

## HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF SIDNEY

BELL & HOWLAND  
306 North Cross Street  
P. O. Box 368  
Montone, IN 46539

About the year 1882, a double row of bright shiny rails sprang out of Whitley County, Indiana, and started across the northern half of Jackson Township. At the same time, two rows of rails were coming out of the west. They came together about one half mile west of present site of the town of Sidney. Mrs. Maggie Boltz, wife of Gus Boltz, and Mrs. Rittenger were there and drove a silver spike to connect the two and thus the New York, Chicago, and St. Louis Railroad came to Jackson Township, bringing the depot with it. A carry-in dinner and program celebrated the historic occasion. About that time "Preacher" Dan Snell, who lived the first house south of the school house, and who was a builder and contractor, started to build a building on the west side of what is now Main Street. That building is the present hardware store, owned by Harry Grisso. Elza Radcliff and late Bill McManara operated stores there. A harness shop was built adjacent to that building on the north and later bakeries were operated in it. The building was torn down in the late 20's and at this time, the spot is Roy Meyers strawberry patch.

Milston Shira and Charles McConnell operated an undertaking parlor on the west side of Main Street, later selling it to Arthur Paulus, who also had a furniture store. Adam Grisso had a harness and shoe repair shop in another room on the same site. For several years Charles Grisso operated the shop after his father was gone. Later he had it in his home, where it is at the present time. Charles Stoneburner operated a creamery in a cement block building, where Mr. and Mrs. Winfield Carlin now live. (Mrs. Zona Helvey used to live there.) John Workman also was operator of the creamery.

In 1901, Isaac Beamer was manager of the telephone company. It was located in a room of the hotel building. Later, the Central office was in the house where Charles Grisso now lives. In the early 30's the Central office was taken out and the office at North Manchester acted as Sidney Central, as it does today.

A grain elevator stood along the railroad tracks west of Main street. It caught fire in 1920, and burned to the ground. At that time, several freight cars were standing on the siding and the track foreman, Mel Heeter, and his section crew, with the help of Roy Michael's team of horses, pulled the cars out of the way of the fire.

On the corner, where the fire station is now, Aaron Stump built a large building which housed a hotel and a bank. The first cashier was Calvin Miller. In 1927, the bank failed, and since that time, Sidney has never had a bank. Tobe Miller was the cashier at that time. That building burned and was never rebuilt. Tally Idel operated the hotel at one time.

The cement block building that houses the feed mill was built by Elmer Circle in the early 20's for an implement store. He also operated an ice cream parlor on the east side of the street, where the school pupils gathered to sip sodas and talk.

In 1892, John Haines and Billy Pifer built the brick building on the corner, now occupied by Kincaides grocery. William Nichols, father of Mrs. Mel Heeter, was on the first carpenters in Sidney. He helped to build counters in the store and also a number of farm buildings in Jackson Township. He made furniture and did cabinet making also. Later Milton Shira and Ridenour operated the store until the early 30's, when Fred Hoppas bought the store and operated it for a number of years. He sold it to his brother Chet, who in turn, sold it to the present owner, Arden Kincaide.



Charles McConnell had a store on the east side of the street from 1898 to 1909, and he was also the postmaster until 1914. Mrs. Whitman operated a milliner shop and the post office in a building that was located across the alley north from the Mason's building. Later, the building was moved to the middle of the business block. Mel Miller was postmaster during the 1920's, and until his death in the middle 40's. The post office was in the store operated by Elvin Tridle, C. C. Shira, Fred Hoppas and the present one, Fred Jellison.

Sidney had several doctors during the early years. Dr. Hoopengartner and Dr. Dorsey established an office in the town. Later, Dr. Heisner was associated with Dr. Dorsey. In 1895, Dr. Warvel rented a room in the hotel and had an office there. He had a two-wheeler cart and a sorrel mare that he drove when calling on patients out of town. He had the first automobile in town—a Maxwell. Later, he lived in the house on the corner, where Lester Johnson now lives, and had an office in the two front rooms. He moved to North Manchester where he is still living. Dr. Lewis Linvill had an office at one time, and in 1915, Dr. Barber came and stayed for a number of years. Dr. Herring, who had an office in Pierceton, came down one day a week and had a room in the house of Mrs. Ida Circle, where he received patients. There has been no doctor in town for about 40 years now. With the coming of the automobile there was no need for one.

Gus Boltz operated a saw mill at the site of the Meloy Welding shop in the early days and built the first dwelling house in Sidney. It is still standing and is owned and occupied by Walter Vance. Later on, William Sisk owned and operated a saw mill near the site of the first one; his son Arley operated it for a number of years.

Gabe Lesh operated a planing mill just north of the school building. Jacob Kiste had a sorghum mill on the lot beside the K and A Mobile Service Station in the north end of town. A building was put up on the south side of the railroad that was used for a grain storage in the early years. Later, it was moved to the lot across the street from the present Brethern Church, and used as a church by the congregation. When the present church was built, the building was moved to the north end of town to be used by Sam Hartsock for a blacksmith shop. Later, it was moved down behind the present post office and used by Charles Ransey as part of his garage. (How many of the buildings built today would stand that much moving?)

The Masonic Lodge was chartered on May 7, 1890, and meetings were held in the upper story of a building on the east side of the street. Later they moved across to the west side over Adam Grisso's shoe shop. They continued to hold meetings there until about 1950, when they purchased the building that they originally had on the east side. So they have the meeting hall in the upper story. Merl Newby has a store in the lower part and there is a barber shop in one room now. At various times, Sidney has had a number of barbers. Among them Joe Phillips, Jim Stoneburner, Gail Hall, Tom DeFebritis, Ernie Linn, and "Beanie" Kreighbaum. The present barber is Clayton Minear.

Sidney was incorporated as a town in August, 1914. There was a special election called and the following town board members were elected; William Mendel who acted as chairman, F. A. Grisso, and E. P. Tridle. Other officers were Freeman Lenwell, Clerk, Adam Grisso, Treasurer, and Melvin Daub, Town Marshall. Later Daub resigned and Vincent Smith was appointed to replace him.



In 1924, Main Street was paved, the firm of Gast and Mickey got the contract to build it. Specifications called for 996 feet of pavement, starting just north of the railroad tracks and going north to just beyond the first street that goes west in Sidney, from curb to curb excepting a strip 9 feet wide in the middle of the street. It was about that time that a 9-foot pavement was put in, starting at the Monroe-Jackson Township line and going through Sidney to North Manchester. The pavement put in by the town cost \$11,000.

Charles Ramsey opened a filling station and garage, where the present post office is now. The town board gave him permission to locate the underground tanks in the alley going west and to pay \$1.00 per year rent. Sisk Garage, located south of the railroad, and Grisso's garage on the west side, were the first filling stations in town. The first gasoline was sold about 1914 and was delivered from South Whitley by Rex Drake in a 200 gallon tank on a wagon drawn by horses. The price was around \$0.08 per gallon. The storage tanks sat on the sidewalk and the gasoline was drawn out in gallon measures and poured in the car tanks. At the north end of town, Dennis Andrews later had a station. He sold it to Gerald Delaughter, who built a new station when State Road 13 was widened and paved. In 1951, he sold it to Amer Koontz, who operates it at this time.

The first electric light plant was built in 1917, by Rev. Ronk, Pastor of the Christian Church. It was housed in a cement block building located adjacent to the First Union Parish Parsonage and now owned by Mrs. Ernest Ruse. Later, the Farmers Mutual Light and Power Company from Collamer provided the current for the lights for the town. In 1925, the northern Indiana Light and Power Company purchased the Farmer Mutual and began furnishing power and installed new street lights.

The Town Hall was located in the building now occupied by Fred Grisso's paint store in the early years. In 1931, Grisso built the present cement building beside the feed mill across the street, and negotiated with the town to purchase the town hall for his business. The fire trucks are housed there at the present time and town board meetings, firemen's meetings, special elections, etc., are held there. In 1915, the first fire equipment was purchased, consisting of two chemical tanks mounted on a hand-drawn two-wheeled cart. E. V. Smith was appointed fire chief. In 1926, a new Ford chassis was purchased, and three chemical tanks mounted on it with 300 feet of hose on a reel. It was housed at the Light Plant building for a while. Then Haines and Shira put the truck in their building, receiving \$5.00 per month rent. In 1932, a new Reo fire truck was delivered. Elvin Tridle was appointed fire chief at that time. In the early years, the fire engine was not allowed to go outside the town to fight fires. Then the town board decided to let the equipment be used by the rural folks and charges made accordingly. In 1945, a new Studebaker truck was purchased jointly with Jackson Township and at the present time is maintained with township funds. Dallas Wood is the present fire chief.

John Workman, Arley Sisk, William Winters, and Vern Ross have served at various times as town marshall. One of the first residents of Sidney was James Wagner, who was Justice of the Peace for most of the time he lived here. He was killed on the railroad in 1950. He ran a livery stable in the early years on the lots where the Grisso cement block making building now stands. He hauled salesmen from town to town.

There was a saloon on the west side of Main street. Clyde Gripe and the Hunter brothers operated it at different times.

Of churches, we have two, the Congregational Christian and the Progressive Brethern. The Christian church was established in 1836, by the Rev. Peter Winebrenner, David Hidy, and R. S. Amber. Dan Snell gave the ground and built the church in 1885. Rev. Hidy was the first minister called.



There were 16 charter members namely; Deacon George McConnell, Pauline McConnell Haines, Charles, Lilly, and Elizabeth McConnell, Washington and Alice Messamore, Nancy and Isabell Whitman, Ada Dome, Perry and Mary Sellers, Porter and Mary Waugh, and Dr. and Louisa Loring.

The Brethern Church was built about 1910. For awhile, the congregation met in the Christian church building, and later they moved the grain storage building to the lot owned by Curt Sisk, set it up on pillars about six feet high, and used for services. Aaron Heckman and Dan Stevens were instrumental in getting the brick building built. Dan Stevens is the father of Senator Floyd Stevens.

Through the years, since 1882, Sidney has had other businesses including a pickle preserving plant operated from 1914 to 1942, by F. H. Swett and Company. Part of that time, tomatoes were processed, also. J. W. Strauss had a hardware and implement store in 1897. Dan Stiffler had a meat market, and grocery stores were operated by C. E. Sisk, L. Paulus, Elvin Fridle, and Mr. Brock. There were two saloons in town, in 1890, operated by Pat McClave, and in 1893, by J. Wines. Lewis Hunter had a billard hall. Sam Hartsock and Lew Rodebush had blacksmith shops. Curtis Hall operated a drug store for a number of years. In 1899, a bakery was here, and again in 1907, Dan Sisk operated one. Mike Mine and Sam Gross operated restaurants in the early years. In 1946, Leroy Baker bought a lot on the east side of the street and started a restaurant building, which was opened for business in May, 1947, and is still in operation. Sidney has had several industries, which provided employment for a great number of people. Among them a wood working plant, operated by Haines and Jellison in 1886, three saw mills, owned by Isaac Hunter, J. Sisk, and Gus Boltz, the latter employing 25 men. A stave factory, a pop bottling works, operated by Tom Fifer in 1899, a broom manufacturing company, by Charles Ramsey, a buggy and wagon shop, by James Burwell in the early 90's, a cider mill, by Gabe Lesh. Three Fraternal Organizations were here -- the Odd Fellows, are still here. In 1889, a uniformed city band was organized, and in 1917, a Civic Improvement association came into being.

In 1896, there was an amusement park with a merry-go-round, and a boxing and wrestling arena. Harley Ulrey ran a photo gallery and a detective agency. Sidney had a rural mail route with Charles Miller as carrier. The railroad has always had a station agent and at one time there were three -- working eight hour shifts. The present agent is Roy Myers. At one time, Sidney was called "the biggest little town in Kosciusko County".

Sidney has had a school for a great number of years. The first date that I can find is prior to 1860. The school has always stood where it is now. The first one was a log building, then a red brick, one room building, and then in 1908 the west part of the present building was built. In 1922, the east part was added. Mr. and Mrs. Loyal Dome were among the first graduates of Sidney High School, he having graduated in 1896. They passed away in 1953. The Alumni was organized in 1915 when William Kinder, now of Tipton, was principal.

At the present time, May 1954, we have in Sidney -- Harold Mcloy's Welding Shop, Ted Harp's Feed Mill and Implement Company, Fred Grisso's Hardware, Arden Kincaide's Second Hand Store, and a part time barber, Clayton Minear.



The K and A mobile Service Station, Charles Kinzie's Welding Shop and Kenny Evan's Standard bulb station.

(Written by Mrs. Amer Koontz who is very grateful to all those who gave information and she hopes that the events are as nearly correct as to time, etc. as is possible to get them. May 21, 1954--With thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Mel Heeter for information--L.K.)

TO BRING HISTORY UP TO DATE, MARCH 1966, the following events are added:

The telephone company was converted to the dial system in the early forties and a direct distance dialing was instituted in 1964. A building was built on the lot of Roy Myers in 1964, which houses the equipment of the company.

Arden Kincaide sold the corner grocery to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Metzger in 1955, and they continue to operate it.

Roy Baker sold the restaurant to Boyd Kreis about 1959, and he operated it until 1961, when it was closed and has remained closed since. Mr. Kreis has a television store in the Mason's building.

The depot was torn down in 1964 and the spot cleared. The last station agent, Roy Myers, retired in 1955. Since that time, the business of the railroad has been transacted from Claypool and South Whitley.

The Whitko School Corporation was organized in 1963, and in the fall of 1964, the high school pupils were transferred to South Whitley. A new elementary building was added about 1956, and is located just east of the old building, connected to it by a hallway.

A temporary postmaster was appointed in 1962, when Fred Jellison retired. In 1965, Verl Gray was appointed postmaster and the post office was moved from the west side of the street to a building on the east side.

Business places in Sidney include Max Leiter's Construction Company, Paul Metzger's grocery, Boyd Kreis's television store, Harry Grisso's Hardware and Implement, and the K and A Mobil Service Station.