



BLACKFORD COUNTY FLASHBACKS

INDIANA COLLECTION

PUBLIC LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE & ALLEN CO., IND.



Construction nears completion on the Blackford County Court House. Finished in 1894, the building required a year to construct and cost, \$129,337.83.

The county got its name from this gentleman, Judge Isaac Newton Blackford, who practiced law in Indianapolis. He never lived in Blackford County.



THE PAST PERSONALITIES OF

Mary Reasoner, the first white child born in Blackford County, was the grandchild of Benjamin Reasoner, Sr., who bought the first land here in July, 1831. This is when the county began to develop. Families were large and willing to work.

Early doctors endured the wilderness, bringing medicine, and also helped schoolmasters such as Blackford County's first, Eli Rigdon. They taught about 15 pupils, grades one through eight, in a one-room schoolhouse. Teachers were respected; the only misconduct was whispering. Older students often helped teach, and the young boys tended the fire.

Some of the earliest preachers in Blackford County were Reverends John Ervin and Samuel Steel. Or Elijah Sims, who performed the first wedding. Lack of communication created more interest in the church.

Old storekeepers had many sidewalk sales. A different type of business was that of the blacksmith and livery stable owners, who were dependent upon horses. Mr Flint Kelly had a shop near Roll, and George Green and Ned Tatman were blacksmiths in Hartford City. Livery stables stood where the Goodyear store and license bureau now operate.



Baptism in streams was an early ceremony recognized by the entire community. Here a large group is gathered to watch a young girl being baptized in a pond near the edge of Washington Township. These crowds were comparable to present day athletic enthusiasts.



The typical early log cabin home was almost always small by modern standards and usually consisted of only one or two rooms. It had few windows, as can be seen in the Walter S. Ayres family home, built around 1888. A few cabins are still standing.



Daily chores were required of women as well as men. Here, Mrs. Kleefisch shows how one task is completed each morning before breakfast. Mrs. Kleefisch is the great-grandmother of junior Beth Granger and lived on Walnut Street, Hartford.



Flashy uniforms of the Montpelier Fire Department's Band around 1910 are shown by Oscar Burden, Lew Worster, Roy Henderson, and Ralph Henderson.

Spare time to spin cloth was rarely found by midwife Maria Mendenhall, who delivered over 1,000 babies without a single death. Her practice extended to neighboring counties.



Industry was simple

The abundance of gas and oil in Blackford County was the major influence on industry in the early 1900's.

The presence of gas and oil in the county was discovered in 1881. After this discovery industry began to boom with glass and paper mills.

From the first discovery of gas and oil in 1887 there have been 1,400 gas and oil wells in the county. The biggest gas well was located at the corner of South High and Leonard streets in Hartford City.

This well, because of its size, was dubbed "Jumbo."

The glass industry was especially big here because of the abundance of gas. There were 13 companies in Hartford City alone at one time.

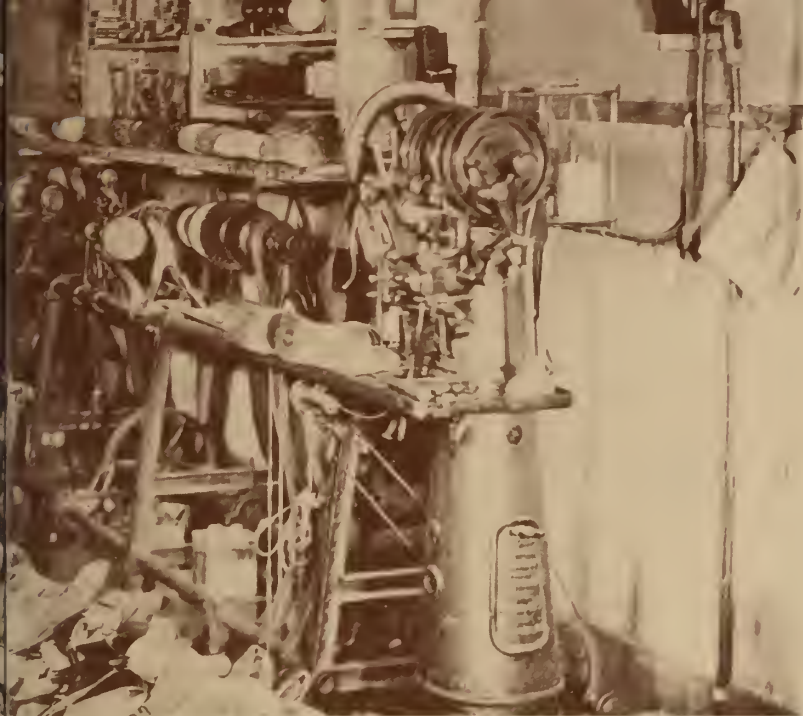
The first was the Hartford City Glass Company located at the south end of town. It began production January 13, 1891. The biggest glass company as well as the major industry in the county was the American Window Glass Company which dissolved in 1929.



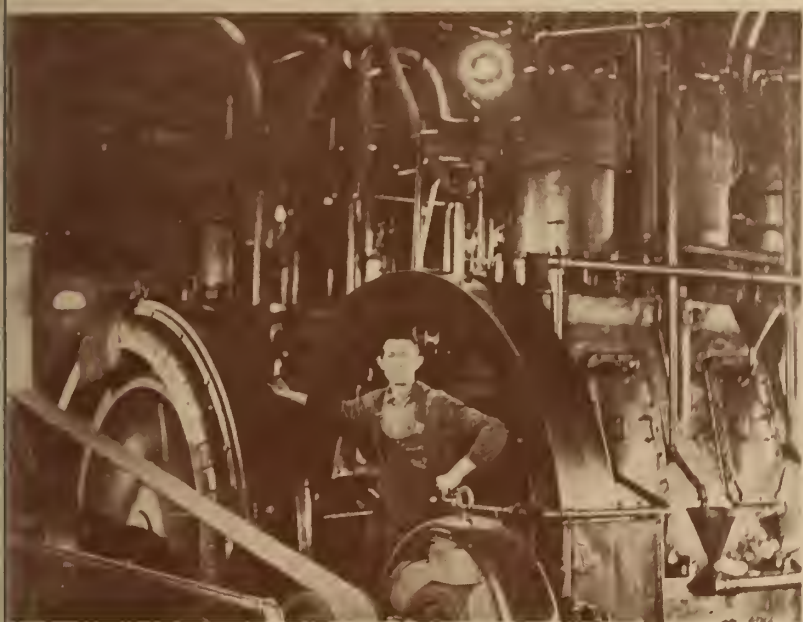
Everything imaginable was stock in George Ayres' General Store. The firm was located on West Main, Hartford City.

Delivering produce and poultry by huckster wagon to rural folks is Mr. Webster Daily.





This shoe repair shop was operated by O. V. L. Hacker, and was situated in the 200 block of West Main, Hartford City. During the days of the horse and buggy, the store was a harness shop.



These machines produced electricity for the rest of the paper mill, which was located at the present St. Joe Paper Mill site. With the machinery is William H. Beeson, engineer and father of Cecil Beeson.



A prominent oil well erupts on the John Shrader farm near Roll, in 1895. This type of scene built Blackford County into a prosperous industrial section of Indiana.

The "Chain Gang," better known as "blacksmiths," toiled long, hard hours in this shop on South Monroe. "Smiths" are Ben Stone, Hays Pugh, Ephraim Stone, and Charles Gilbert.



Many tragic accidents have befallen Blackford County. Some have caused damage to property and homes; others have caused death in unusual numbers.

The first fatal auto accident occurred Sept. 30, 1913. Dr. Jonathan B. Garber of Dunkirk was critically injured when the car he was driving overturned while trying to avoid a poultry wagon. Dr. Garber died three days later with a concussion and many broken bones.

July 5, 1918, was the date of the Johnson Glass Company fire which destroyed the factory. The blaze, which started in the colored glass department, was discovered by worker Arthur Pettit.

In 1913, Blackford County and the Midwest was stricken with a severe rainstorm that started a flood. Homes were flooded, traction lines washed away, bridges swept aside, and valuable land completely inundated.

An explosion of bigger proportions happened when the Jumbo gas well, largest in the county, exploded in 1887, severely burning By Boyd, Charles Inman, Jesse Dowell and John Lenox.

Daniel O'Connell, builder of the First Catholic Church in Hartford, was in conflict with trappers. On his farm southeast of town three men tried to kill him. Swimming across a pond to get away, ironically he caught pneumonia and died a week later.

A small store owner, a man named McGrew, and a gang leader named Chritzer were involved in a gunfight. In short, McGrew came out the better man. Conflicts like this once gave Blackford the distinction of having the toughest towns in the state.

Lick Creek covered the countryside in the flood of 1913. The flood caught Mr. Liga Jones and his horse was drowned.



Flying 75 m.p.h., Mr. Howard Casterline crashed into a tree in October, 1928. Mr. Casterline escaped the accident without injury, and his plane flew nine more years. He still lives on Cherry Street in Hartford City.





On Sept. 30, 1913, the first fatal auto accident in the county occurred, involving a Dunkirk man, Dr. Jonathan B. Garber. The car plunged down a 10-ft. bank.



The area east of the Hartford City Paper Mill was the scene of this train wreck. In 1920, 31 Pennsylvania cars were wrecked. Many similar accidents have occurred in Blackford County.



In 1900, threshing machines were used for harvesting grain and for steam in saw mills. This tractor was too heavy and the bridge capsized under it.



Disobeyed orders caused this head-on collision of interurban cars near Kingsland (Wells Co.), Sept. 21, 1910. Forty-two died as a result of the wreck on the line which crossed Blackford County.



The Johnson Glass Factory, the former James Clelland Factory on West Kickapoo St., Hartford City, was destroyed by fire in 1918. Starting in the colored glass department, it caused a \$30,000 loss.





today's styles

High-button shoes, ankle-length skirts and highly decorative hats were among fashions of yesterday. These were supplied by two widely known Hartford City stores--Ervin's, on the southwest corner of the public square, and Weilers, on the northeast corner, where Val's Store is now.

Weilers (1897-1928), consisting of eight or more departments and a personnel of 40 employees, was the ultimate in fashion and presented a style show every spring and fall. Mr. Weiler sent fashion department heads to New York City twice a year to bring back the latest in styles.

Miss Josephine Sablon, a former clerk at Weilers, remembers the high fashions of the early 1900's. The ladies wore hobble, slender skirts with blouses in navies and blacks but chose brighter colors for dress up. Fabrics used included wools, silks, satins, taffeta, rayon, cotton, gingham, and calico. They wore high button shoes and gloriously decorated hats. The lavish use of ribbons, flowers, buttons, bows, and braid called for the need of a notions department staffed by four lady clerks.

Ervin's consisted mainly of four departments--dry goods, ready-to-wear, shoes, and millinery (or hats).

Employees played an important part in the success of this business, according to Miss Grace Campbell and Mrs. Edna Swift, for many years. They remember the simple courtesy of customers treated at the store entrance as Mr. Ervin's requirements. Other persons who worked as clerks include Joe McAtee, who first worked as an errand boy and later as a shoe clerk; Carl, Paul and Lawrence Dearduff, who worked wherever needed; Mrs. Esther McConnaughey, clerk; and Mrs. Trixie Stout, who worked in the ready-to-wear department.

The old fashioned courtesies have been forgotten but some of the styles remain.

Timmonds' Hat Shop, owned by Cora Timmonds and Anna Gough, sold fashionable hats and plain hats that the buyer could design himself, if he wished.



As horses and buggies were characteristic of the early 1900s, Mrs. Harry O. Miller, mother of Joe Miller, Hartford City, wears a stylish dress for a day of riding.



Neutral colors and many buttons were worn by the Pursleys: John, brother; Orville, present judge; Anna Latham, sister; Amy, mother.

Wicker and fancy framework made a baby buggy. Long skirts and fancy hats made the lady; cut-off ties, suits and hats made the man.

Campbell & Ervin Dry Goods, owned by Howard Ervin, Bill Ervin's father, sold ladies' dress goods, silks, skirts, embroideries, laces, and other necessities in 1883.



Lots of lace and flowers are typical decorations of the Ladies of the Order of Eastern Star, Purity Chapter 126, the Masonic Lodge.



For the sleeker person, there was the motorbike even in the early century. Posing with their new Harley Davidsons near 215 West Main Street in Hartford City are Clemmy Tidd, Edward Johnson, Clayton Bell and Johnny Bill Turner.



A faster means of travel was the steam locomotive with its passenger coaches. The last passenger train on the former Lake Erie & Western Railroad made its last trip on August 3, 1929. The Pennsylvania stopped passenger service in 1958.



A common sight and popular mode of transportation was the interurban which ran through Hartford City and Montpelier from Indianapolis to Fort Wayne. The station on South Jefferson Street in Hartford is now the Stag Cafe. Service stopped in 1941.

By 1920, traveling on horseback had become outdated. Happy with the change is Ed Smilack, posing with his pony and a newer form of transportation, the bicycle. An early version of the automobile can be seen in the background.



OLD DOBBIN WAS MORE RELIABLE THAN NEW-FANGLED MOTORS

In early Blackford County, transportation was not taken for granted as it is today. The steam locomotive and the interurban line provided the means of travel and freight passage for manufacturing firms and county residents.

At one time, Indiana was considered an interurban empire. The system in Blackford County was started in 1903 and made its last run on January 18, 1941. Rates averaged about one and one-half cents per mile with a trip to Montpelier from Hartford City costing 15 cents.

A person in Blackford County could, in the early 1900s, take his choice of about 50 specific ways or times to leave or re-enter town. These consisted of round trips on the Pennsylvania Railroad, three round trips on the Lake Erie and Western Railroad, and 19 round trips on the interurban.

Travel sometimes became troublesome, especially after a hard rain. This mud-caked buggy is stopped on Monroe Street near the Blackford County jail. Monroe Street has improved since.

This passenger and freight bus ran daily for the Hartford City Hotel on East Main Street, moving hotel residents around the city. Driver on the bus is Ernie Whitaker.





Gatherin' 'round the surrey before the Sunday afternoon joy ride, Blackford High School yearbook journalists--Becky Stoll, Jeff Fergus, Rob Bonham, Ross Elwood, Bill Wine, Cathy Beal,

Kip Gross, Jeff Bonham, Melanie Sprowl, Pam Jackson, Debbie Winger, Roger Garrett, Al Osborn-- pose for the camera. Absent: Liz Monfort, Coreen Smith. Photo by Don Rogers

This booklet was planned, laid out, and typographically composed by the Blackford High School Yearbook Journalism class of Mr. Ed Henderson. Historical materials were generously provided by Mr. Cecil Beeson, Hartford City, and Mr. Art Hammond, Montpelier. Also providing information were Miss Grace Campbell, Miss Kate Voss, Mrs. Howard Ervin, Miss Josephine Sablon, Miss Mary Sablon, Mrs. Edna

Swift, Rev. Clarence Kerlin, and Mr. Henry Balle. The surrey used in the staff picture was provided by Mr. Golden Walker. The class is especially grateful to the Citizens State Bank for a substantial contribution commemorating its 100th anniversary in the county.

The publication may be purchased from any staff member or at the publications office for 75 cents per copy.

