

Footprints

A publication of the Howard County Historical Society
Volume 13, Issue 4 Winter 2024



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**Mary G. Ring, two years old, with
J. C. and Mrs. Blacklidge.**

**Jennie C. Steele, six years old,
with H. H. and Mrs. Stewart.**

Arthur Steele, (brother) four years

A Home for the Homeless
When the Orphan Train Came to Kokomo

Footprints

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From the President

Greetings!

I hope this letter finds you well as we embark upon this fourth and final quarter of 2024. As most of you know, the final quarter of the year brings about some of the busiest times and most frenetic activity around the Howard County Historical Society.

Before reminding you all about the upcoming "Christmas at the Seiberling" annual event, I want to share my gratitude and joy about the HCHS Cemetery Walk in October. If you were able to attend, then you can also attest to what an awesome event this was. This was a great evening where we had an opportunity to learn about many of the early residents and leaders of Kokomo and Howard County. Personally, as a self-confessed history nerd – particularly around the Civil War – I found it fascinating how many Howard County residents served in the 89th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment and then came home at war's end to establish very successful business careers. That is so interesting. If you missed this year's event, then put it on your mental calendar to join us in early October of 2025 for the next opportunity. Many thanks to Anne Shaw and her team of both staff and volunteers that made the shows possible!

Of course, our next (and biggest!) program of the year kicks off at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 30. I'm talking about, of course, "Christmas at the Seiberling." Tickets can be purchased online or at the door. You can find all the event info at: howardcountymuseum.org/programs/christmas-at-the-seiberling. Come out and join us!

Our local historical society plays such a vital role in connecting us to the rich vista of our past, reminding us of where we have been and inspiring us as we chart the course for our future. We are so appreciative of all of you, our members, volunteers and residents of Howard County for your commitment to our organization and to keeping the important history of this county alive for future generations.

Thank you for reading! I continue to look forward to walking through this year in history with you. Please feel free to contact the HCHS with any questions, or, if you are able and willing, to step up to volunteer in any capacity in 2024! Peace.

Respectfully,
Dave Dubois
HCHS Board President

From the Executive Director

Fully Staffed

For the first time since June, we have a full staff at HCHS! This has been a year of many transitions, some planned and some not. We are all very excited to move forward and continue making our organization the best that it can be!

For the first time in 17 years, HCHS resurrected the Cemetery Walk. On Oct. 4 and 5, we had well over 200 guests walk through Crown Point Cemetery, enjoying history and stories at nine locations. I'd like to tip a huge hat to our actors, directors, guides, sponsors, and volunteers for such a successful event. I think we're all excited about how we can make it even better for 2025.

Speaking of events, we're in the thick of getting ready for Christmas at the Seiberling. This year's theme is "Holiday Memories" and our decorators are chomping at the bit to start working on their rooms! We can't wait for the magic to happen and share it with all of you! Speaking of magic, the exterior of the mansion and Elliott House will be decorated by In-Line Lawn and Lights this year. We greatly appreciate them helping us out!

I attended the annual Preserving Historic Places conference a few weeks ago in Madison, Indiana. If you've never been to Madison, you are missing out! The small but mighty city has one of the country's largest National Historic Landmark Districts. The conference, put on by Indiana Landmarks and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology covers a very wide range of preservation topics. This year, I focused my energies on accessibility, rehabilitation, repair projects, and updates on preservation law. All of these are concerns for us every day here on our campus. We are constantly working to upkeep the buildings, to provide as much access as possible to our visitors, and to use best preservation practices while doing so. It is not an exaggeration to say every day brings a new adventure in maintaining our beautiful buildings and campus.

To that end, our second annual campaign letter will be going out soon. We humbly ask for your donations to help with our ongoing repairs and rehabilitations. Our needs include historic window repair, tuckpointing chimneys, the ever-present HVAC issues, plaster repair, weather-proofing, and general maintenance and upkeep. We are so grateful for our generous membership!

Put Nov. 30 at 6 p.m. on your calendars for opening night of Christmas at the Seiberling! We hope to see you there!

Sincerely,
Anne Shaw
HCHS Executive Director

After 17 years, Cemetery Walk returns for a trip to the past

Seventeen years had passed since the Howard County Historical Society last offered its cemetery walk.

An enthusiastic response met the reboot, two days in early October of walking back into the county's past at Kokomo's Crown Point Cemetery.

"It exceeded my expectations," said Alyssa Witter-Pier, HCHS curator. "We sold more than 200 tickets over the 11 available tour times and were able to accommodate some extra walk-ups – a wonderful turnout!"

Alyssa said audience reviews of the event were "super positive," with helpful suggestions in terms of planning next year's event.

Led by HCHS volunteer guides, the "visitors" were escorted to the gravesites of nine notable "residents" of Crown Point where 13 volunteer re-enactors shared their stories. Many of the actors were drawn from the casts of the "From Dark Pages" events presented by HCHS over the last few years.

Scripts for each of the presentations were researched and written by the team that organized the previous cemetery walks. The event offered a chance for the historical society to share local history lessons in a very visual setting – and the gorgeous fall weather "was to die for."

Aubrey Brock and Heather Voltz, veterans of "From Dark Pages" and other local theater productions, served as directors and two members of the cast, Marcia Nelson (as Leone Grace Defenbaugh Hansell) and Lois Martin (as the grieving Miriam Huff), had taken roles in previous cemetery walks.

Other actors included Sarah Kinsey (as Kokomo Tribune editor T.C. Philips), Jim Hollo-

way (as Crown Point sexton Mark McTigue), Scott Blackwell (as lawyer Otis Pollard), Doug Arnold (as Wilbur Defenbaugh), Amy Henderson and Lexi McDonough (as Mary Jane Prime and her daughter Arabelle), Jessica Calderon (as Nancy Snider Williams), Mady McDonough and Mia Halley (as Katie Hauser and Jane Enderberry), and Sara N. Holloway and Kathryn Quirk Bobbs (as Elmer and Catherine Apperson).

Led by HCHS volunteer guides, the "visitors" were escorted to the gravesites of nine notable "residents" of Crown Point where 13 volunteer re-enactors shared their stories.

Volunteers who served as guides included Brett Ellison, Linda Ferries, Gale Hendricks, Elizabeth Kirchner, Morgan McDonough, Jerry Nelson, Marsha Santen and Alyssa Witter-Pier.

Anne Shaw, executive director of the Howard County Historical Society, extended thanks to the staff of the Kokomo Parks & Recreation Department and Crown Point Cemetery who made sure the cemetery's lawn was mowed and everything was cleaned up in time for the event.

Thanks also went out to the sponsors, including the Kokomo Lantern, Moore's Home Health & Medical Support, Caldwell Monument Company, and Top Banana Farm Market.

As Alyssa concluded, "Everyone who participated and volunteered really helped to set the bar high for next year!"



Volunteer re-enactors shared remembrances of nine Howard County residents who now lie in Crown Point Cemetery.

The Guinness World Record Gravedigger

As participants were reminded at the 2024 Howard County Historical Society Cemetery Walk, an Irish immigrant named Mark McTigue served for 40 years as the first sexton and chief grave digger at Crown Point Cemetery in Kokomo. During those 40 years, he is said to have dug more than 4,500 graves.

While that seems like quite a record, it pales in comparison to the world record of Allen McCloskey of Galveston, Indiana – who, after 70 years, is still on the job!

Hearing about a portrayal of Crown Point's long-time "digger," Allen McCloskey made sure he got to come to the cemetery walk and "meet" his Kokomo counterpart. Meet they did, an extraordinary event where the very real Mr. McCloskey could share his record with the reenacted "Mr. McTigue."

While Mr. McTigue logged 40 years of caring for the dead and those they left behind, with more than 70 years and counting in his lifetime, Mr. McCloskey holds the official Guinness World Record as the "longest career as a grave digger."

As Josh Flynn reported in the April 19, 2023, Logansport Pharos-Tribune, when the honor was bestowed in 2023, at age 89, Mr. McCloskey's official record stood at 70 years, seven months and 20 days, having dug his first grave on Aug. 28, 1952, at the Young America Center United Methodist Church. He's credited with digging more than 5,600 graves during his career – so far.

According to Vicki Newman, lead digital editor



Allen McCloskey and "Mark McTigue" (Jim Holloway).

for www.guinnessworldrecords.com, the previous record was held by Johann Heinrich Karl Thieme of Aldenburg, Germany, who was credited with digging 23,311 graves during a 50-year career that ended in 1826.



Mary Geary Ring about the time she was adopted when the “Orphan Train” came to Kokomo, Indiana.

A Home for the Homeless

By Ginny Hingst, HCHS Publication Committee Member

Mary (Blacklidge) Wagner at age 90 was bedridden with a broken hip and had suffered a series of strokes when she asked a strange question: “Why didn’t my mother love me?”

Daughter Martha McKay knew her mother had led a charmed life, growing up in Kokomo, Indiana, the only child of wealthy and prominent lawyer and business man James Courtland Blacklidge and wife Addie. Martha understandably chalked the comment up to delirium.

But then came the phone call. The caller was seeking information on a relative who had traveled West on an “Orphan Train” and claimed Mary was also on the train. The caller was put in touch with Martha, who was in disbelief until the caller mentioned she had documentation. By then, Mary had been moved to Hoosier Village in Ft. Wayne to be near Martha, making it easy for her to ask her mother in person: “Were you adopted?” She replied, “I’m glad you know.”

When Mary died on Jan. 21, 1981, Martha’s search for her mother’s biological family began in earnest. The caller had supplied the key words “Orphan Train” and “Home for Little Wanderers,” which sent Martha to Boston and eventually to Walpole, Massachusetts.



Mary Wagner was recognized in the *Indianapolis Star* in 1944 as a school board member awarding diplomas for seniors called to duty in World War II. Mary was James Courtland ("JC") and Addie (Jemison) Blacklidge's only child.

A retired high school history teacher, Martha gathered the facts by visiting cemeteries, libraries and courthouses. It helped that in 1980, adoption records began opening up all across the country.

Here is what Martha discovered:

Mary (Blacklidge) Wagner's roots trace back to the Geary family of County Cork, Ireland. Her grandparents (Martha's great-grandparents) Thomas Francis and Catherine Geary emigrated to America in 1849, settling in Walpole, Massachusetts. There they gave birth to eight children, with Mary's mother (Mary Frances) being the oldest, born on March 2, 1857. She went to work young, most likely as a servant girl and had a son out of wedlock, William Geary, who would be raised by Mary Francis' mother. Mary (Ring Geary and later Blacklidge) was born on November 22, 1887,

with some question as to who her father was. (However, according to family historians Kent and Marcia Blacklidge of Kokomo, the Orphan Train Complex in Concordia, Kansas, lists Mary's father as Michael Ring).

When Mary was 2, mother and daughter moved to Boston where Mary Francis found work as a servant and also met and married George E. Hunt, who worked as a gardener. When Mary Frances became pregnant with his child, she gathered up little Mary and took her to the Baldwin Place Home for Little Wanderers in Boston. Family members speculate that George was not interested in raising a child that was not his own.

Two weeks later, Mary and 23 other children were on an Orphan Train headed for Kokomo, Indiana. Back in Massachusetts, the Hunts would have five children of their own, and Mary



The old Blacklidge home on West Mulberry Street today is the site of the First Congregational Church. Mary's daughter Martha McKay, at right in photo, found and met her "half-cousin" Louise Geary Hinchey, daughter of Mary's half-brother.

Frances would die of pulmonary disease in 1903 at age 45.

Martha also discovered the details about William Francis Geary, the half-brother of Mary. William was raised by his grandmother, left school at age 12 and went to work as a machine tender at the Bird and Sons Paper Mill. He eventually worked his way up to plant superintendent.

William, also known as "Tap," played semi-pro baseball from 1900 to 1913 and was a long-time manager of the paper mill baseball team. He married, had three daughters and died in 1957. Martha was able to track down and befriend one of William's daughters, Louise Nora (Geary) Hinchey. When the two met in Walpole, Massachusetts, they marveled at the family resemblance they shared. Their friendship blossomed over the years as they

began meeting in Naples, Florida.

When Martha McKay died in 2019, niece Mary Elizabeth ("Liz") McFadzean inherited the research. Liz is the daughter of James Courtland Wagner (Mary and husband Eldo Wagner's firstborn) and wife Lola. A writer herself, Liz determined to find the story behind the facts of her grandmother's Orphan Train ride, prompting her to travel from her home in La Canada, California, to the Howard County Historical Society to see what she might find out. There she met with Randy Smith, assistant curator.

Randy began searching through newspaper archives using words such as "orphan" or "Blacklidge." The searches were coming up empty and Liz was thinking her trip was in vain when Randy said, "I don't give up too easily."

Then Liz recalled the phrase "Home for

Little Wanderers,” and, bingo, up popped five accounts in the *Kokomo Daily Gazette Tribune* beginning with the Orphan Train’s arrival on Saturday, Oct. 12, 1889. “When I looked over, Liz was crying happy tears,” recalled Randy. “Her story is in my top two of helping people get the answers they are looking for.”

The writeup on Oct. 14 chronicled the activities of the 24 children after their arrival in Kokomo. On Sunday, Orphan Train officials, Rev. Cooper and Cummings who accompanied the little ones, preached at four different churches with the children, in the reporter’s words, supplying “the music in their sweetly charming way.”

On Monday at 9 a.m. at the Methodist Church, the process of families selecting the children began. Mary, the youngest at 2 years old, likely was selected first as the reporter lists her name at the top. That J.C. and Addie Blacklidge were given the first choice is plausible as they were sponsors of the project.

The reporter offered this description of the children’s reactions to being selected: “Their eyes silvered with tears as they separated to enter the attachments of their new homes, and hundreds looked sympathizingly on, deeply touched by the affecting scene.” Yet the reporter mentions that eight children were not chosen.

On Oct. 15, the news story appeared that two boys aged 9 and 13, who had been placed in Peru, were returned and again needed homes. The number of children needing homes was reported as six. On Oct. 16, the writer issued a plea for those not selected: “Young as they are, these little wanderers feel the humiliation, though it is no fault of their own.” On Oct. 18, a long article appeared advising the parents as to how to raise their new charges.

“I wept when I saw these accounts of what happened to them each day,” Liz recalled.

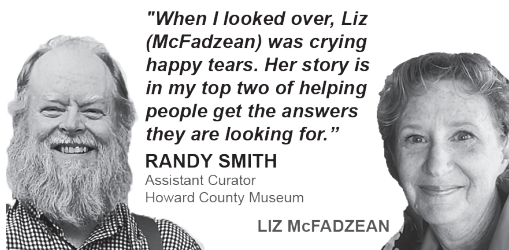
Mary’s immediate family knew the story starting at this point, which Liz compiled in “Two Family Trees,” a two-set photo book based on Aunt Martha’s research.

Mary Ring (Blacklidge) Wagner grew up in Kokomo, Indiana, the only child of James Courtland Blacklidge and his wife, Addie. Not only was Mary adored, she had every advantage as her father, “J.C.,” was a prominent lawyer. The family lived in a grand home at what was then 101 W. Mulberry St., the site today of the First Congregational Church, (in “modern” numbering, 505 W. Mulberry St). Mary attended school in Kokomo and sang in the First Congregational Church choir. When it was discovered that she was a musical talent, Mary studied voice for a year at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She later attended Rockford College in Illinois.

In 1912, the family of three embarked on an adventure, unusual at the time, of traveling the world. The six-month tour took them to Java, China, Egypt, India, Italy and France. According to family research, Mary sang the Rosary at the Taj Mahal and was even lobbied

to pursue a career on stage by a Broadway producer on board ship.

Mary declined because, prior to their trip, she had met and become engaged to Eldo Wagner, “a handsome young man” recently graduated from Wabash College who had come to Kokomo to work in residential real estate development. The two married in 1913 and had three children (Jim, born Jan. 22, 1918; William B., born May 23, 1924; and



Martha, born Dec. 2, 1928). The family made their home in Indianapolis, where Mary was active in church and volunteer groups and where she and Eldo enjoyed a “rich circle of friends.”

Mary’s mother Addie died in 1914, and when J.C. suffered a stroke in 1920, Mary moved back to Kokomo to care for him. He died in 1921. “When her parents died, her association with Kokomo was gone,” Liz said.

Although the Depression was hard on the Wagners, they not only survived but eventually thrived. Mary and Eldo’s sons returned safely from service in World War II. Eldo died on May 27, 1947, but Mary lived to see each of their three children marry and took great joy in her seven grandchildren until her death in 1981.

Along the way, there were clues that Mary had been adopted. In an article dated June 1912 (reprinted in the *Kokomo Perspective* on July 6, 1994), reporter Annmarie Campbell wrote about the Blacklidge family’s return from their world tour. In the last paragraph, she mentioned that Mary had been “rescued from the throes of homelessness when she arrived in Kokomo as a two-year-old waif.” Liz’s mother Lola recalled that one of Mary’s friends once fumed “Mary thinks she is so high and mighty, but she is just adopted.”

Nonetheless, Mary’s adoption was news to her children and grandchildren until shortly before her death in 1981, begging the question why the secrecy. Likely over the years Mary caught wind of the stigma reflected in her mother’s friend’s comment. A similar sentiment is expressed in Blacklidge family letters. According to Liz, being adopted was a taboo subject: “You just didn’t bring that up,” she noted.

There were more clues. Mary poured herself into service on the board of the Suemmo Cole-

man Home, originally known as the Florence Crittenden Home for Unwed Mothers, in Indianapolis. Liz notes that in 37 years of service, Mary represented the home in court for every single adoption case during that time. Also, Mary served as president of the PTA at her children’s schools, an experience that led to her successfully running for the Indianapolis School Board in 1943.

In 1947, Mary spoke and handed out diplomas at every high school graduation ceremony in Indianapolis with one exception, that being daughter Martha’s graduation from Shortridge High School. As Eldo had recently died, Mary was not confident she could keep her composure in front of Martha’s friends.

The first time Mary issued diplomas was January 1944, which earned her a writeup in the *Indianapolis Star* (Jan. 23, 1944). The graduation ceremony was early that year due to the many graduates who would leave for service in World War II. The *Star* writer Lotys Benning Stewart dialed in on Mary’s passion for quality schools and teachers. The key, Mary stated, was parental involvement. “I am frequently asked to make talks at PTA meetings, and this is always my topic, for no matter what the schools do, the parents have to do their part too.”

In retrospect, the family sees Mary’s service as a “telling indication of the impact of her own birth history.” Liz describes the revelation of her grandmother’s adoption this way: “The clouds parted, and we realized where my grandmother’s passion came from.”

As Liz dug into the topic of the 80-year history of Orphan Trains, she quickly discovered that not all of the riders had positive experiences but noted her grandmother Mary’s story is a beautiful one. Of her great grandmother Mary Frances who relinquished her daughter to the orphanage, Liz commented, “What a gift she gave to my grandmother. I see it as divine intervention.”

About the Orphan Train



Attend the churches to-morrow
and hear the little wanderers sing.

That there were such things as orphan trains in America was news to Mary (Blacklidge) Wagner's family.

It was to many others as well. Historian and author Christina Baker Kline calls this chapter of American history "strange and little known." Nonetheless, from 1849 to 1929, the trains did run, transporting approximately 250,000 homeless children from the East Coast to the Midwest.

Kline wrote a historical novel, *Orphan Train*, based on her research, which includes written testimonials of the riders gathered at the New York Public Library, in addition to verbal testimonies at rider reunions in New York and Minnesota.

"In talking to them and reading their oral histories, I found that they tended not to dwell on the considerable hardships they'd faced," writes Kline. "Instead, they focused on how grateful they were for their children and grandchildren and communities – for lives that wouldn't have been possible if they hadn't been on those trains."

There were numerous reasons for the glut of homeless children at the time, one strong possibility being the Irish Potato Famine (1845-1852). The founder of the Orphan Train, a Methodist minister named Charles Loring Brace, recognized the lack of welfare options and reasoned that the

abandoned and orphaned children would benefit from midwestern Christian family values and, at the same time, help the plight of poverty-stricken farmers.

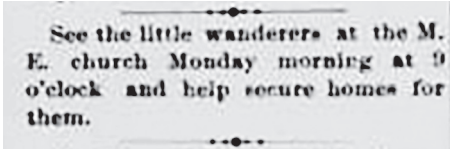
Kline points out that at the time, there was no welfare, no child labor laws and no foster care. The plan was conceived in all good intention, but many of the riders were taken in by ruthless people intent on acquiring free labor.

According to Kline, the riders' experiences came to light as their children and grandchildren, an estimated 2 million, began asking questions. In all, Mary Blacklidge Wagner has 33 living descendants -- six grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and 17 great-great-grandchildren – spread out over seven states. Family historians Martha McKay and Liz McFadzean have always shared their research and stories for the benefit of all of them. "It is their legacy as well," Liz noted.

More about Orphan Trains:

Orphan Train: a Novel by Christina Baker Kline, published in 2013 by HarperCollins

National Orphan Train Complex (Concordia, Kansas), (orphantraindepot.org)



See the little wanderers at the M.
E. church Monday morning at 9
o'clock and help secure homes for
them.

News selections from the *Kokomo Daily Gazette Tribune*, Oct. 12, 1889.

Blacklidge Contributions to Kokomo; Mary's Family

The Blacklidge family has been instrumental in the growth of Kokomo, and evidence of their influence remains today. James Courtland and William E. were brothers, the sons of Richard Manwaring Blacklidge and Lucinda Hays.

James came to Kokomo in August 1875, the year he graduated from Indiana University law school. His younger brother William had passed the bar exam in 1867, and the two formed Blacklidge & Blacklidge, the largest law firm in Kokomo at the time of William's retirement in 1890.

According to Kent Blacklidge, former publisher of the *Kokomo Tribune* and William E.'s great-grandson, William donated the land upon which the current downtown library is located. His name can be seen on a bronze plaque just inside the library. William also was one of three businessmen who purchased in 1891 what remains Kokomo Opalescent Glass. In all, four generations of Blacklidges were involved in the leadership of KOG – William, son Kent H. II, grandson Richard and great-grandson Kent II. The latter served on the board from 1975 to 2009.

According to the descendants of James Courtland, he was influential in many business interests including the Frances Hotel and the Courtland Hotel. He was the first member of the City Council to advocate the installation of a water works system. Upon his death, the Kokomo paper stated: "There was perhaps no more widely acquainted man in Howard County than J.C. Blacklidge."

The Blacklidge family connected to another important family when William's son Kent H. Blacklidge married Bernice Kautz, one of four daughters of John Arthur Kautz, on Jan. 7, 1909. John Kautz was the owner of the *Kokomo Tribune* until his death in 1938. In 1919, Kautz built the Tribune building at the corner of Mulberry and Union Streets, now transformed into apartments.

He also gifted the land that would be Kautz Field, which for decades served as the Kokomo High School football field. Kautz's grandson Richard Blacklidge joined the Tribune management in 1936, becoming general manager in 1938 and the publisher in 1956. The former *Kokomo Tribune* owner retired in 1978 after more than 40 years in the publication of Kokomo's longest running daily newspaper. He died in 1993. Richard's son Kent, who joined the newspaper staff in 1961 and later served as its publisher until its sale in 1982, has carried on the family tradition of community service.

He and his wife Marcia contributed vital information regarding Mary Blacklidge and her history.

Mary (Ring Blacklidge) Wagner's Descendants:

(Based on the text. Just a portion of the Blacklidge family genealogy.)

James Courtland (JC) Blacklidge ... married Addie (Jemison) Blacklidge.

[Mary's parents]

Their daughter Mary married Eldo Wagner. Mary and Eldo had three children:

Son James Courtland (had daughter Liz, married to Dave McFadzean*).

Son William B.

And daughter Martha Mckay.

Among Mary Wagner's three children (all deceased) she had seven grandchildren (six are living, including Liz); 10 great grandchildren (all living); and 17 great-great-grandchildren (all living).

William E. Blacklidge ... married Amanda Jane (Hackleman) Blacklidge. **[Mary's uncle and aunt]**

Their son Kent H. married Bernice (Kautz) Blacklidge (daughter of John Arthur Kautz) ... *their son* Richard H married Marian E. (Reinertsen) Blacklidge ... *and their son* Kent H. II married Marcia (Fountain) Blacklidge.

*** Family Fun Fact**

Liz's husband Dave McFadzean is one of three creators of the television show Home Improvement (1991). According to imdb.com, he is also known for Bernie (2011) and Where the Heart Is (2000).



Kokomo In Song

By Matthew Behnke

HCHS Publications Committee Member

After moving to Kokomo in 2021, I knew of only a few songs about my new town, but I soon began encountering numerous titles, sometimes by accident, others through deliberate research.

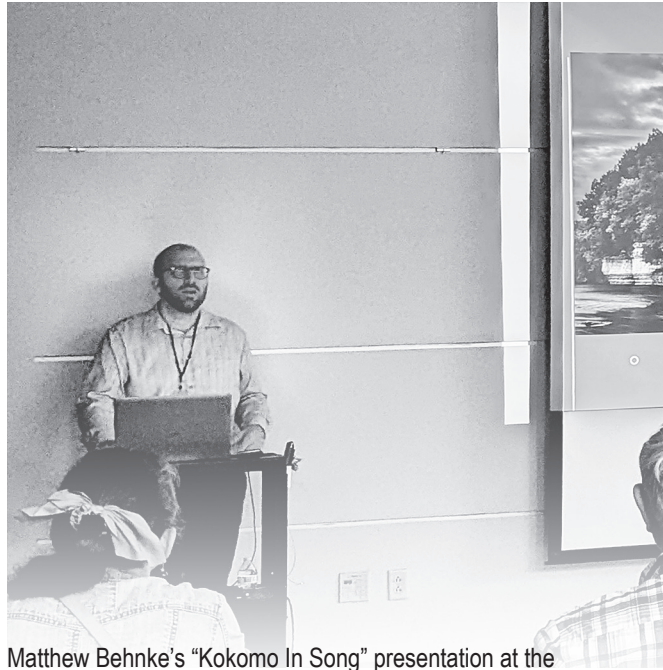
Eventually, the numbers increased, and themes became apparent, prompting me to put together a presentation. On Aug. 17, 2024, I presented “Kokomo in Song” at the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library, a culmination of nearly four years of research.

The research came about organically. I paid close attention as I sifted through Google and Youtube search results. As I found more and more songs, I also found literally every genre of music represented over the last 100 years. My official list stopped at 45 songs, but unofficially, I had many more. As I worked, I formatted the results into chronological citations.

My official list stopped at 45 songs, but unofficially, I had many more.



Eventually, I would even begin making guesses at titles. I keyed in Kokomo girl and



Matthew Behnke’s “Kokomo In Song” presentation at the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library on Aug. 17, 2024, was the culmination of nearly four years of research. The program was well-received with lively conversation.

got Roy Brown’s 1954 R&B hit “Gal from Kokomo.” I keyed in Kokomo kid. It sounded cool, but I was also aware of the Globe Stove Company’s lifeboat of the same name. Sure enough, the results brought up “Kokomo Kid,” a 2016 blues song by Guy Davis.

Next, I spent time analyzing song lyrics, to find thematic common ground. The most obvious is longing to be in a place called Kokomo. In some cases, Kokomo, Indiana, is this specific place (See “Kokomo, Indiana” from the 1947 movie “Mother Wore Tights” with Betty Grable and Dan Dailey), but more often than not, it is a mythicized, idealized Kokomo.

The name sounds exotic, making it appealing for use in songs. The most obvi-



WHY KOKOMO?

Alliteration and Assonance

2 K's and 3 O's

Rhyming novelty

Exotic quality

Timbuktu, Shanghai, The North Pole
Crossroads of America – flyover state

Songs about travel

Indiana as home

Irony



ous usage is the 1988 Beach Boys hit about an idealized island paradise called Kokomo that does not actually exist.

The name sounds exotic, making it appealing for use in songs.



Then, there is the simple fact that Kokomo is a name or, better yet, a word that sounds great in a song, with built-in rhyme with three consecutive O's and alliteration with two K's. The three O's are used in a number of songs to rhyme with Joe, Floe, etc. It has even been reduced to verbal filler, with essentially no

meaning, evinced in the famed 1954 novelty song, "Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)".

*Talk to me baby, whisper in my ear
Talk to me baby, whisper in my ear
A come a little closer, don't you have no fear!
Don't you know? ~ I love you so!
Don't you know? ~ I love you so!
When I holler "hey! ko-ko-mo!"*

Not exactly Shakespeare, but that's okay. It's a fun song that does not need to be deep. Clearly, Kokomo, Indiana, or other such places are not referenced here. But Kokomo is a linguistically versatile word that can be twisted into a verb, common noun, or adverb.

Mississippi Fred McDowell, a famed 1960s folk revival bluesman, put a suggestive spin on the classic "Kokomo Blues," turning the name into a verb, by adding the line, "Kokomo me, baby, Kokomo me right."

Chuck Berry brought our esteemed town name down even further in his 1964 hit, "No Particular Place to Go," using the song as a common noun, so common that it really means the middle of nowhere or the boonies.

In more recent usages, Kokomo has continued its fluid lexicographical interpretation. Two new-ish indie rock bands, Royal Otis with "Going Kokomo" and Blue Ranger with "Kokomo, Please", manage to whittle our city into an adverb. Apparently, "Going Kokomo" means to be carefree, young and adventurous. Thanks, we'll take their word for it.

Kokomo has an enduring legacy in the history of popular music. If recent events are any indicator, it will be fun to see what the future holds for Kokomo in song, for a town name, or word, or name that, it would seem, is a fruit ripe for the picking.



“Kokomo In Song” Bibliography

Compiled by Matthew Behnke, 2024

1922 MARION HARRIS

Harris, Marion. “Fickle Flo From Kokomo,” Columbia, 1922.

1927 EVA TAYLOR

Taylor, Eva. “Red Hot Flo From Kokomo,” Columbia, 1927.

1927 MADLYN DAVIS AND HER HOT SHOTS

Madlyn Davis and Her Hot Shots. “Kokola Blues.” Winter Blues, Paramount Records, 1927.

1928 SCRAPPER BLACKWELL

Blackwell, Scrapper. “Kokomo Blues,” The Virtuoso Guitar of Scrapper Blackwell, Yazoo, 1928.

1934 KOKOMO ARNOLD

Arnold, Kokomo. “Old Original Kokomo Blues.” Milk Cow Blues, Decca, 1934.

1934 MCCOY BROTHERS

McCoy Brothers. “Baltimore Blues,” 1934.

1935 HOOSIER HOT SHOTS

Hoosier Hot Shots. “Whistlin’ Joe From Kokomo,” Whistlin Joe From Kokomo/Four Thousand Years, Conqueror, 1935.

1936 ROBERT JOHNSON

Johnson, Robert. “Sweet Home Chicago.” Vocalion, 1936.

1947 VAUGHN MONROE

Monroe, Vaughn. “Kokomo, Indiana,” RCA Victor, 1947.

1954 ROY BROWN

Brown, Roy. “Gal From Kokomo,” King, 1954.

1954 GENE & EUNICE

Gene & Eunice. “Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So),” Go On Kokomo, Combo and Alladin, 1954.

1961 DANNY BOY AND HIS BLUE GUITAR

Danny Boy and his Blue Guitar, “Kokomo Me Baby” Great Bluesy Dancer, Tifco, 1961

1961 JIMMY WISNER AKA KOKOMO

Kokomo. “Asia Minor,” Asia Minor, Future Records, Feisted Records, 1961.

1964 CHUCK BERRY

Berry, Chuck. “No Particular Place to Go,” Saint Louis to Liverpool, Chess Records, 1964.

1964 MISSISSIPPI FRED MCDOWELL

McDowell, Mississippi Fred. “Kokomo Blues,” Mississippi Delta Blues, Arhoolie Records, 1964.

1968 MAGIC SAM

Magic Sam. “Sweet Home Chicago.” West Side Soul, Delmark, 1968.

1972 ARETHA FRANKLIN

Franklin, Aretha. “First Snow in Kokomo,” Young, Gifted, and Black, Atlantic Recording Company, 1972.

1975 KOKOMO

Kokomo. “I Can Understand It,” Kokomo, 1975

1976 BONNIE RAITT

Raitt, Bonnie. “Kokomo Blues,” The Old Grey Whistle Test Show, 1976.

1979 LITTLE FEAT

Little Feat. “Kokomo,” Down on the Farm, Warner Records Inc., 1979.

1981 MISS BLITZ

Miss Blitz. “Kokomo Joe,” Dancing Shoes, A&R, 1981

1984 GILBERT & TRAVIS

Gilbert & Travis. “The Old Kokomo Road,” The Blood of a Gambler, Ridgetop Records, 1984.



1986 JOHN PRINE

Prine, John. "Kokomo," Let's Talk Dirty In Hawaiian/Kokomo, Oh Boy Records, 1987.

1987 BEACH BOYS

Beach Boys. "Kokomo," Still Crusin' and Cocktail. Elektra Records. 1988.

1993 GRATEFUL DEAD

Grateful Dead "So Many Roads," 1993.

1998 MIKE MILLIGAN AND STEAM SHOVEL

Mike Milligan and Steam Shovel. "Home to Kokomo," All My Life, Mojo Hut Records, 1998.

1999 TOM WAITS

Waits, Tom. "Lowside of the Road," Mule Variations, ANTI, 1999.

2006 ERIC BROWN

Brown, Eric. "Kokomo," Here, Mack Avenue Records, 2006.

2006 GREG BROWN

Brown, Greg. "Kokomo," The Evening Call, Red House Records, 2006.

2006 MIKE LOVE

Love, Mike. "Santa's Going to Kokomo," More Hope For The Holidays, Music for Hope, 2006.

2009 ERIC BIBB

Eric Bibb, "Kokomo," Live a Fip, Nueva Onda under license to Dixiefrog, 2009.

2011 GREENCASTLE HOMER

Greencastle Homer. "To Kokomo," Swing It, Jazz It Baby, Machiavelli Records, 2011.

2011 KOKOMO

Kokomo. "Go, Mordecai," If Wolves, CD Baby, 2011.

2013 KOKOMO KINGS

Kokomo Kings, "Wrong Doing Woman," Artificial Natural, 2013

2015 GUY DAVIS

Davis, Guy. "Kokomo Kidd," Kokomo Kidd, M.C. Records 2015.

2018 SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS

Squirrel Nut Zippers, "Karnival Joe from Kokomo," Karnival Joe from Kokomo, Southern Broadcasting, 2018.

2021 LANI CUPCHOY

Cupchoy, Lani "Take Me Back To Kokomo," Take Me Back to Kokomo, Pinkjade Creations, 2021.

2021 CHARLIE P

Charlie P, "Kokomo," Kokomo, BLACKFLYMU-SIC, 2021.

2021 JAPANESE BREAKFAST

Japanese Breakfast. "Kokomo, IN," Jubilee, Dead Oceans, 2021.

2021 JOHN MAESTRO

John Maestro, "10pm in Kokomo," Indiana Love, Integrated Media System LLC, 2021.

2022 KO KO MO

Ko Ko Mo, "Need Some Mo," "Need Some Mo," 2022.

2023 ROYEL OTIS

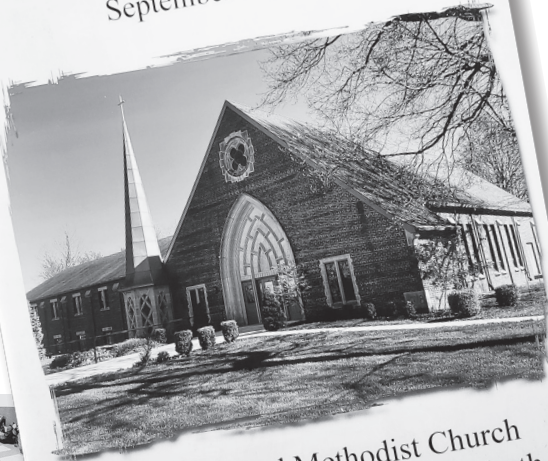
Royel Otis, "Going Kokomo," Sofa Kings, Ourness, 2023.

2024 BLUE RANGER

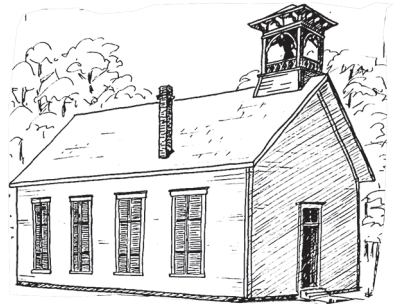
Blue Ranger. "Kokomo, Please," Close Your Eyes, Ruination Record Company, 2024.

Shiloh's Sesquicentennial

Shiloh United Methodist Church
Sesquicentennial 1874-2024
September 15, 2024



Shiloh United Methodist Church
5741 West County Road 100 North
Kokomo, Indiana 46901



The Team

Pastor Joe Johnson, Mike and Charlotte Overmyer, Patty Zeck, Diana Frazer, Scott and Krista Jarvis, Todd and Connie Trobaugh, Mike Wise, Katie Suter, Michelle and Carl Hardwick, and Dave Johns.

Book Written and Compiled by Patricia Arnett Zeck. With contributions by Church Members and Archives.

Chapter 9 Activities

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1

Shiloh has had long lasting activities with and for members and the community. Most have been in the past. As time passes and members move or die, some activities no longer exist or have been changed. Some of the more prominent ones are given below:

Church Cookbooks

In the early 1980s several ladies met at the home of Sharon Whitacre to plan a church cookbook. Many ladies contributed recipes that were organized into topics. The books were sold as a fund-raiser for the Methodist Women. Recipes have held the test of time. Helen Spraker was instrumental in producing the famed yellow cookbook. A second cookbook followed with coordination by Doll Stroud. Anecdotes were included with the recipes.

In 2021 Joan Strawhacker and Patty Zeck led church members in producing a third cookbook, which also had a yellow cover with graphic designs by Julie Strawhacker. The Finance Committee sponsored the cookbook so that it would be a "quality production." Every recipe in the book had to be served sometime at Shiloh and the location or event had to be given. A few of the classics such as Eva Ehrman's grape pie, chicken and noodles, and mince meat recipes were included. The Methodist Women held a book launch on a Sunday morning and sold out before the second service ever began. Two smaller printings followed. Families and friends could enjoy Christmas presents with the book selling at \$10/copy.

Bazaar/Fall Festival

Shiloh held bazaars later called fall festivals for over 50 years with the first one in 1954. Back in the 80s the event was held at Northwestern High School before moving to Shiloh. Members of the church divided into committees to work on supplies to sell in different booths such as Holiday, Children's Activities, Baking, Candy, Crafts, Farmers' Market, Chicken and Noodles, and Mince meat. The church library has a folder just on mince meat recipes and finances. In the early days there were five persons on the main committee with a rotation into the chairmanship after serving as an "apprentice." Later there was just an overall chairman (often a husband and wife team such as Diana and Jay Frazer, Faye and Ruth Suter, Ken and Linda Munro, or Brent and Mary Jo McClellan) to coordinate the booths. Sometimes teams of two ladies were co-chairmen. In 1987 the work list said that daughters were encouraged to work with their mothers. From the length of the worker list, it appeared that nearly everyone on the church roster was helping in some way. In the final years, booths were sold outside vendors. Profits reached into the \$4000 range in especially good years. The money was divided among various local charities to help provide needed medicines, food, and clothing. Other recipients 20 years ago included Nesting Doves, Samaritan Caregivers, Family Service Association, and Northwestern (High School) Guidance Help Fund. In 2000 the profits helped pay off the church mortgage. There were no consignments since everything was donated.

Certain members were associated with certain foods. The egg whites were saved from the noodle group and distributed to make angel food cakes. Customers would come in and ask for the cakes by Ruby Jackson Long or Helen Spraker. One year there were 18 cakes lined up on bookshelves to be sold. There were never any left over. Alice Ortman's mince meat recipe was standard. Flossie Barker's fruitcakes sold out immediately. You could put any price on them. It did not matter. People wanted her fruitcakes.

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Haitian Environmen
"on the map." We th



Sources
Vicki Boles
Becky Farrington
Les Kistler
Barb Nylen
Robbi Ortman
Rick Parsons
Joan Strawhacker
Jon David Zeck
Patty Zeck





Celebrating 150 Years ...

From a humble house on the very same property where it all began 150 years ago, members of Shiloh UMC's church this year added another milestone to their storied history in Howard County, Indiana.

Over the decades, people and families have come to Shiloh. Its five different buildings have endured Indiana winters, arson and even mold. But the spirit of the people then and now remains. And on Sunday, Sept. 15, 2024, the sanctuary was filled with worshippers (above), celebrating past with present, with an eye on the future.

The journey has been chronicled in an impressive 80-page history book. Everything from building and grounds to missions and music to cooking and quilts is covered, elegantly presented and neatly indexed for whichever future church members will come along next to update the history for another 150 years.

IN THE NEWS: "Shiloh United Methodist Church celebrates 150 years". *Kokomo Tribune*. Wednesday, September 18, 2024. Page 1.



Drums Along the Wildcat

It was a day to honor the ancestors Sept. 21, 2024, at Foster Park in Kokomo, Indiana. Organized by the Kokomo Native Initiative, with funding and support provided by the Community Foundation of Howard County, Solidarity Federal Credit Union of Kokomo, and generous donors, the event is establishing Kokomo as a “center of excellence” for Native American culture and as a prominent place to talk about our shared history. We gather to show respect for the descendants of the Miami Indians who were removed from their ancestral homes some 180 years ago, including from Howard County, Indiana.





The “Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women” red dress symbolizes an Indigenous woman who has been murdered or is missing throughout the United States and Canada.

Right: Event emcee LeRoy Malaterre, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota, has been an advocate and strong presence for Native people since the 1970s. He announced that “Drums Along the Wildcat” was his final powwow.



Christmas is coming to the Seiberling



It's that time of year! Time to get ready for the Howard County Historical Society's "Christmas at the Seiberling."

"This year, our volunteer decorators will be interpreting our 'Holiday Memories' theme as they work their magic between Nov. 12 and 24," said co-chair Judy Brown, adding co-chair Angela Washington has been promoting decorating very successfully.

Judy said there are a number of new decorators as well as decorators returning after taking a break.

"We have a couple of new organizations and several groups of individuals who enjoy working together. Some are decorating rooms different from those they had previously decked out," she said. "We're excited to see what they come up with for 2024's edition!"

Once again, visitors will have the chance to vote for favorite rooms with cash donations in the respective jars. "That response certainly adds to the pride our decorators take in their work," Judy said.

Santa will arrive at 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30, to help light the lights that signal the opening of "Christmas at the Seiberling." He'll ascend



to the third floor of the mansion where he will again greet children in his workshop at various times throughout the season.

You can purchase tickets for the Nov. 30 opening ceremony, as well as the Candlelight Night set for Saturday, Dec. 21, by going to the HCHS website at www.howardcountymuseum.org or calling the HCHS office at 765-452-4314

Santa will arrive at 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30, to help light the lights that signal the opening of "Christmas at the Seiberling."

Six evenings of free admission courtesy of community sponsors are being planned for Dec. 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 20. Musical entertainment will be offered on some of the sponsored evenings.

This year's sponsors include Wyman Group, Community First Bank, First Farmers Bank, Duke Energy and Ivy Tech Community College Kokomo. Anyone wishing more information on participating as a sponsor or musical entertainment is encouraged to call the museum office.

Membership

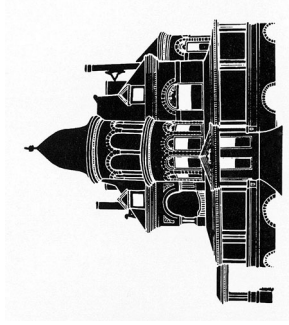
Our new and renewed members ...

James Allman
Ron & Pam Barsh
Charles & Mary Duncan
Larry & Judy Ingle
Dr. Joe & Lynda Klein
King's Heating & Plumbing
Don & Gail Beaton
Linda Stout
Richard & Marsha Miller
Phillip & Victoria Conwell
Dorothy Dague
Joe Dunbar
Ken & Linda Ferries
Diana Goodnight
Glenn & Nancy Grundmann
Robert & Mary Hingst
Mark & Peggy Hobson
Robert & Joan Hoch
Rachel Jenkins
David & Janice Kellar
Suzanne King
Keith & Judy Lausch
William Menges
Sondra Neal
Jerry & Maria Nelson
Deanna Gifford
Phillip Rankin
Darrell & Jule Rider
Blake & Jennifer Rollins
Dr. Allen Safianow
Bill Shirley
Ronald & Jean Simpson
Patricia Sottong
John & Emily West
Gale & Donna Leiter
Mary Ellen Harnish
Goldie Snively

Alan & Prudence Harnish
Thomas Tolen
Glen Boise
Jon Zeck
Wilda Wolford
Kent & Marcia Blackledge
Don & Marilyn Woolridge
Ellen Tate
Craig Dunham
Laurence & Janice Blanchard
Medora Kennedy
Kirk & Wendy Daniels
Glenda Kamosa
Charles Short
Susan Luttrell
Sherry Riley
David Foster
Douglas & Lynn Vaughn
Milton Beach
David & Carla Summers
Rick & Sandy Warner
Chuck & Doris Lingelbaugh
David & Lisa Olmsted
Beth Rider
Andrew & Mary Baker
Todd & Myra Moser
Dolores Herman
Rick & Beth Emry
Jane Richardson
Michael Rodgers
Thomas & Kathryn Rethlake
Phillip & Diane Knight
Peggy Hollingsworth
Hilary Crook
Judy Kruggel
Tyler & Ann Moore
Irene Rolland

Richard Alexander
Larry & June Barton
Larry Newlin
Thomas & Marsha Maple
Marilynda Bennett
Thomas & Linda Miklik
Harry Hanson
Ruth Massey
Gloyd Johnson
Sam & Mary Pat Burrous
Faith Brautigam
John & Marie Roberts
Don & Gloria Martin
Gilbert Porter
Teresa Fields
Sam Rhine
Harold Beal
Phyllis Melick
Nancy Harper
C.W. & J.D. McClish
Michael Whiteman
Pamela Yohn
Dana Scruggs
Matthew Behnke
John Dreyer
Sue Beahrs
Jia Hardimon-Eddington
Gale Hendricks
Dianna Walston
Angelica Roberts
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Howard County
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