

History of Geist Reservoir and Germantown

A forgotten history of small village which today lies at the bottom of the lake.

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The Goldsmith family (Germantown)



The Goldsmith Farm (Germantown)

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GERMANTOWN: A HAMLET LOST TO GEIST RESERVOIR

Orientation to Subject Matter

Geist Reservoir is interesting for many reasons. For one, it is Indiana's largest manmade lake, and second largest body of water, after Lake Wawasee. The Geist area is noteworthy for its wealthy and famous residents, especially the reservoir's shoreline inhabitants who include renowned professional sports figures, politicians, local media personalities, and businesspeople. The history of the reservoir is no less interesting; Clarence Geist, a former owner of the Indianapolis Water Company, foresaw a deficit in Indianapolis's water supply, and envisioned

"Geist Reservoir" to preemptively address the problem - but not without a casualty. Yes, there was an unmitigated casualty in the creation of the recreational and luxurious living locality known as Geist Reservoir. It was a tiny hamlet called Germantown , whose parcels were systematically bought up by Clarence Geist in the 1930's, then put to their death in 1943 when Fall Creek was dammed to create the reservoir.

Lest you wonder why an animal hospital might consider Germantown relevant to its homepage contents, explanation is in order. For one thing, Log Cabin Animal Hospital inhabits the oldest structure in the Geist area. It can be considered the only remaining structure from Germantown , because it was completed shortly before the flood when "downtown Germantown " still stood just a few hundred feet away. Additionally, LCAH is owned by Dr. Sandor Gal, who emigrated to the United States from Hungary in 1985. His Hungarian heritage endows Dr. Gal with an essential appreciation for history, and for village life in particular. So, rumors of a nearby, ill-fated immigrant town caught his attention.

Unfortunately, information about Germantown was not easy to find. Being thoroughly busy managing his new animal hospital, Dr. Gal had no time to personally pursue, inquire and investigate this interesting subject, so his wife undertook the project. The brief history that follows, as well as the primary historical materials and photographs found in the links, were gleaned from the following sources, which we sincerely thank for their efforts and assistance:

Conner Prairie Farm's *Local History Project*

Fall Creek Township Assessor

Hamilton County Historical Society

Hamilton County Museum of History

Indiana Historical Society (Susan Sutton, Multimedia Librarian)

Indiana State Library

Indiana State Museum

Indianapolis Star/News

The Martin family geneological website

Mrs. Pat McDaniel

Noblesville Public Library - Indiana Room

The Trittipio Family

Textual Sketch of Germantown



Germantown was established in 1834 as a result of an Algonquin Indian slaying in nearby Oaklandon. The community was so divided over the circumstances of the killing that certain, primarily German households abandoned Oaklandon and created Germantown. Colloquial reports would have that this solved the strife; said Fred Martin, a 40 year resident of Germantown, "[the reservoir] ruined a fine little village. We all got along fine there." If residents of Germantown were content, it certainly was not attributable to cosmopolitan excitement, for the town had but one general store, a shoemaker, and a grist mill. Rather, it would seem that the residents' fulfillment came from rope swinging into the nearby watering hole, fishing, target practice, and having the teacher from the Oaklandon one-room school house over for dinner. These are among the remnants of Germantown recorded in memory and photograph.

Germantown was situated on Fall Creek's north bank right straddling Hamilton and Marion counties, in Fall Creek and Lawrence Townships, respectively. The town consisted of about twenty lots along north/south running Main Street (also known as Germantown Road), now the entrance road to the Geist Sailing Club. The burg lie between two bridges, one about a half mile eastward, the other equidistant southward. The former was Fall Creek Township's first bridge ever to span Fall Creek. It had been built in 1836 by four local residents, but was washed away in 1847 by a an overflow of the creek.

The southern bridge began as a swinging footbridge that the children would cross when walking to Craig School, about a mile south of town. Twelve steps lead up to each end of the bridge, which was anchored by a walnut tree on the one side, and a hackberry tree on the other. Wagons,

buggies and carts could only cross the creek on a nearby ford. In 1901, the swinging bridge was replaced by one suitable for vehicles as well.

More to come.

- Jennifer Gal



Liquid Assets

[Geist Reservoir's namesake was one of the biggest Tycoons you've never heard of](#)

In Indianapolis the name Geist is associated not with a person but with the 7 billion -gallon reservoir on the city's Northside. Few remember the lake's namesake: **Clarence Geist** , a high rolling early 20 th century **tycoon** who owned country clubs and utilities. Equally obscure is that

Geist, originally **a northern Indiana farm boy** , was the nation's largest private owner of utilities and master of some of America 's finest resort hotels. Still, the belt of expensive housing that surrounds "his" lake may be an appropriate monument. During his lifetime **from 1874 to 1938** he earned a reputation as both a shrewd businessman and an unabashed lover of status and money. Developing his business sense early, he started trading horses at age 13, then moved

West at 18 against the wishes of his father, who wanted him to go to college. Believing that college men were "saps, " Geist spent several years out West, then moved to Chicago to become a railroad brakeman. He held the position for a year before getting into real estate development with a northern Indiana firm, the South Shore Gas Company.

Geist quickly impressed the firm's head, Charles Gates, a future vice president of the United States; within a few years the two men became partners. But teamwork wasn't one of Geist's virtues. A power struggle soon erupted, and in 1905 he sold his share in the company and invested in the Indianapolis Water Company, then the nation's largest privately owned utility; in seven years he was its sole owner. At the same time he took over several East Coast utilities, eventually amassing 100 companies worth roughly \$54 million. **His was one of the huge American fortunes that seemed unaffected by the Great Depression.**

A card-carrying member of the nouveau riche, Geist not only loved to join exclusive country clubs, he also loved to own them. **Legend says he purchased one exclusive East Coast club to avoid having to wait in line at the golf course** and built another for spite after being denied entrance to one nearby. His first resort was the Seaview Golf Club, built in 1914 in Atlantic City, N.J. His second, The Boca Raton Hotel and Club, was built in 1928. Known as the crowning achievement of the 1920s Florida land boom, the project was to be a city of luxury, sporting 20 miles of Venetian canals, crystal lakes, placid lagoons and world's largest and finest hotel. The development went bankrupt before completion, but Geist still managed to bring a scaled-down version to market.

Though not as great as planned, the Boca Raton was still one of the most opulent private clubs ever erected, boasting members such as Warren G. Harding, Herbert Hoover, Bing Crosby, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. When staying at the club, Geist naturally had his way with everything. If he didn't feel like dressing in the locker room after golf, he might don his bathrobe and stride through the hotel lobby to the elevators. Regardless of how many people were on the lift, he would order it directly to his sixth floor suite. And when evening movies were shown, the screening didn't begin until Geist appeared.

Politically, the Indiana farmer's son virtually controlled the town of Boca Raton. He had local elections moved from September to February so more of his club staff could vote in his favor; after all, he paid more than half the town's taxes. It was even said that not so much as a birdhouse could be erected without a Geist's permission.

Like many tycoons of his era, however, he occasionally was capable of charity. In 1931 he donated a \$15,000 pipe organ to the Columbia Club and once gave \$500 to the minister of a ramshackle church he spotted during a train trip. Though some thought Geist was an old softie beneath his gruff exterior, he never became a great philanthropist - a fact which no doubt contributes to his current anonymity.

When **Geist purchased, the Indianapolis Water Company in 1912**, he had to overcome a new local law that required all officers of a utility to be state residents. Since Geist preferred to live in Philadelphia where his holding company was headquartered, he simply named an old friend president and himself chairman of the board - a title created as a loophole.

Three years after buying the water company, a controversy developed over a mysterious illness that was striking local citizens. Everything from faulty iceboxes to the water supply was suspect. Eventually the latter was found to be contaminated by the coke washings of the Citizens Gas Company. The Central Canal, the usual dumping ground for such refuse, had been closed for repairs and the washing diverted to Fall Creek, where they contaminated the drinking water supply. In a melee of buck passing, the water company blamed the city for the mistake, the city blamed the water company, and both blamed the gas company.

More controversial by far, however, was Geist Reservoir. Completed in 1943 (five years after its namesake's death), it was then the third largest body of water in the state. **Planning for the reservoir began as early as 1913** when the nation's foremost hydraulic engineer told Geist that White River and Fall Creek wouldn't supply enough water for Indianapolis future needs. **Geist spent the 1920s and '30s purchasing roughly 5,000 acres of Fall Creek Valley to make room for a reservoir. The purchases included the small village of Germantown, which today lies at the bottom of the lake.**

Over the years the project faced sturdy opposition. The residents of Germantown were against it for obvious reasons, and during the '30s citizens and government officials feared it would trigger utility rate hikes. Immediately after the lake was completed, sportsmen and swimmers were angered by rules that forbade swimming, boating, and ice skating. In the early '60s water company officials were annoyed when they were denied permission to develop housing along the

shores, and some city officials and conservation groups were disappointed when they couldn't raise enough cash to turn the area into a public park.

The years 1961 to 1963 were decisive ones for the development of Geist Reservoir. The Indiana Public Service Commission had recently ruled the the land surrounding Geist could not be included in figuring the rate base for utility bills, so the water company reportedly created Shorewood Corporation to develop some of the land in order to generate revenue for its stockholders.

Scotty Morse, who operated the water company when Geist was built, objected strongly to Shorewood's plan to develop the area, seeing a major distinction between a water supply and a recreational lake. His opposition was to no avail, and so he resigned after an illustrious career.

Joining Morse in protest was Indianapolis City Council president John Kitley, who challenged the right of the water company to develop the land, fearing it would be used as a "giant commercial enterprise." After long and bitter debates, a compromise was reached whereby plans for development were put on hold, the city abandoned efforts to turn Geist into a park, and the water company agreed to maintain a public observation area near the dam, continue boat rental services, install a small, public launching ramp and make available 25 acres to the State Conservation Department for a mutually agreed upon use, such as a fish hatchery.

Then came the controversy in the early 1970's over the Highland Dam project that would have tripled the size of the reservoir. Indiana Sen. Birch Bayh led home owners and environmentalists in opposing the project and in 1978 the plan was dropped. Shortly thereafter the housing boom began and Geist became known for luxurious living - but, ironically, not for the man who practiced it.

This article was written by Peter Tocco

Published in Indianapolis Monthly 1989



History of Lawrence Township

In establishing the first political subdivisions of Marion County in 1821, the County Commissioners constituted the northeast portion of the county as Lawrence Township . The War of 1812 still fresh in their minds, the commissioners named the township for Captain James Lawrence, a hero of this war with Great Britain famous for his battle cry: "Don't give up the ship." The area was virtually uninhabited, witnessing only the occasional passage of Indian hunters who chose to remain after the Indian Evacuation Treaty of 1818. The township was blessed with "magnificent stands of hardwood" and, as recorded by another chronicler, at certain

times of the year "much of the level land was covered with immense sheets of water, quagmires or ponds."

Among the first recorded settlers of the township were Elijah and Elizabeth Reddic who farmed a sizeable homestead in what is now the City of Lawrence . Hard working farmers, the Reddics were considered prosperous for the time having migrated from Pennsylvania with two yoke of oxen, two horses, twenty-five hogs, two milk cows and twelve sheep. Other early recorded settlers were Joel Wright and Elijah Fox.

Overall, settlement of the township was slow - growth being largely concentrated in Indianapolis to the southwest. Settlements which did occur (such as Castleton, Lawrence, Germantown and Oaklandon) were small farming communities served by roads roughly hewn through the forest, a general store and a small church which served as both a place of worship and a site for community social functions. In retrospect, when the township grew, it tended to do so sporadically and generally in response to developments beyond its own control.

Not the least of these developments was the building of the "B Line" Railroad at the height of the railroad building boom of the late 1840's and the 1850's. This line linked Indianapolis with Anderson , Muncie , Wabash and Fort Wayne , passing diagonally through the southern portion of Lawrence Township . The town of Lawrence was first platted north of this rail line in February of 1849 and, four months later, Oaklandon was laid out ten miles to the east parallel to its tracks.

Lawrence was originally platted by James White as the Town of Lanesville (Lane being a prominent resident and backer of the town's development). Perhaps indicating some political rivalry between Mssrs. Lane and White, the town was also commonly referred to as Jamestown . Immediately south of the town, a post office had been established in 1846. Due to its location in Lawrence Township , it was simply known as the Lawrence Post Office. The three names proved to be a source of considerable confusion until the problem was resolved in 1866 when the Marion County Commissioners officially renamed the town "Lawrence."

The town of Oaklandon was originally platted by John Emery who, along with other residents, saw a great future for the community because of its location along the railroad and Pendleton Pike. They envisioned a community that would "accommodate hundreds of homes, stores, churches, schools, factories, mills, and even exporters and importers." In deference to the stands of towering oak trees growing over the countryside, the community was initially called Oakland . It was not until the early 1880's that the "on" was added, once again (as in the case of Lawrence) following the lead of its local post office which was so named.

The rapid growth and rise to prominence envisioned by the town's founders was frustrated by a series of national events. First, the Gold Rush of 1849 had diverted immigration to the West. Next, the Civil War had slowed new development and, finally, the Financial Panic of 1873 (when "no one was going anywhere") stopped the town's growth completely. By 1880, the founding fathers had resigned themselves that Oaklandon would be nothing more than a thriving county town linked to Indianapolis by a toll road whose passage took a half day and 60 cents.

The first local recorded slaying of an Indian by a Lawrence Township settler took place in the Oaklandon area. The Indian was a Kickapoo guide from the Algonquin Tribe. The killing and the subsequent investigation into its circumstances deeply divided the small community. Feelings ran so high that one group of German homesteaders moved to a site five miles north of the town along Fall Creek to establish their own settlement which they appropriately named "Germantown ." This small community continued to exist until 1941 when it was entombed in water by the construction of the Geist Reservoir dam.

Another reminder of the migration of northern European stock to central Indiana in the 1830's and 1840's was the small community of Vertland situated just north of what is now Castleton. The name was derived from its local storekeeper and resident, Milford H. Vail. The town had grown around the switching facility for the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad. When the railroad was reincorporated as the Nickle Plate Railroad, the switch was moved south and a station built on what is now 82nd Street . Vertland then gradually moved to or was assimilated by Castleton.

The first settlers of Castleton were Julia Sterret and her husband who had moved into a log cabin they built in 1841-eleven years before the town was platted by Thomas Gentry in 1852. This original plan contained nine lots and it wasn't until 1875 that David Macy developed its first addition containing 16 lots just east of the railroad. The town's first postmaster was "Old Billy" Anderson . The community became known as a Methodist center, its first church having been organized in 1873 by James T. Wright. The building used as the congregation's first church was a barn-like structure constructed of cherry beams moved from Vertland. The building subsequently served as a Magistrate Court , a school and a store.

By the turn of the century, Castleton was also known as a brick and charcoal making center. The industry's kilns were fired by natural gas from a local well. Unlike other local natural gas wells which failed around 1900 after a brief ten years of production, the Castleton well continued to produce fuel into the 1940's.

Well into the Twentieth Century, Lawrence Township 's growth had been measured, but it was only a matter of time until the buildup of Indianapolis , the popularization of the automobile and a concomitant move toward suburbanization began to impact this sparsely developed area to the northeast. Three principal developments took place that fed the remarkable growth we continue to see today: the buildup of industry in east Indianapolis during the 1940's; the damming of Fall Creek at 8200 Fall Creek Boulevard in 1941; and the opening of the I-465 and I-69 interstate system in the mid-1960's.

First to benefit from these developments was the Town of Lawrence . Established in 1903 just south of the town, Fort Benjamin Harrison had created a modest demand for housing and commercial development. When the U.S. Government opened its Army Finance Center at the Post, its use of civilian employees greatly increased this demand. The opening of Chrysler, Ford and Western Electric plants just south of the town along Shadeland Avenue initiated a thirty year period of growth that saw the town's progression to a 5th Class City in 1951 and its upgrade to a 4th Class City in 1961.

As a Fourth Class City, Lawrence was no longer governed by a Town Board. The City Council was enlarged from five to seven members. Morris Settles (a former deputy sheriff who had come to Lawrence as Marshal in 1955) was elected its first mayor—a position he held for twenty-four years. Mayor Settles' name became synonymous with the City as its population increased another 150%, solidifying its position as the second largest municipality in Marion County .

As the City's population grew, so did pressures to expand the City's boundaries and increase its economic base. Adding a sense of urgency to its need for territorial expansion was the movement toward a county-wide form of government being pursued by Indianapolis in the State Legislature. Fearing that the passage of such legislation would "freeze" the City's boundaries, the City Council routinely annexed roadway segments extending eastward to the Hancock County Line. This practice put off the politically unpopular legal step of annexation of communities such as Lantern Hills, Indian Lake , Fairwood Hills and Oaklandon while effectively preventing their annexation by the City of Indianapolis since annexation could not extend across streets of another municipality.

The practice also had the effect of increasing the City's share of State Gas Tax disbursements which were based on the number of miles of roadway in the community. Increasing the share of these state revenues was, in fact, a principal motivation when the Council moved to annex Fort Benjamin Harrison (another being the necessity of incorporating the Fort within its boundaries before it could proceed to annex the area east of the Fort). Initially opposed by the Army, objections were later withdrawn and, in 1970, Fort Benjamin Harrison became a part of the City of Lawrence .

By 1925, Oaklandon had established itself as a stable northeast-side community of some 500 residents. That year, in the early morning hours of February 13, a fire broke out in its business district. Fire apparatus had to come from Indianapolis and Fortville to fight the blaze. The truck dispatched from nearby Fort Benjamin Harrison unfortunately ran off the road and did not arrive until after the fire was out. Despite the efforts of the firefighters and townspeople, the fire destroyed much of the town center and the community set about rebuilding. L. W. Mohler's General Store, a town landmark, dates from this period.

The boom in housing construction which followed the Second World War finally brought about the discovery of the community. Despite the formation of the Oaklandon Citizens Committee chaired by Everett Hartig to oversee orderly growth, the town developed a virtual split-personality between the old center and the new subdivisions being built around it. The division seems to have weakened the community's sense of identity. This, coupled with the fact that the town had never incorporated, left it vulnerable at a time when other communities were looking for opportunities for expansion. It was in 1962 that Mr. Mohler, referring to new housing subdivisions either built or being planned in the Oaklandon area, was quoted by the Indianapolis Times as saying: "Gradually the old town will be encased by subdivisions and shopping areas. Then we will be annexed by Lawrence or Indianapolis ."

Stating that "the people in this area don't want anything to do with Unigov," Mayor Settles and the City Council of Lawrence, in the same year, moved to annex 5,871 acres east of its boundary to the Hancock County Line. The annexation was opposed in court by the Annexation

Committee of the Eastern Lawrence Township Plan Council. Apparently having resigned themselves to their eventual loss of autonomy, residents responding to an informal survey conducted by the Plan Council indicated that 47% preferred to be annexed by Indianapolis and 27% by Lawrence-the remaining 26% being undecided. The poll carried no legal weight however, as the case was resolved in April of 1976 in favor of Lawrence , thus establishing its present boundaries.

As the northeastern segment of I-465 was in the final stages of completion in 1966, placing Castleton at the base of "an interstate triangle," residents described it as a dying town "engulfed in a sea of commercial business." Anticipating the inevitable growth the belt parkway and its two interchanges would bring to the area, the Marion County zoning Board had rezoned the area around the town "Commercial." While this was meant to accommodate the growth of the area, it also effectively prevented the town's growth through annexation. The move proved to be a mixed blessing as residents suddenly saw the value of their houses double, at the same time realizing that the town's fate had been sealed. Many predicted its complete demise in a brief ten years.

While Castleton languished, the area around the new regional commercial center was the scene of some of the most intensive residential development ever experienced in the county. Adding to this momentum was the presence of nearby Geist Reservoir with its potential for development.

In 1941, Fall Creek had been dammed by the Indianapolis Water Company to create a reservoir that suddenly became the State's third largest body of water. Stocked by the Department of Natural Resources, Geist Reservoir (named after the recently retired president of the company) immediately became a mecca for local fishermen and boaters who continued to enjoy its idyllic beauty and peacefulness for more than twenty years.

In January of 1961, the Water Company announced plans to develop the west and south shores of the reservoir for exclusive, up-scale residences. The development of 2,782 acres-to be known as Shorewood-would involve construction of 435 luxury waterfront units, 1,431 inland units, a marina, boat clubs, a private county club and a shopping center connected by forty miles of roads. Ambitious as the plan was, the project proved to be far simpler in its conception than in its execution.

The real difficulty began when the Water Company announced that, in order to guarantee the exclusiveness of the development, public access to the lake would be restricted. Public response was immediate, if not predictable. The Central Indiana Fair Plan Association was quickly organized and a petition drive initiated seeking government intervention in the plans. By June of that year, over ten thousand signatures had been collected and the petition was presented to the County Commissioners by Gerald Raper, spokesman for what the press termed the "Fishermen's March."

John A. Kitley, President of the Marion County Council threatened legal action to preserve public access to the reservoir since the Water Company had used its condemnation powers (or the threat thereof) to acquire the land initially and the State stocked Fall Creek which fed the lake. French M. Elrod, the President of the County Board of Commissioners, announced plans to acquire all or part of the Marion County shoreline for use as parkland through the Board's own

statutory condemnation powers and indicated that the necessary bond issue was already being prepared. An Indianapolis Times Editorial appearing in the June 11 edition stated that it was "obvious that the elected officials have been talking to fishermen who outnumber Water Company officials at the polls."

An impasse was quickly reached over a potential purchase price for the land. Cost estimates varied widely depending on who determined the valuation: the County stressing the Water Company's original cost of \$200 an acre and the Water Company emphasizing the land's best possible use after its investment in the reservoir's development. In the midst of the considerable rhetoric the confrontation produced, the County pressed its cause by refusing to approve either the development's plats or its proposed road system.

It became apparent that even the development of a scaled-down park along the shoreline could cost in excess of \$10,000,000-an amount that would severely test local resources. An editorial in the July 7, 1961 edition of the Indianapolis Star urged the County to abandon its acquisition efforts on the basis that the purchase would also represent a long-term tax liability at the expense of increased property tax revenues that would accrue as the result of development. A political issue became an emotional one at this point, with both sides continuing to posture: the Water Company contending that, even though the County should buy the land, it would not allow it the use of the water in the reservoir and the County countering that, if necessary, it would even condemn the water itself.

A truce of sorts was eventually reached by both parties. The overwhelming cost of park land acquisition at Geist forced postponement of County plans, and local government began to see park development at the proposed Eagle Creek Reservoir as more feasible. The Water Company on the other hand decided that, because the political climate was inappropriate, it would postpone its plans at least until the upcoming elections when the composition of the County Council and Commission would likely change.

The final salvo of the skirmish was fired by the County Council, however. Having been unanimously turned down by the County Board of Commissioners when it formally petitioned them to buy the land needed for a park at Geist, it petitioned the Metropolitan Plan Commission in September of 1962 to rezone 223 acres of shoreline from its Special Uses category to the Parkland Category. The Plan Commission approved the petition. Under State law, the County Board of Commissioners was required to approve the rezoning and the Water Company found itself the reluctant owner of 223 acres of public parkland situated in the midst of its planned residential development.

It was not until 1978 that the development of Geist was finally initiated by an offshoot of the Water Company-The Shorewood Corporation. That year, the rezoning of 280 acres was approved by the Metropolitan Development Commission and construction finally began.

Growth in Lawrence Township has been explosive since 1950. Its population doubled by 1960, doubled again by 1970, and will be close to having doubled for a third time in forty years when the 1990 Census is taken. The precipitousness of this growth has created very real problems in

the township, as well as concerns about its future. This plan will examine these problems in detail and enlist the assistance of its residents in proposing a sound approach to their solution.



Pictures of Germantown now under Geist Reservoir



Germantown farmstead



Germantown gentleman



Germantown girls



Germantown ranch by Fall creek



Germantown residents



Germantown residents



Robert's Mill covered bridge



Goldsmith Family



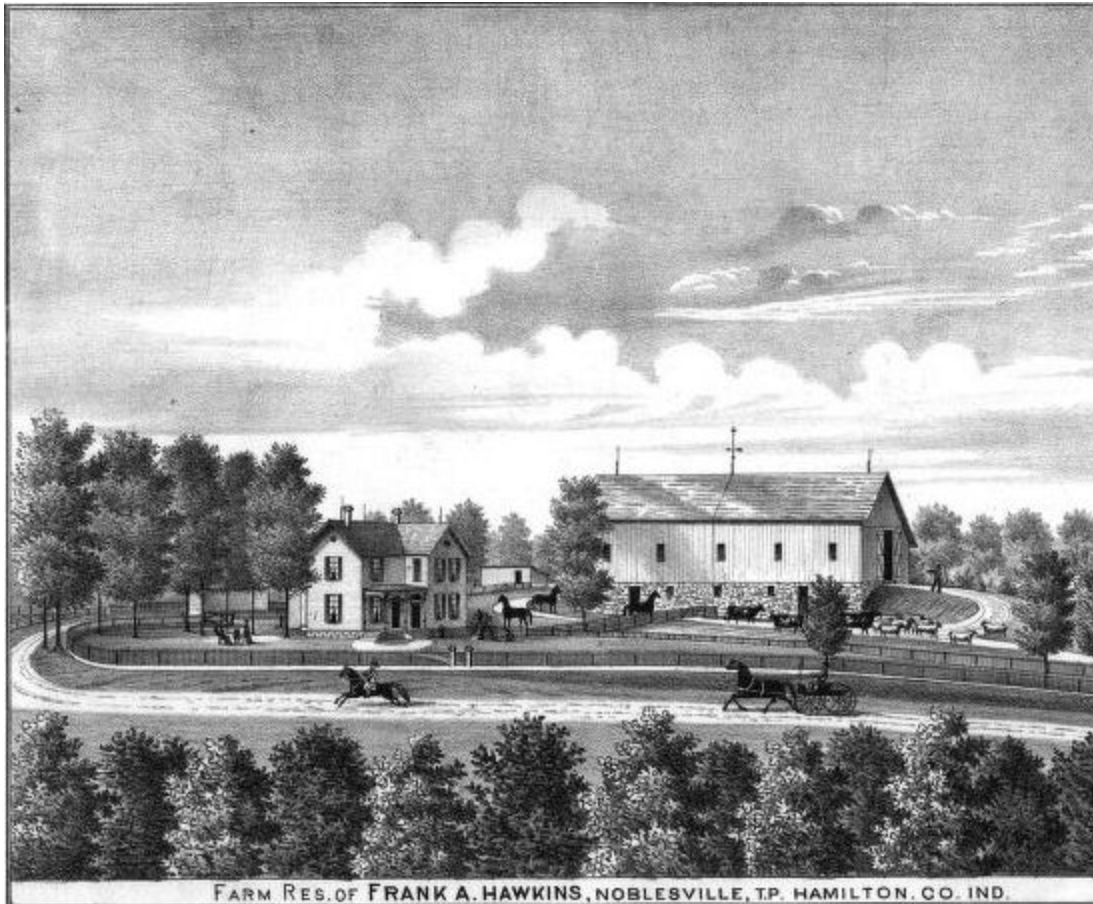
Goldsmith Farm



Goldsmith Farm



Goldsmith Farm

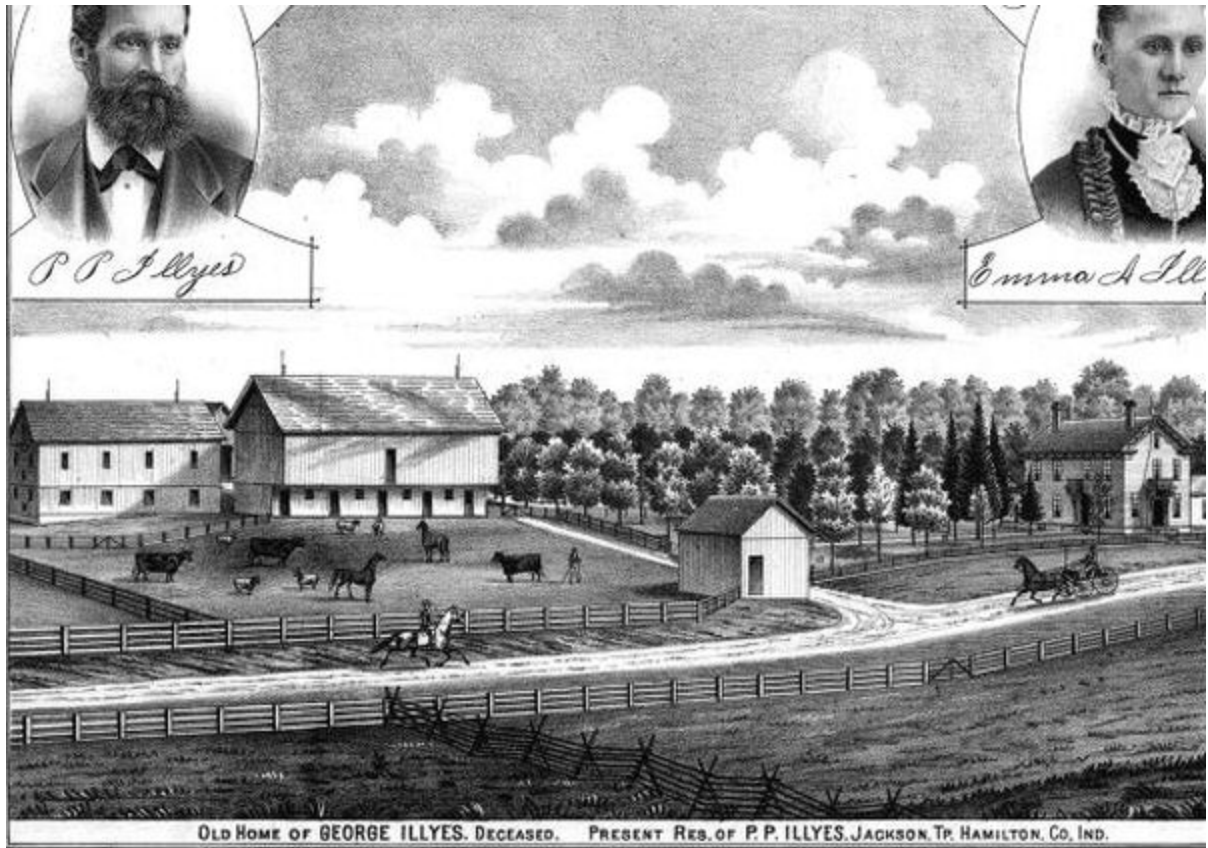


FARM RES. OF FRANK A. HAWKINS, NOBLESVILLE, T.P. HAMILTON, CO. IND.

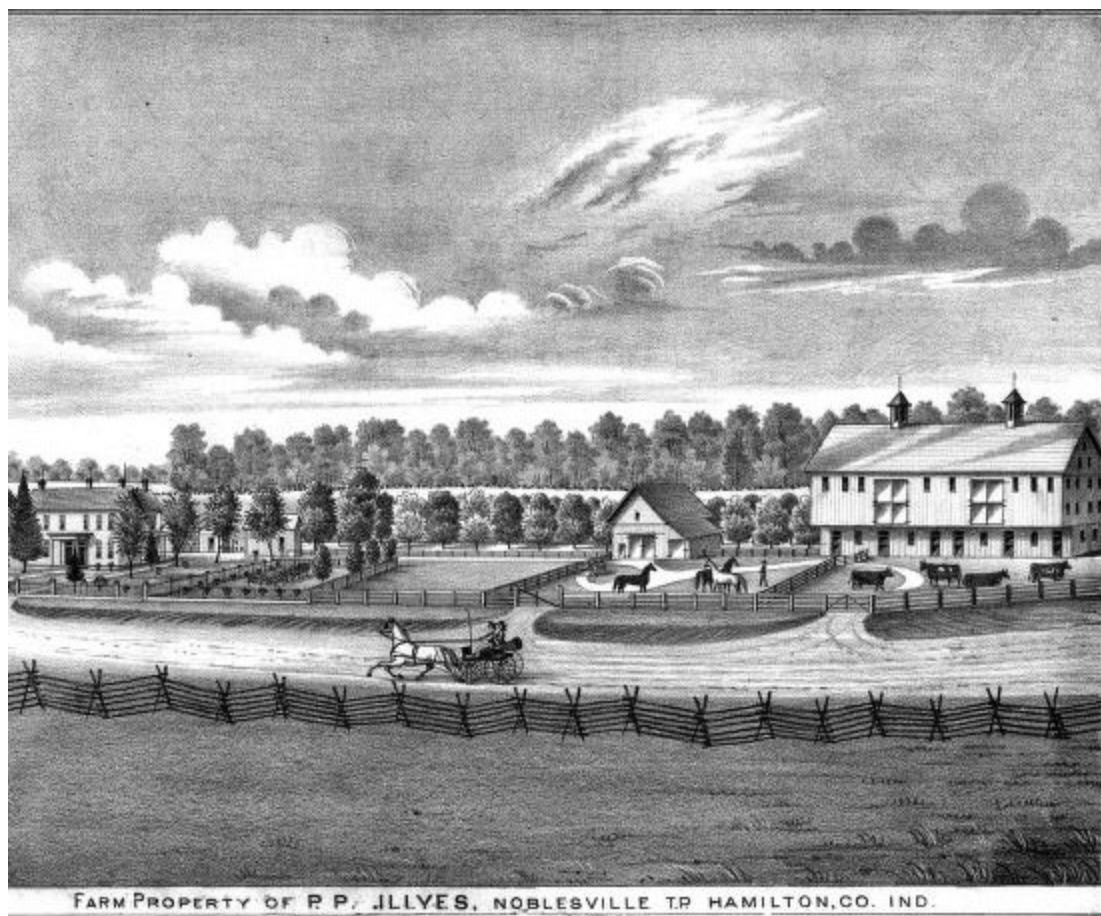
Hawkins Farm



Helm's Mill - before Geist reservoir



Illyes farm



FARM PROPERTY OF R. P. ILLYES, NOBLESVILLE T.P. HAMILTON, CO. IND.

Illyes farm



Life in Germantown along Fall creek



Old Fall Creek before reservoir



Historical Interviews with Geist residents - Part 1

ACCESSION NUMBER: RHP 146

INTERVIEW: STANTON RENNER

INTERVIEW DATE: 8/7/2000

INTERVIEWER: JASON LANTZER

TRANSCRIBER: BARBARA ABEL

STANTON RENNER

Stanton Renner, I'm 54 years old and have lived in Hamilton County all my life. I am a career educator, starting my 33rd year at Hamilton Heights School Corporation, where I am chairman of the high school social studies department. I teach U.S. History and Sociology there. On my mother's side I'm 6 generations Hamilton County, her folks landed here in the 1830s. My dad's side is almost as old. They were Madison County/Hamilton County line pioneers. The county

boundaries got changed which put them into Madison County barely. I've lived in four of the townships in the county in my lifetime: Fall Creek, Wayne, Noblesville and Jackson.

TALK A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR MEMORIES OF FARM LIFE.

I guess the first memories I have are of visiting my grandparents -- both set of my grandparents were farmers. I remember visiting my grandparents farm north of Cicero, staying there quite a bit. By that time granddad was retired but they still had a few cattle and chickens. I used to help set the eggs under the hens -- enjoyed that. Always enjoyed raising chickens. In fact I raised them out here until just a few years ago. I always showed them at 4-H and my kids showed at 4-H. I think that's where that love came from, helping my grandmother Kaiser set the eggs under the hens in the spring time and marking the days off the calendar until they would hatch.

When I was about 8 my dad purchased a farm in Fall Creek Township. Before that we had lived in a house with small acreage. He farmed the next 30 some years, and I would help on that farm. We raised hogs and chickens, sheep, rabbits occasionally. Even though I'm not old enough, I'm one of the oldest of the baby boomers, I remember living in a home that did not have an indoor bathroom for a couple of years. We left a modern home and went to a farmhouse that had very limited amounts of plumbing. My mother wasn't too happy about it but dad thought it was a good financial move and it turned out to be. I remember walking out to the path out back and taking my brother. He and I would take baths in the winter time in a tub in front of the stove in the living room. We got indoor plumbing in a couple of years.

Great life. Lots of things to do on a farm. We had a woods -- we'd camp in the woods. Play in the hay mow by the hour. My cousins would come up, they lived in town, and we would have all kinds of interesting and fun things to do in a barn. Camping in the woods was a lot of fun. In the wintertime we'd hitch 3 or 4 sleds together behind a tractor and dad would pull us on the gravel road on the snow. Never had to worry about traffic. Maybe if you're lucky 4 cars a day would go by. This was in the southeastern part of the county, Fall Creek Township. We were probably 2 miles from our little church we went to. I grew up in the 1950s and it was a great time to be a kid.

CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE ABOUT 4-H.

I got into 4-H as soon as I could. Always enjoyed it. The county fair was the highlight of the summer. Seemed like we had very structured 4-H meetings. More so than I remember my own kids attending. We would have entertainment at the meetings. Seemed like they met the year-round, too. I usually showed Hampshire sheep and chickens. Maybe would take a wildlife or forestry project on the side which I called indoor, city kids projects. It was always fun -- we would go on Saturdays, dad and I, and buy the lamb. Look 2 or 3 places -- always kept it secret, too, as you didn't want your competitors to know where you bought your lambs. Thinking back I'm sure the same 3 or 4 people sold them to everybody. We didn't know it at the time. Getting the baby chicks in the spring was the highlight of my life. We would buy them from Mabel Anderson's hatchery in Noblesville. We'd have to have the temperature just right in the brooder

house and check on them 4 or 5 times a day. If the lights went out then it was a big panic and a couple of times we'd box them up and bring them into the house until the brooder stove got fixed again. In the summer the fair was the highlight. Every day you could spend there, every hour, was great. In fact in those days if you were a certain age as I remember, you could actually stay all night in the sheep or cattle barn. You got to meet people from all over the county and developed some strong friendships. Especially those of the opposite sex. There was always a 4-H camp that you went to down at Versailles State Park. That was another highlight of the summer - seems to me that it took place before the Fair, maybe June. It was a 3 day camp. A great time. A lot of lasting friendships. Still go to the Fair but it's a lot different than it used to be.

WHAT WAY?

Many many more projects -- it's bigger and more complex. It's interesting that you still see some of the same last names associated with hogs or cattle or sheep or chickens that we had 40 years ago. The facilities are a lot nicer than what we had. I served on the Hamilton County Extension Board for 2 terms back in the early 90s -- it's a good way to keep involved with 4-H as an adult. Of my 3 children, 2 were active in 4-H. They also went to camp.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN THEY MOVED TO THAT LOCATION?

They were always there in my lifetime. I think I read it was right after WWII that they purchased that land. I remember there just being 2 or 3 buildings and each year it seemed like there was another building added. There was just a very limited number of buildings when I was first there.

YOUR DAD'S FARM -- WAS IT PRIMARILY A LIVESTOCK FARM?

Livestock and grain. It was a small farm, 65 acres and then later we sold that and bought an 80 acre farm. He worked full time for General Motors in Anderson -- what they called a factory farmer. He worked at the factory days and then farmed nights and weekends. Spring and fall were very busy times. I'd come home from school and get off the school bus and he'd usually have told me the night before what field to disc to get ready to plant, or which field to cultivate. I enjoyed doing that; it was fun. Now my younger brother didn't enjoy it -- he was more into sports and athletics. But I liked the farm. I think one of my best childhood memories would be going with Dad to farm auctions in the winter time. Farmers would sell out and we'd go to look for a particular piece of equipment or machinery. Try to find a bargain. You'd stand around and you'd hear stories and tales and even though it was bitter cold you didn't mind because it was entertaining. You got to go through someone else's barn and look at their set up and all that. It was fun.

SINCE YOU'RE VERY ACTIVE IN SCHOOLS IN THE AREA CAN YOU TALK ABOUT HOW THAT'S CHANGED.

Again, I'm not all that old, being 54, I'm one of the oldest baby boomers but I actually went to a school in Fall Creek Township that didn't have indoor plumbing. It was a 2 room brick school, Bethlehem was the name of it. It used to stand at the intersection of Ohio and 136th Street which is now real close to the I-69 interchange out there. What had happened is Fall Creek Township

had closed all their one room schools probably 8 or 10 years before and the students either went to Fishers Elementary, Noblesville or Fortville. Then in the mid-50s they decided to build their own grade school in Fall Creek Township. It was not ready when school started so we opened up one of the old 2 rooms schools that had been closed for several years. Of course the kids thought that was great fun -- pot bellied stove there, no indoor bathroom. You had to trot out back to the path again -- I think the boys enjoyed that more than the female teachers did. My mother taught in the other half of the schoolroom. She didn't like to go into the coal bin to get the coal for the stove so I was a fourth grader, she taught second, so I felt real macho and would go over and get in the coal bin, there were mice in there, and get coal for her for the stove. Then after Christmas we moved into the brand new building there at Fall Creek. Beautiful building. And they still use that as part of the Hamilton Southeastern School system. It's just south and across the road Hamilton Southeastern High School. It was a lot of fun. Even in the new building we sometimes had two grades in one room. We'd have fifth and sixth together or second and third. There weren't enough students to make a whole room. So you were used to knowing kids other than in your own classes. It was like a big family. You had the same teacher for more than one year sometimes. You'd have the same teacher for your second grade and your third grade. They knew you very well and you knew them. Eighth grade was as high as the school went. In 1960, when I was an eighth grader, you had to make a decision. The township supplied transportation for you to go to either Fishers High School, Fortville, or Noblesville High School. I remember there were 24 in our class and exactly one third of us went to Noblesville, which is where I went, one third to Fishers and one third to Fortville. That was the bad thing. You split up and you never saw some of those kids again. Except the eight you went with to your high school.

High school was probably not much different except for technology than it is now. Noblesville High School, I was there from '60 to '64, and we had 182 or 3 in graduating class so based on that there were probably 750 to 800 in the whole building. And it was a modern building -- it's where the Noblesville Middle School is now -- about the same as you would experience now except for the technology. I remember we got to leave and go out to eat at lunch time if you had transportation. Certainly more sports now, girl's sports and more things for students to do. The early 60s were a great time to be in high school. Pre-Viet Nam so that wasn't a worry. Less stress.

HOW HAVE THE TOWNS CHANGED -- A LOT OF LITTLE TOWNS THAT WERE THAT AREN'T ANY MORE.

Besides towns, in the 50s and early 60s, we had community grocery stores, little country stores that were also combination gas stations. Those were fun places to go as kids or even as teenagers. There was one at Durbin that sold gas, bologna and cheese and snacks and cokes and men loafed there and played checkers. You could always go there and find somebody. Clarksville had one. We had one down there at the intersection of where the Bethlehem school was -- at 238 and Olio Road -- Byron Johnson was his name and he ran the store with his wife, Kate. They had a candy counter and gas pumps and meat case and necessities and you could go there and catch up on the news. It seemed to me there was always a lot of older men in there -- I suppose they were retired farmers that would come in there and just loaf. Walnut Grove had one up next to Walnut Grove School -- Chiney Moore's Store was there for a long time. I think they sold gas. And you had those dotted around so you didn't have to go to town you could just go to

the store. If Mom just wanted a few things, like bread or lunch meat that's where we would go. We went to Noblesville for major shopping. Every Friday night when Dad got home from the factory we'd go. It was a treat. You got to go to Noblesville and eat out somewhere, a sandwich shop or cafeteria. Then afterwards you'd do your grocery shopping. There was probably as many or more grocery stores then as they have now. A & P, Kroger, Regal Market on the north side of the square, Kenleys. Mom was always partial to Kenleys and the Regal Market. Also on Saturday night if you went back to town for some reason, especially in the summertime, people just parked, usually on east side of the square. The sidewalk would be full of people at 7:30 or 8 at night. You'd see all your neighbors and friends and people would walk up to someone's car and talk. It reminded me a lot of when they had the Great Race [antique car race] in Noblesville a few weeks back -- didn't have quite as many people in town in those days but it was that kind of an atmosphere. Now, of course, after dark there is nobody in downtown Noblesville. I remember that being quite a bit different.

The other thing the communities had besides the general stores were grain elevators which were neat places for farm kids to go and hang out. Dad usually went there on Saturday morning to get livestock feed or at harvest time if you were old enough and your feet reached the clutch on the tractor they'd let you drive a load of oats or soy beans into the grain mill to sell. They always had coke machines and candy machines and you'd listen and hear all the conversation. Talk politics - - maybe that's where I got my interest in politics. You'd hear both sides of all the issues in the community or the nation at the grain elevator. They're about all gone, too. Cicero had one, Durbin had one, Aroma had one, Noblesville had two or three, Fishers had one, Arcadia, Atlanta had a couple. They were gathering places for the farm crowd.

DID YOUR DAD HAVE A FAVORITE ONE TO GO TO?

Yes, we usually went to Durbin. We lived closer to it and once in a great while we'd go to Fishers. Dad knew the operator there. You'd go there on a Saturday morning and get the feed ground and buy the hog feed or chicken feed. Sometimes you bought a Coke and talked to a couple of people and you'd be home by dinner time and the truck would be full with feed.

LET'S DIG INTO THE CHURCHES LITTLE BIT. . .

The one I've most familiar with, I've gone here for most of my life, is the Bethel Lutheran Church. I think I'm the 6th generation of my family that has gone there. I had family that were charter members back in the 1850s. It's an interesting church, it evolved really from three sources like a lot of churches, it's like a family tree. Ambrose Sherer was the founder of the church. I read once where he started 19 or 20 churches in the Midwest and I've always thought that when I retire I'd like to research and see how many are still going. He started the one in Cicero. In 1856 Bethel was started in a broom shop in Cicero with 12 people there. But before that there was a sister Lutheran Church called Mt. Pleasant which was east of Arcadia. It actually had existed since the 1830s. So the roots of our congregation go back to the 1830s. A lot of German settled in this part of the country. In fact the whole southeastern part of Jackson Township, used to be referred to as Little Germany, because there were so many German families there. A lot of them came directly from Germany but many are Pennsylvania Germans that had first landed in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Dutch and then moved on into Hamilton County in the 1840s and

50s.

I was thinking about this last night because I knew you were coming, I think maybe one of the biggest changes I've noticed in my life time is that the function of the church has changed a little bit. Even up through the first half of this century, with the exception of some huge city churches. Almost all of them were worship and family centers. You went there to worship and you went there to be with your family because almost all in the congregations were inter-related. There would be 3 or 4 basic families and they all had intermarried and produced offspring over a period of 80 to 90 years and that really was what the congregation was. It was a nice place where a family bloodline gathers, as well as a place to worship, and because of that I think the function of the church was more like what a family would give you. Church gave you support, encouragement, propped you up in times of stress and mourning, a place for weddings, funerals, baptisms and the confirmations. Now I think the church function has changed a little bit. It tends to be program directed. Lots of programs come out of churches now. Even medium sized churches have all kinds of self help programs available -- 12 step programs. Recovery workshops, they've gotten into preschool, some even have schools now. It seems less personal and you go there to attend a program or programs that you want to take part in. You still worship certainly, for Lutherans that's always been a big part of our gathering. I think the function has shifted a little -- from family worship to the program directed church. People shop around to see what offers the best menu of programs that they want to participate in.

Another thing, the congregational makeup certainly is different. Even up to 25 years ago churches were basically blood related. There were 4 or 5 basic families in the church. I would guess that many of the churches in Hamilton county had less than 100 worshipping members on a Sunday morning. And of those about half or more had connected family trees. One of the main ways the churches grew was through the natural reproduction of those families, occasionally move-ins, but not very often.

Natural reproduction kept the church going. You would have in the congregation great age expanse -- the extremely elderly people and the tiny babies. But it would be full of people that had spent their whole life in that one congregation. Today's congregations, I think, you have people that have spent just a few months and then move on because they are transferred. Probably the majority of the members in our church have been there less than 5 years. It's a minority now of the congregation that have been there their lifetime. It's much more transient. That's the way their occupations are, too, so they have to come and go. And they're not afraid to shop around. They'll worship with you for a few Sundays but if they find something that doesn't fit what they want they'll go shop around and find something else. It's almost a consumer mentality when they hunt for churches now too, like automobiles or other products. I think in some ways, even though years ago you had blood relationships in a church, they are actually more heterogeneous than in those days because you had a sampling of the community. You had the banker and the teacher and the farmer and the widow and you had occasionally an orphan. and the spinster. Nowadays congregations are pretty bland looking. They are basically the same social class with only a few exceptions. While they're not related by blood in any way, they are actually more homogeneous now, more the same. Just a personal observation, it may not be that way at all. There seems to be a lot less different kinds of people in churches. They appear to be similar social classes with similar life styles. Not the variety you might have had 50 years ago.

Certainly there isn't the age span any more. There's an average age that would probably catch most people in the congregation. Very few people would be outside that average age. Same with social class. One social class would catch the majority of the congregation. Very few on either end.

The size of the church certainly has changed. There were few churches, even in the city of Noblesville, 50 years ago that had more than 200 worship on Sunday. The township churches had less than 100 worshipping on Sunday, some less than 50. Today they have mega-churches, huge, hundreds, some even in the thousands. There are a couple by Carmel, huge churches. The scale of it is so much different. Our church on a good Sunday we'll have 350 -- 20 years ago we would have had half that. That's probably a healthy thing that you're growing. Would hate to have the opposite problem. Certainly taking some getting used to and some accommodation due to the massive scale. Something as simple as taking communion used to take this amount of time now takes this -- or passing the offering plate. Just because of the scale.

I don't remember when I was growing up as a kid ever having in church anyone in the congregation or in the pulpit ever make a political comment. I don't know if that was just a peculiarity of Lutherans and Methodists, but that was not done. Politics was kept outside the church. We knew inside who were Republicans and who were Democrats and even some times they ran against each other for township trustee or advisory board or town board member but it was never discussed or talked about. I've noticed in the last 10 -15 years, not just TV preachers, but there are some political comments being made now on issues in churches. Some churches are, and some pastors are, very vocal on this national issue or that national issue and that's different than it used to be. The line between church and state, which used to be much more clear cut, is maybe getting fuzzy. Lutherans still don't tend to cross that line very often, they tend to shy off that.

HAS THERE BEEN A CHANGE IN YOUR LIFETIME IN SERMON STYLE?

Certainly. Much more informal. Used to you never saw the pastor except when he was preaching, except when he was behind the pulpit. Now sometimes we wonder why we even have a pulpit as they don't use it that often. That could be a personal style, too. I think sermons are more entertaining and I think it's easier to get the message than it used to be. They are certainly informal which I think helps some people grasp the message more. I don't think you have to be entertained to get the message in the sermon but there are more personal anecdotes than there used to be. I'm sure there is as I can't imagine as a kid a pastor telling me something personal about his own life or an experience he had. Now you have a lot of that. Some people in the congregation can probably relate to that; others I think, older more traditional persons, probably thinks you're telling me more than I need to know. Seminaries are now beginning to blur the line between preaching and entertaining a little bit, too.

WOULD YOU SAY THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONGREGATION AND THE PASTOR.

I think that came about because of size. I've talked to our pastor about how it's not a pastor-centered church any more. Churches used to be pastor-centered; they were the church. Now with

350 worshipping on a Sunday in our church, you can't possibly be pastor-centered. Now it's program centered or directed. The pastor is more of an administrator and he has staff under him or her that has to be managed. We have an office manager now in our church. Until I was 35 we didn't even have a church secretary. It's all been in the last 15 or 20 years that we've had a church secretary. Now we're up to one secretary, an office manager -- it's like any institution, once it begins to grow you have to have all these layers of bureaucracy. The pastor is way up here, kinda removed. I'm sure there are some that don't like that. You can't just call and get his voice on the phone any more. You can't have whole church gatherings like you use to -- there's just too many. We still do but we don't get the percentage of turnout that we use to.

I'M INTERVIEWING YOUR PASTOR SOON

Good. You'll enjoy him. He's probably just about to break our record on longevity of pastors. If he hasn't already he's close to it. He's seen the church nearly double in size in 9 years.

IS THIS THE ORIGINAL SITE.

In Cicero the church was started in 1856 - our sister church 20 years earlier near Arcadia. Right down here at this intersection at 206th & Cumberland Road, you saw the old one room school, that was called the Baton Rouge community for some reason. There was a wooden one room school there before the brick school was there. Go east on 206th Street and you'll come to a small cemetery, called Zimmer Cemetery and that's full of all the Lutherans. Those were kind of the two focal points of this community and it's hard to believe that 130 -140 years ago the 4 miles from here to Cicero was too far in the winter or spring when the roads were bad to get to worship so they worshipped informally in people's homes. They also held services in the wooden one room school that used to sit there. Then in the 1890s there was enough interest to build a satellite congregation. So right across the road on the opposite corner of where the school is located now, there's a little modern house that sets there, the SE corner of the intersection they built a Lutheran Church, called Olive Branch. They shared pastors with Bethel in Cicero. It was kind of a circuit but yet it wasn't. They were independent, shared pastors, but made their own decisions. Had their own church council. That lasted until about the 1930s -- the automobile caused the distance between Cicero and here to become shorter and you got families that began to go back to Cicero. Cicero built a new church building in 1930 and that caused a little dissention. Not much, but a little. Some of these people at Olive Branch supported building that new building so they could in turn go to it -- a modern building with a furnace, indoor restrooms. Others held out and were going to be stubborn and stay at Olive Branch. Well, there weren't enough left to make it go so in '32 it closed. What hadn't moved to Cicero then did or they didn't go at all. Sixty - seven years later when we built this new one, ironically it's just across the road from where one of the sister churches had been 100 years ago. The little one east of Arcadia closed in 1936 and it merged with the parent church in Cicero. So Bethel really had 3 sources: the original Bethel, Mt. Pleasant, up north by Arcadia, and the Olive Branch Church. Over a period of years they ended up getting back together into one church.

DO YOU THINK THE DEPRESSION HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT?

Oh yes, it had a lot to do with it. And also by the 30s you began to get, especially the small rural

churches like those two would have been, sons and daughters that were no longer staying on the farm and they had begun to wander away. What you had left was a core of people who couldn't support the building. The young people wanted the modern buildings. If you get a chance go to Cicero and look at it -- a beautiful building -- hard to leave it. Architecturally it was very close to a Gothic chapel you would have found in Germany. Amazes me that they started that building in 1929, finished it in 1930 right when the crash occurred. Worked hard all through the 30s and had it paid off by the late 30s. That church didn't have a debt until when they built an educational wing on in the 60s. That's what made, for some, the move to this new building really difficult. Not just that they were leaving a building but that they were leaving a building that they had worked hard to pay for. But it's a beautiful church. We tried to build it in a style that would incorporate the old into the new. I was the president of the building committee when we started. We had to move because of size and facilities but we weren't going to have a structure that Lutherans weren't comfortable worshiping in. It's a beautiful new sanctuary -- we moved some of the stained glass windows from the Cicero building, and all the furniture. It's a lot bigger in scale but it's got some of the feeling of the old in it too.

WHAT DID YOU END UP DOING WITH THE OLD BUILDING?

It was sold to a gentleman that has made a series of offices out of it. Architecture is a hobby of his so luckily he's kept it intact. Has not destroyed the integrity of the building. It's been a hard 3 or 4 years -- relocating is always difficult. We lost a few families and gained many more. I think one of the great strengths of this congregation is that the history gave it deep roots. The history has also given it a lot of great tradition and stability. But luckily all the new people that have joined us in the last 5 - 10 years, and most of them in the last 2 - 4 years have brought in a lot of energy, vitality and spirit. It's been a good mix. I think you have to have both -- you can't exist on just tradition.

LET'S TALK A LITTLE ABOUT THE GROWTH NOT JUST IN THE CHURCH BUT WITHIN THE COUNTY.

I ran across a great quote by David McCullough, one of my favorite historians. He's written a lot on Truman and LBJ. . .one of my personal favorites. "Change is neither good nor bad just always with us. The current change in some localities has outdistanced our emotional ability to keep up with it." I think that's what it is in Hamilton County, especially southern Hamilton County. Emotionally you simply can't handle the devastation that change has brought down there. I'm not a native of Fishers but if I were I think I'd be. . .I don't know what. . .I'd be devastated. There is nothing there any more that was Fishers. The whole area has been wiped out and in 6 months there are 600 acres of tract houses. Not even a tree, not even a landmark left that you can visualize. You can't stop it, it's going to happen. We're just not emotionally prepared sometimes for the scale of the change. Not just the practical parts -- the traffic, the congestion. Just seeing things that have always been there and you thought would always be there that are gone. Not even a trace of that farm, that tree. That's why I got concerned a couple of years ago and I wrote to a couple of state legislators -- they didn't deal much with it but they helped somewhat in the protection of cemeteries so they can't be obliterated. Because that's going to happen as the growth moves north -- there's a lot of cemeteries that you can't locate or find in parts of the state. Change is a constant you can't stop.

HOW HAS THE POPULATION EXPLOSION AFFECTED THE SCHOOLS?

Dramatic! My whole career I've spent at Hamilton Heights, 33 years. We have exactly now twice as many at the high school as we did the first year I was there. And we're one of the slower growing school. You think of northern Hamilton County as being the part that hasn't changed all that much -- but we've doubled. It takes longer to do everything. Pep sessions take longer so we don't do as many of them. We only have 60 - 70 staff members with the four grades of the high school and you don't know them all very well. In the past, not only did you know every staff member, you knew their spouse and the kids they had. It was a family. You taught there, you were employed there but they also were your friends and colleagues that you knew well. I remember going to a conference last fall at Carmel, Jim Garrettson is the history chairman there. He and I were walking down the hall and he was showing off the new part of Carmel's high school and he passed a faculty member and I said "I'm curious Jim, do you know that person's name?" And he said no. We have 250 faculty here and I don't know them by name. What a strange place to teach if you didn't even know your fellow colleagues by first name. But that can't be helped -- 250 of them, you wouldn't know them all. Pass them in the hall you wouldn't know if they were in the science department, math department or where they were. Luckily we're not there yet.

The classroom is probably not as much changed except for technology, which has been a great change. But you can still only get so many students in a classroom at one time. There's a lot of change in athletics, girl's athletics and then all the new sports -- tennis, soccer, girl's golf, swimming, all these sports. Thirty years ago you had two sports -- football and basketball or maybe a baseball team in the spring or maybe a track team. The only girl's sports were through clubs or leagues. Luckily that changed. That brought in a vast array of different sports now which is very different. Always some kind of a sport ending or starting a season.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT HOW THE GROWTH HAS AFFECTED THE CHURCH?

I think now it has to be more PR oriented. I sense competition among churches that didn't use to exist. Cicero used to have the Methodist and Baptist and the Lutherans and the Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics and the Christian churches. You knew there were 4, 5, or 6 different brands there in a town of only 1200 people but there was no competition. No one did PR work. In fact you shared and had cooperative Bible Schools sometimes. Now I kind of sense that we're competing for the growth -- you want to get there and get them into your building before the other guy gets there. You call it Evangelism but I wonder sometimes also if it's not -- "if we don't get them they'll get them" mentality. When the scale of development is that massive maybe you have to do it that way. You have to put your program out there, you have to advertise what you're about. You didn't use to have to do that. With a congregation of family members word of mouth spread what you're about and you knew if you were supposed to be a Lutheran or not because your aunt and uncle and grandparents were so you didn't go to the Methodist Church. Your good friend was a Methodist and he goes to that church and that's OK except when he stays all night with you then he goes to your church. There was less competition 40 years ago.

HOW ABOUT THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY?

It's eliminated because you can't find the communities any more. They're not there. New Britton used to be a community, north of Fishers there, totally gone. Olio was a little community, all covered by Hamilton Southeastern High School now. Bethlehem was a little community, it's gone. The big churches and the massive housing developments may have created a different type of community. My son just built a new home east of Noblesville, 191st Street. They have their little cul-de-sac and they do block parties -- a different kind of community. Very isolated. It's very homogeneous -- houses, kids, mailboxes, swing sets are alike. By ordinance they have to be. I miss the variety. Or they try to do retro-development. Reinvent the 18th century in architecture and placement of the buildings. I would think it would be like living in an artificial world. It's kind of a surreal feeling you get in there. Inside those beautiful homes it's still the 21st century. It's not as genuine and I think that's something the churches still try to do is to have a sense of community.

TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT POLITICS.

The one thing that hasn't changed in Hamilton County. In fact it's getting to be more of a one-party county. The difference between the two parties is getting wider and wider. Used to be when I was young it's was about a 3 to 1 advantage for the Republicans, now it's 6, 7 to 1. In certain areas of the county it's probably 20 to 1. I'm a sixth generation Democrat in a county that is the most Republican in the state. We like to think of it as missionary work. I don't see that changing -- a combination of the wealth and the growth in this county make it extremely Republican oriented. There is no industrial base here, no bluecollar worker, the farmers are rapidly disappearing. Farmers were not necessarily Democrat or Republican, they were pretty smart voters as they tend to vote their pocketbook more than most groups do. There are few that would have been die-hard like my Grandpa was Democrat. Religious influence used to cause the county to be like it was for a long time. The whole western half of the county was settled by the Quakers and they tended to be staunch Republicans. Still are. The Lutherans tended to be not very evenly distributed -- they were mainly in the north and northeastern part of the county. German Lutherans and Pennsylvania Dutch Lutherans tended to be Democrat and that's why the segment here in Jackson Township and the northeast corner of Noblesville Township and a little bit of White River Township occasionally elected a Democrat. That was that German Lutheran influence. And the Baptists tended to be Democrats and they were located in Noblesville and you had a strong Baptist congregation in Cicero for a while. There was a little overlap. Larry Hopkins, the Republican County Chairman doesn't have much to worry about in the future.

CATHOLICS ARE MOVING NORTH OUT OF MARION COUNTY -- HAS THAT ANY EFFECT ON THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE HERE?

Politically I don't think it is going to influence anything because they are obviously affluent enough to move into this county which probably puts them in a social class that would tend to make them Republican. I don't know that their religion is going to cause the county any great difference in political makeup. What it might do is create relief for the public schools. If they absorb some of the students in Catholic Schools they are building (they're building a new Catholic High School). I don't think the public schools will view that as competition at all, they

probably view it as a relief, particularly down in Noblesville and Southeastern districts. Maybe take off some of the edge of the rapid growth in some areas. I would think the parochial schools would do very well in this county -- there is a lot of wealth in this county. People should be able to pay the tuition to send their kids there.

THERE ARE A LOT OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS MOVING UP HERE -- CARMEL AREA, RATHER THAN TRYING TO BUILD IN MARION COUNTY.

I don't know whether they follow the money as the saying goes -- if they aren't moving for that reason it's just an added bonus for them because that's certainly where the money is. Still the wealthiest county in the state.

IT'S NOT AS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLICS. WERE THERE CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN THE COMMUNITY?

I don't think I knew a Catholic until I was probably in high school. I knew the Catholic church in Noblesville was a very small building, north end of town. I knew they had a Catholic grade school in Noblesville but those kids came to Noblesville High School. I don't think I was ever exposed to any pro or anti Catholic feeling. I have a Catholic daughter-in-law and when I got into college I became interested in religion, history and western Europe religions. I remember the 1960 election and my mom and dad were strong Kennedy supporters wondering if his religion would keep him from getting elected. I had a very liberal set of parents. I had some uncles who occasionally told off color jokes, but I remember my mother always frowning when that happened and I got body language from her that that wasn't acceptable. But she didn't make a point of it as I was also taught to respect my elders and he was an older man. But I could certainly read from her expression that that wasn't acceptable.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE PEOPLE TO KNOW OR REMEMBER MOST ABOUT HAMILTON COUNTY -- THE WAY IT WAS?

How uncluttered it used to be. How you could just get in a car and drive with your parents on a Sunday afternoon. Some of the beautiful barns and farm buildings -- not beautiful in terms of wealth but in terms of settings. The outbuildings, the farms, the fence rows. Most of our relatives lived on a farm and we would visit them. On the way to their house you would pass all these pretty farms. Probably the way that parts of White River Township still look -- the last best place to see some of that. But you found that in Clay Township. I miss that. The drive, the fields and the beautiful big barns. And I guess I also miss the small country churches which have all but disappeared -- with the old cemetery beside it. The cemeteries may still be there but the churches are all gone.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO ADD TO THE RECORD?

I just hope we don't become too exclusive in the county. I'm fearful because of zoning ordinances and square footage requirements and those kinds of things. I don't think they're used that way now. I'm fearful that we'll be excluding a variety of people from the county. That we're going to have a very homogeneous mix -- to me homogeneous can be bland, dull and I don't know what to

do about that. I don't know how you create diversity in a county that is this wealthy. I notice it in the schools already. There's not the variety that we once had -- social class wise. Maybe religion, too, I don't know. Then the step beyond being too homogeneous, of course, is losing your ability to appreciate things that are different. And the step beyond that becomes intolerance. That's a danger.



Historical Interviews with Geist residents - Part 2

ACCESSION NUMBER: RHP 169

INTERVIEW: VICTOR KNARR

INTERVIEW DATE: 1/9/2001

INTERVIEWER: JULIE ZIMMER

TRANSCRIBER: BARB ABEL

VICTOR KNARR

My grandfather Knarr came to Hamilton County in the late 1800s -- I don't know just when. He came from Germany and he traveled up the Mississippi River to southern Indiana. I think he stopped in Louisiana or someplace down there and worked in a sugar factory till he got enough money to go back and marry his girl friend and brought her over then. They came up the Mississippi and Ohio River and they settled in Jennings County, in southern Indiana and eventually came here. I think because he had a brother that lived in the neighborhood of Pendleton. My father was born in Jennings County and I think maybe he was a year old when they came to Hamilton County. So he grew up in Hamilton County. His parents spoke German -- they never learned English. My father said that when he went to school he didn't know yes from no in English because all they spoke at home was German. And he always had a German brogue to his talk and people liked to talk to him.

WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER A FARMER?

Yes. He settled east of Clarksville, a little town about 6 miles east of Noblesville. After he died my father tried to farm for a year and I was born there. We moved when I was a year old to a little parcel, 2 or 3 acres, north of Noblesville. We lived there until I was 9, then we moved into town and I've lived in the same house for 81 years. I had 1 brother and 2 sisters. I was born June 10, 1909.

TELL ME ABOUT THE WAR AND THE DEPRESSION.

I don't remember too much about the WWI but I know it had ended, I think, just as we moved into town and I remember my father taking my brother and I up to the courthouse square. They had a big bonfire and they were burning the Kaiser. They had a big do celebrating the end of the war.

WHEN YOU LIVED JUST NORTH OF TOWN, EVEN THOUGH IT WASN'T A FARM, DID YOU HAVE A GARDEN, CHICKENS. . .

We had a big garden and had some chickens. One thing my brother and I hated was that father always put out a lot of potatoes and we had to bug the potatoes. We had a bucket or something and we knocked them into the bucket and took them up to the house and mother poured hot water over them. I don't remember whether we had electricity, course I was only 1 year when we moved there. Seemed to me we had gas lights and we had electricity and mother always did her ironing with irons you heated on the stove. That's what she used. When we got electricity father bought her an electric iron and she said that won't work because it's too light. I don't know if we always had gas or not but we had an old cook stove that you cooked with wood and we had a big iron pot that you'd take a lid off the stove and this pot would fit right in that opening. We've still got that pot. They were good to pop corn in.

THERE WERE GAS WELLS UP AROUND THIS AREA. . .THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE HEATING WITH GAS AROUND THAT TIME.

I know we had gas eventually because we had a regulator -- it reduces the pressure and maintains a certain pressure. That was right outside the back door and sometimes I've seen my mother take a tea kettle of hot water and pour on that because the gas pressure wasn't great enough. I can remember her doing that. We had no inside plumbing then, had a pump and we walked to school. It was less than a mile away. It was in the north part of Noblesville, what they called first ward. We had first ward, second ward and third ward. And all three of the school buildings have been torn down. During nice weather we'd walk to school, we'd walk home for lunch and we'd walk home in the evening. Well, mother had to have dinner on the table when we got home as that's all the time we had. If it was real bad weather father would hitch up the horse and buggy and take us. We also had surrey with a fringe on top. Father use to take us to Sunday School in the buggy. In the buggy you had a lap robe. When I was a kid seems like we had bigger and more snow than we have today. I remember seeing the snow drift as high as the fences in our neighborhood.

DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER LIVESTOCK?

We had chickens. Father had to bring the country with him. He built a chicken house. I think he worked at a lumber yard for a while and then he operated a dray -- it's a one horse wagon. Course they didn't have any trucks then, the drays would meet the incoming freight cars and haul the merchant's whatever they had coming in to their store or where ever. He'd move people. When the trucks came in they put him out of business. He never got a truck.

We moved to town and he became a stationary fireman -- fired the boiler at the milling company. We had a big flour mill here in town and he fired the boilers. We had a strawboard plant -- they made brown paper that was used to make corrugated boxes. It was Ball Brothers. That strawboard -- they had stacks of straw. You can't imagine how many stacks of straw they had down there. They'd go out in the country and collect it when it was available and they'd store it in these stacks so they operated year 'round. If the wind was a certain way, we lived on the north side of town, you'd could smell the strawboard. It was an interesting operation. I went through a

sugar factory in Florida at one time and it was very much the same operation up to a certain point. They had big vats that were constantly agitating the straw pulp -- cane pulp. Then they'd take that out and they had a belt that that came out on and the paper would go over rollers and those were heated with steam to dry the water out of the paper. That was a long machine with a lot of little rollers on it and it never stopped. When they got a roll full the fellows there really fought that paper coming out to get it started on a new roll. Never stopped, just kept coming.

SO WHAT KIND OF MEMORIES DO YOU HAVE OF NOBLESVILLE BACK THEN?

It wasn't built up then. We had a vacant field, a farmer had a cow and horse in there and there was a vacant lot back of us. Usually grew up in weeds -- once in a while somebody would put a garden out.

DID YOU KEEP YOUR HORSE IN TOWN THEN?

We got rid of it when we moved to town.

Father always rented a lot someplace nearby and put out a big garden. He liked to grow things.

WHAT KIND OF MEMORIES DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE DEPRESSION?

Well I don't know. My father didn't have a job then. I don't know how we got along. We ate a lot of corn mush, which wasn't too bad. I like fried mush.

DID HE HAVE RELATIVES THAT COULD HELP HIM OUT?

He had some sisters here and one of those used to buy us some groceries and I don't know how she did it. I remember -- I don't know if father had to get a loan when he bought the house or not or if during the Depression he borrowed money against the house. What was the agency in the government that was to help home owners that got behind in their payments and things. . .they got behind in payments and this came along and I remember father and I painted the house one time through this agency. Think they bought the paint. But it wasn't an easy time.

YOU WERE A TEENAGER -- DID YOU GET A JOB?

No you couldn't find a job when I graduated from high school and I didn't have money to go to college. Back in those days you couldn't borrow money to go school like kids can today and it was 1928 when I graduated from high school. The Depression started a year later and I was out of high school years and I went to Purdue one year and I couldn't finance any more so that's all the advanced education I got.

YOU CAME BACK AND HELPED OUT AT HOME?

In 1936, I think it was, I got a job at Diamond Chain in Indianapolis and I worked there until '71 -- 35 years. I loafed for about 4 years then and then I went to work as custodian at my church. I worked there for 14 years. First Christian Church. As I hobby I repaired clocks and did that as a

business after I retired from the church. I still got one at home that I torn down and hoping to get back and finish it.

I've seen electricity come. I've seen the automobile come in. Seen TV and all that. We didn't get a TV until way late. I don't have a computer -- everybody else has a computer.

ALL THESE CHANGES IN YOUR LIFETIME. . .DID YOUR FAMILY GET A CAR?

No we never had a car. Father always had a bicycle. We never had an automobile. We were too poor.

IS THERE A SENSE THAT THE PEOPLE WHO WERE ON FARMS, WOULD THOSE PEOPLE BE CONSIDERED LAND RICH?

I don't recall anything like that. I remember we had the interurban. We used to get on it and go to Indianapolis and we had relatives that lived north of Noblesville about 3 miles and we used to go out there for Sunday dinner. We'd ride the interurban out and they had the "limited" which didn't make any stops except in the main towns. They had "locals" and of course, you had to ride the local out there. I remember when my relatives used to say when we were waiting for the train to come in -- "Stand back" when a limited went by because they went so fast. They had certain stops -- I'm trying to think of the stop where we went. I don't remember. But each stop had a name and of course you knew when the train was coming and you'd stand out there and wave them down. If there wasn't any passengers there they wouldn't stop.

HOW ABOUT THE ROADS. . .

I remember when we lived north of town that was just a dirt road then. While we lived out there they paved it. I remember they put piles of gravel and sand out along the road where they were going to use it. They mixed their cement right there. Today they mix it in a plant and haul it out in trucks.

WHAT ABOUT TELEPHONES. . .

As I recall we always had a telephone in the country. It was a party line and you had to crank something in order to get the operator. You had to get the operator and tell her who you wanted to talk to.

WHEN YOU WERE IN TOWN DID YOU GO TO THE BUTCHER TO GET MEAT?

Yes we went to the butcher. Mother used to make bread. She always made bread when we were young -- they had bakeries in town. I remember mother commenting about people buying sliced bread. Can't slice their own!

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ALL THESE CHANGES?

I think there are greater changes coming. I get literature from financial newsletters telling you

what to invest in. They're talking up the fuel cells now and they say the automobile companies are putting millions and millions of dollars into developing fuel cells for automobiles. It's hydrogen. It's non-polluting. It forms water as a by product and one of these newsletters said that you would have a unit in your home about the size of a refrigerator that would heat your house and provide your electricity. If that develops there will be some big changes. That would put the electric companies out of business. The big problem is how do you get hydrogen. Hydrogen is hard to store because it's very explosive. Thompson Electric has recently announced a new system of projection television and in this article it told about a system that they've got ready to put on the market. A hard disc that you can store 4,000 songs -- can you imagine a disc that you could put all your songs on -- push a button and play whatever.

BESIDES THE TECHNOLOGY. . .THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY PEOPLE HAD -- WAS IT THAT WAY IN TOWN?

I remember when we first moved to town for several years, whenever anybody died they didn't have funeral homes then. The undertaker would prepare the body and put it in a casket and bring it back to the house and people would come in to view the casket. People would sit up with the family all night. I remember my father going in the neighborhood when anybody died and stay with the family all night. They'd hang a wreath on the door.

When we were kids if you had any communicable diseases they came out and put a sign up on your house. I know we had the measles and I think father stayed away from the house for a week or so because of that. My brother and I and a sister, I think, were all in school and we lost so much school that year that we didn't pass and had to take the grade over. If you had measles or scarlet fever they'd come out and tack a sign up on your house.

Then when we moved to town, that was before electric refrigerators, the ice man came around every so often and you had a card that hung out to indicate how much ice you wanted. The ice man would bring in what you'd ordered. We had a square card -- 25 - 50 -- 100 pounds on the corners. You hung that up with the corner up with the number on it of the amount you wanted and they'd bring your ice in. Of course, when the ice truck came around the kids always gathered around wanting a chunk of ice to suck on.

DID THEY HAVE EVENTS DOWNTOWN. . .

They used to have a county fair and it was down on the square. I remember you used to have balloon ascensions on the square. It was a hot air balloon. They'd build a fire and that balloon would fill up with hot air from that fire and some fellow would take off with that balloon and then he had a parachute that he cut loose and would come down. I remember when he would cut loose the balloon would kinda turn over and the black smoke would pour out of it. When he cut loose the hot air would go out of it and it would fall. He came down in a parachute. I suppose they recovered the balloon.

They used to have Chatauquas. Our church had their church service there on Sunday and Sunday School. We used to go to church then on Sunday out there. It was southeast of town. We walked out there and back. People can't walk any more. Even I drive the car for a few blocks sometimes.

I THINK ABOUT PEOPLE TALKING PHILOSOPHY OR POLITICS THERE
[CHATAUQUA]. . .

They had well known people come in and speak. I think William Jennings Bryan was here one summer. I suppose they had musical groups, too. As I recall, they had movies but I don't remember when. But I remember when we lived in town we had movies but we never went. Went to the library I guess. We always had the library. People back in those days made their own entertainment. We had Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues. The catalogues always wound up in the outhouse.

When we moved to town we had indoor plumbing. We had a furnace when we moved to town.

YOU WERE WORKING IN INDIANAPOLIS DURING THE WAR -- DID YOU GET
DEFERRED BECAUSE YOU WERE WORKING IN A FACTORY?

Yes. I was operating a lathe and my boss said I was more valuable operating that lathe than I was in the Army so I didn't have any trouble getting a deferment. I lived where I live now and drove back and forth. It took about an hour each way. But there were a lot of people that lived in Noblesville and worked in Indianapolis.

YOU SAID YOU HAD ONE BROTHER AND TWO SISTERS -- DID THEY ALL STAY
AROUND NOBLESVILLE?

My brother went to Indianapolis and worked for Kresge Company and he moved around all over the country in the Kresge organization. He got married and had a family and I never married. My sisters both lived around here. One of my sisters is here [nursing home] -- she's in the same room with me. I was taking care of her at home and she had had a stroke about 11 or 12 years ago and she more or less recovered from that and she was at home. Then about 2 or 3 years ago she broke her hip and was in a nursing home then after spending some time in the hospital. Eventually I took her out and took her home to take care of her. I saved over \$50,000 the time I had her at home and then I fell in 1999 and she had to go back to the nursing home then. After a few months I recovered enough that I took her home.

DID YOU HAVE ANY MUSIC IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

I remember when we lived out in the country my father bought a phonograph -- an early Victor phonograph with a brass horn on it. Have you seen those? We had one of those and you cranked it up. After we moved to town he was kind of a trader and he traded that off and while we were in the country yet he bought a Reed organ. He was going to give my brother music lessons and he didn't take very much to it and didn't go far. We had that organ up till a few years ago and I gave it to a niece. She had it overhauled.

DO YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER HAVING A RADIO?

We didn't have a radio very early. I remember when radio first came in. Somebody who worked

where my father did lived not too far from us and he had one of the early radios. My father took me over there one night and we listened to it and you didn't hear very much. More static than anything. Radio came in during my life time.

WOULD YOU SAY THE CHURCH WAS THE CENTER FOR THE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.

I would think so. We used to have church service in the evening. Very few churches have that any more. We could walk to church.

WERE THERE OTHER FAMILIES THAT YOU KNEW THAT WERE GERMAN IN TOWN?

We had a neighbor, an old woman and she spoke German. Couldn't speak English and I think her husband spoke German and he spoke a little English. My father used to talk to this woman.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY BLACK FAMILIES IN TOWN AT THAT TIME

Yes. I remember we went to school and there was what you called Federal Hill, west of the river, and those kids came to our school, first ward.

DID YOU HAVE FRUIT TREES IN TOWN OR DID YOU HAVE TO BUY FRUIT?

When we moved to town I think we had 3 enormous cherry trees. In the summer we picked cherries by the bushel and mother sold them -- of course she put up a lot of them. Canned them. When we moved there mother had to have a fruit cellar to store things in. Most of the house was not excavated so dad excavated part of it and built a fruit cellar. He cemented it.

In town we always had city water. I remember in the kitchen the pipes were lead and today they say lead is poisonous. Of course they didn't last long as lead was so soft and didn't take the pressure. I remember we had trouble with them and they was pretty quickly replaced.

I don't remember what year the house was built -- think around 1900. We moved there in 1918 so it wasn't too old when we moved there. It has a nice porch, cement floor porch with a yellow brick work around it. Always enjoyed sitting on the porch. We always had a swing and always had a good breeze blowing. We had 8 - 10 big Maple trees around the house. Of course, they've all disappeared -- I had the last one cut down last spring.

FURNITURE

Still have it. Have an old rocking chair that I imagine belonged to his father as we always called it Grandpa's chair. It was a reed construction back and seat -- woven something and of course that gave out and I took it to the blind school and had it re-caned. It's in good shape now.

When my father started housekeeping he bought furniture someplace. Think he shopped in Fortville and of course we had furniture stores here in town. We had a furniture factory here. In later years it belonged to Sears.

YOU DON'T REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE LUMBER MILL WHERE YOUR DAD WORKED DO YOU?

Bernell and Doolin.

WHAT ABOUT GAMES

Well, I remember we used to play Dominoes on Sunday and my father liked to play. We had a Carom Board -- it was a board that you had shooters you flipped and knocked each other off. It had pockets in the corner -- you flipped the the shooters with your fingers. I think on the backside it had a checker board. I think we've still got that. I think they still make them. My father had a game made and I don't know where he got the idea. It was not square, it was oblong and he had a pocket in each corner with a hole. It was a 3 sided pocket with a hole in each piece and you used marbles to flip them and see if you could put them in those holes. We've still got that. It had felt on the playing surface. Kids use to play marbles outside but I never did.

IS THE HOUSE YOU HAD PRETTY MUCH AS THE SAME AS IT WAS IN 1918?

Our old house was cheaply made -- it wasn't first-class workmanship. For instance, the stairs. Usually when they build a stair they cut slots and insert the steps into slots. Our old stairs they just nailed boards on risers and put the steps on those. Well that's cheap construction. Back in those days when they built a house it was all built with native lumber. They had saw mills around here and they sawed the lumber. The floor joists are what they call a native Beech. You can't hardly drive a nail.

It had a small kitchen, no kitchen cabinets. We have a kitchen cabinet if you know what I mean. We had that in the country. It has a pull out dough board and a flour and sugar bin. My father did build another cabinet in but not like regular kitchen cabinets are. The bedrooms were all upstairs.

Sometime when I was working I put in a stoker in the furnace. It used coal that had been ground up into small pieces and you put that in a hopper and it had an auger that fed it into the furnace. Then during the war, I don't remember why, I took the furnace out and I put in an oil burner. You couldn't get gas then and then when gas was available I took the oil out and put a gas furnace in.

RUGS

I recall that we had one big rug in each living room. We had a front room, we called it, and a living room and had a big rug that was 9 x 12.

GROWING UP WAS THE RIVER PART OF YOUR LIFE?

We used to go down and fish some, my brother and I. Not a whole lot. We never swam. The boys used to go up north of town. There was a swimming hole there. Stoney Creek, south of town, they had a swimming hole. I suppose the kids on the south end of town went down there.

BACK THEN IF YOU CAUGHT A FISH I SUPPOSE YOU COULD EAT IT.

Yes. You didn't know about the fish kill in White River. A time or two I went up to the lake and went fishing. I belonged to the Indianapolis Hiking Club and one year I went with them on a canoe trip up in northern Wisconsin or Minnesota on the Canadian border. I don't know when I joined -- 1939 maybe. They're still going. I don't hike anymore but I still belong. I joined about a year or two after they formed the club. They just went out and hiked and they publish a schedule all the time where they're going to hike. They have somebody that locates these places. We've gone to a lot of interesting places. They'd take overnight trips. Over weekends. We went to Kentucky several times. (Natural Bridge) We went one time when there wasn't many trees around and we went back later and some of the bridges were almost obscured by trees.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THE TIME OF THE CCC DOING A LOT OF WORK WITH BRIDGES AND SOME OF OUR PARKS TODAY STILL HAVE CCC ACTIVITY.

Back in the Depression I remember they had WPA and I think my father worked on that some. I remember we had a brick sidewalk in front of the house and the WPA came in and took out all the bricks and re-laid them so it was level. Two or 3 years ago they cemented all the old sidewalks unless you wanted the brick. Cement is easier to sweep the snow off.

WERE THERE ANY OTHER CLUBS THAT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW ABOUT?

I don't know of any. I'm sure there were. One time some of the members knew places and because they knew they knew somebody there that could get us in -- I remember one time we hiked around the airport and we got to go into the control tower and hear them bring in planes.

YOU MENTIONED THE COUNTY FAIR.

I remember they had a fairground that was just across the street from the school. I remember when you used to go to school and look out the window and daydream about the fair that was going on over there. I was only in the first or second grade. I'm sure we went, but I don't remember. I remember one time at the fairground -- it seemed to me it was some sort of temporary building they put up for Billy Sunday [well-known evangelist]. They put up that tent or building special for that meeting. That was at that fairground across from the school. That's all houses in there now. Now the fairground is out east of town.

WHAT WOULD YOU WANT PEOPLE TO REMEMBER OR KNOW MOST ABOUT LIFE IN HAMILTON COUNTY . . .

I'd say life was slower then. Everybody is so busy today. Going in a hurry. Back in those days, when I was a kid, of course they didn't have automobiles, so when anybody died you had a horse drawn hearse that took the casket to the cemetery. I've heard my mother say that when they started getting the motor driven hearses, "Just can't wait to get them to the cemetery quick enough."



Construction of Geist Reservoir









Some views during the construction period from 1941 to 1943



Helms mill bridge (reservoir inlet) from upstream.



Roberts' Mill Bridge 1/2 mile above dam



The covered bridge is dismantled



Rip-rap blocks for dam and approaches to bridges



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