoys playing golf, traveling to Lexington to visit Ava at the University of Kentucky (and taking in a football or basketball game), reading, and spending time with family.

Officer Spotlight—Becky Webb, Treasurer

Becky was born in Rushville, Indiana to Ray C. and Marjorie (McMillin) Suttle. She has two step-children and four step-grandchildren. Step-daughter Andi is as much a daughter to Becky as any biological daughter could be. Andi lives in Maine and works for the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, ME. Andi has two sons, Ryan and Kyle who also hold special places in her heart.

A 1966 Rushville graduate, Becky went on to graduate from Purdue University, with both a B.S. and M.S. degree in mathematics.

Becky was married to John C. Webb, now deceased, for nearly 38 years.

Becky taught mathematics in Rush County Schools for 30 years before retiring. During her years teaching at the high school, she was a sponsor of R-Teens, freshmen class, junior class, and Student Council.

She is a great-great granddaughter of covered bridge builder Archibald M. Kennedy, and a great granddaughter of covered bridge builder Emmett L. Kennedy.

Becky has been involved with the Rush County Historical Society since 2004, and served as Treasurer for close to 15 years. Becky is also on the board of Rush County Heritage, a 12-year member of Rushville Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, and Rush County Genealogy Society.



Officer Spotlight—Barbara Drake, Secretary



Barbara (Wagner) Drake was born and raised in Arlington and actually bought her old childhood home in 2012 when she moved back to Arlington from Fort Wayne. She graduated from RCHS (1979) and Parkview School of Nursing/Purdue, Fort Wayne in 1982 as a Registered Nurse.

After years in a hospital and large OB/GYN office, she became a medical sales representative for a Fortune 400 medical distribution company in northeast Indiana serving physician offices and hospitals for more than 30 years.

She was given the Point of Light Award by President George H. Bush in recognition of her many hours of volunteer service work from 13 medical trips to Romania, Honduras, and Indiana as a medical missionary. She's active in her church including missions, teaching, VBS director, and puppet ministry which has lasted 25 years.

Barbara is married to David Drake and has one daughter teaching in Louisville. She and her husband are owners of the Mocha Moose Coffee & Antiques shop in downtown Rushville. She's currently serving as Rush County Historical Society Secretary, since 2021, and also the President of the Arlington East Hill Cemetery Association. In her free time, she enjoys antiques, card making and other crafts.

Invite a Friend to Join

Thank you for renewing your membership. Without your continued support, the Historical Society would be unable to fulfill its mission. Please consider inviting a friend to join.

There are different levels of family membership in the Rush County Historical Society:

Laughlin Family Level \$25 - Subscription to the newsletter & discounts on programming fees.

William B. Laughlin was the founding father of Rushville who donated 75 acres of land that would become Rushville, the county seat.

Newby Family Level \$50 - Subscription to the newsletter & discounts on programming fees.

Sarah Newby was from an early Ripley Township Quaker family whose home was on the underground railroad. Upon her death, Sarah donated her personal property to the Historical Society. Proceeds from the sale of her farm provided an endowment for the Society.

Arnold Family Level \$100 - All of the above plus one complimentary ticket to the fall membership dinner.

Dr. John Arnold was the first settler to purchase land in what would become Rush County. He also developed and chronicled the early history of the county.

Gowdy Family Level \$250 - All of the prior level benefits plus two complimentary tickets to the annual fall and spring membership dinners.

John Gowdy was appointed by President McKinley to serve as Consul-General to Paris. The Gowdy house was donated and became the home of the Rush County Museum.

Kennedy Family Level \$350 - All prior level benefits plus two complimentary tickets to the annual fall and spring membership dinners.

The **Kennedy** family of bridge builders lived, died, and are buried in Rush County. The Kennedy family constructed more than 50 bridges throughout the Midwest. There are six original and/or rebuilt Kennedy bridges that remain in Rush County.

Willkie Family Level \$500 - All prior level subscriptions, invitations and dinner tickets.

Wendell L. Willkie was the Republican dark horse candidate for President in 1940. Willkie named Rushville as his national campaign headquarters

Your check should be made payable to the Rush County Historical Society.

Send to: Rush County Historical Society Museum, P.O. Box 302, Rushville, Indiana 46173

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____ E-mail: _____

- Laughlin Family Level \$25
- Newby Family Level \$50
- Arnold Family Level \$100
- Gowdy Family Level \$250
- Kennedy Family Level \$350
- Willkie Family Level \$500

The Rush County Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization, and all gifts are deductible in the United States as allowed by law.



President's Notes

In looking back at our previous year, there are many accomplishments to note. We have installed both a new furnace and air conditioner for the Gowdy House and put beams in the basement to support sagging floors in the dining room and the front room. We still have a list of repairs and improvements to accomplish. One of those is to fill in cracks and openings around the windows in the basement.

We added new activities to our calendar. In the spring, we had a very successful Ladies Tea and in the fall we had a Harvest Dinner for our gentleman. Both events were very well attended. Our fair theme was "Education in Rush County." It included wonderful pictures and photographs of old and some no longer existing school buildings, teachers, and classes of students. This year the theme will be "Sports in Rush County," and it promises to be just as good as last year's display.

We have also hired a grant writer, Mrs. Alle Wicker Lilly. We are looking for grant money to help finance several projects that need to be addressed this coming year.

I encourage you to check out our website. There you will find projects and activities we are planning for this year. I will be discussing a variety of subjects about the museum, certain artifacts, changes in policy, and upcoming activities. We have some really great ideas and hope to see many of you at the activities.

All of the activities for the Rush County Historical Society Museum are completed by volunteers. I want to thank each and every one of our volunteers who do wonderful things for the museum. Without their help and support none of our business and projects would happen. Thank you, Volunteers!

Journey of an Artifact

Recently we obtained an artifact that had a long and perilous journey before it wound up in the hands of the museum curators. The artifact is the Sexton family bible whose first entry is baby William Oliver Sexton born August 2, 1833. The Sextons have a long and distinguished history in Rush County. If you walk through East Hill Cemetery you will see the Sexton name on many headstones. They were farmers and physicians and the family can be traced through five generations per the family bible.

The Sexton doctors of the 1920s, J.C. Sexton & M.C. Sexton, started the first hospital in Rushville on 5th Street. Dr. J.C. Sexton built his own surgical hospital on Perkins Street; some of you may know it as the old Jackson Nursing Home.

Now that you have a little background of the Sexton family we will return to the long journey of the family bible. The bible was found at a dump in southern Indiana ready to be destroyed when a worker salvaged it. He turned it over to Kirk Womock, Jr., who was known to have an interest in historical things. Kirk is also a Civil War enactment soldier. And to add a little romance to the story, Kirk met his wife at a historical enactment. Back to the story, Kirk recognized the significance of the find and contacted the museum with the details of the bible, and of course, we were interested in it.

So on the evening of our "Festival of Trees" Kirk and his wife drove from Aurora to Rushville to deliver the bible. We thanked him and he said, "Oh, it really wasn't that far of a drive!" He complimented us on our lovely museum and left that evening for Aurora. And that was the journey of an almost 200 year old artifact. Maybe someday we will "know the rest of the story" of how the bible arrived at the dump.

Submitted by Lou Starkey

Gowdy House Museum Hours



The Gowdy House Museum is open every Monday and Thursday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Open Houses are scheduled the first Sunday of each month from May through November from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. (except July 4). Tours, meetings, and other special times can be requested by contacting one of the members listed below.

Lou Starkey (317) 502-5047

Jeff Houser (765) 914-0293

Steve Mahan (317) 753-1928



Rush County Historical Society
Gowdy House Museum

P.O. Box 302
619 N. Perkins St.
Rushville, IN 46173
(765) 932-2492

“Come – be a part of history!”

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Email Address: rushhistorical@gmail.com