

# Kosciusko County Tour rich in area history

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Around Winona Lake, Warsaw, people refer to the big red cottage on the point as the "Mystery Cottage." An air of mystery shrouded the home in the early part of the century when it was boarded up for 20 years.

A wealthy tea merchant named Bruning had the house built in 1904 for the girl he hoped to marry. Since her parents disapproved of the match, the couple wasn't married until the parents died. The newlyweds were able to spend three summers in their lovely cottage before the bride herself died and her husband had the place boarded up.

This exquisite cottage, which Bruning named "Merbrink" (meaning lake's edge), is a highlight of the Annual Kosciusko County Historical Tour, "A Day to Remember," from noon to 6 p.m. on Oct. 2.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Don White since 1932, Merbrink, at 410 Administration Blvd., Winona Lake, contains several of the original furnishings. When built, the house was said to have had full-length cheval mirrors, Brussels carpets and 21 rocking chairs.

The Whites have retained the original flavor of the house, decorating with antiques, Oriental carpets, and old white wicker.

Since White retired from coaching college basketball, the couple has turned the home into a year-round residence.

The Kosciusko County Jail in Warsaw, begun in 1870, is an example of the Gothic Revival Style of architecture. Proposed for national landmark status, the jail is considered a valuable architectural asset in the heritage of historical buildings.

An 1879 lithograph reveals that the jail, with its lancet windows and embattled facade, was enclosed by an iron fence.

Also located in Warsaw, the James Miller house, 121 N. Union, was built about 1865. The dining room contains a suite of handcarved furniture, said to have been made to order for an unnamed opera diva. Rumor also has it that author Theodore Dreiser once lived in the house.

Outside the house, the rear yard still has parts of the old iron fence which surrounded the property. West of the house is a large field where the circus used to pitch its tent on visits to Warsaw.

Another interesting home on the tour is the Wilbur McSherry farm home near Burket. The home, was built for McSherry's ancestors in 1881 on the land settled by the family in 1838. It is the oldest farm owned by the same family in the county.

The style of the brick house was typical of the early 1880s, with its corbeled eaves and shallow-curved window headings.

The house is filled with antique pieces, many handed down through the family while others have been purchased and refinished by Mrs. McSherry. The old pieces blend nicely with the original butternut and cherry woodwork.

Sitting on an antique family bed in one of the six upstairs bedrooms, Mrs. McSherry said that half of the upstairs was for the girls and half for the boys. She said that her husband's grandmother was very short and fought the idea of high ceilings, so common in houses of that period. She said the builders made 11-foot ceilings upstairs, but the grandmother got her way and the downstairs ceilings were lower.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Smith, Mentone, was built in 1898 by Albert Tucker, who laid out the town. Although the house is said to have nine gables, there are actually no gables, but sharply pointed dormers for each window on the second floor. The house includes the Smiths' extensive glass collection.

The sixth stop on the tour is the Bell Memorial Public Library in Mentone. Built with money donated by Lawrence Bell, the library will feature an exhibit on Bell and a film about him.

Bell, born and raised in Mentone, has been recently inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame. He began working with airplanes at the age of 18 and later formed the Bell Aircraft Corp. He is best known for producing the Bell Airacobra (P-39), the fastest climbing plane in the United States arsenal during World War II. Another of his planes, the Bell X-1, was the first plane to fly through the supersonic barrier.

Secluded at one end of a country lane is the final house on the tour, "Briarwood," the rural Mentone home of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Hammer. An excellent example of Italianate architecture, the 1866 house has been restored by the young Hammers. The low-pitched, bracketed eaves and porthole attic windows are identifying characteristics of the period.

Containing more than a million bricks made at the home's site, the house contains poplar woodwork and a cherry "bridal staircase." Such a staircase contains 18 steps to correspond with the number of years old a young woman should be at her marriage or else be considered a spinster.

Mrs. Hammer, an artist and art teacher, and her husband have decorated the house with a combination of the old and new. Hammer knocked out partitions of three small rear rooms and created a huge country kitchen with a fireplace along one wall. Off the kitchen is a bathroom whose walls have been decoupage with pictures from old magazines.

Tickets for the tour are available in advance from members of the Kosciusko County Historical Society and at county banks. They may also be purchased the day of the tour at four sites, Mentone Town Hall and on the courthouse lawn. Tickets are \$2 and a bus tour, leaving from Mentone, is \$1. Children under 12 will be admitted free and tickets for those over 12 are \$1.

In charge of the tour are Mrs. Doug Haney, chairman; Mrs. Fred Anglin, publicity; Mrs. Dean Kistler, hostesses; Philip Holliday, newspaper brochure; Suzanne Ware, arrangements; Dennert Ware, photographs; Mare Rogers, transportation; Mrs. Jim Ruthford, refreshments, and Mrs. Chet Smith, guides.

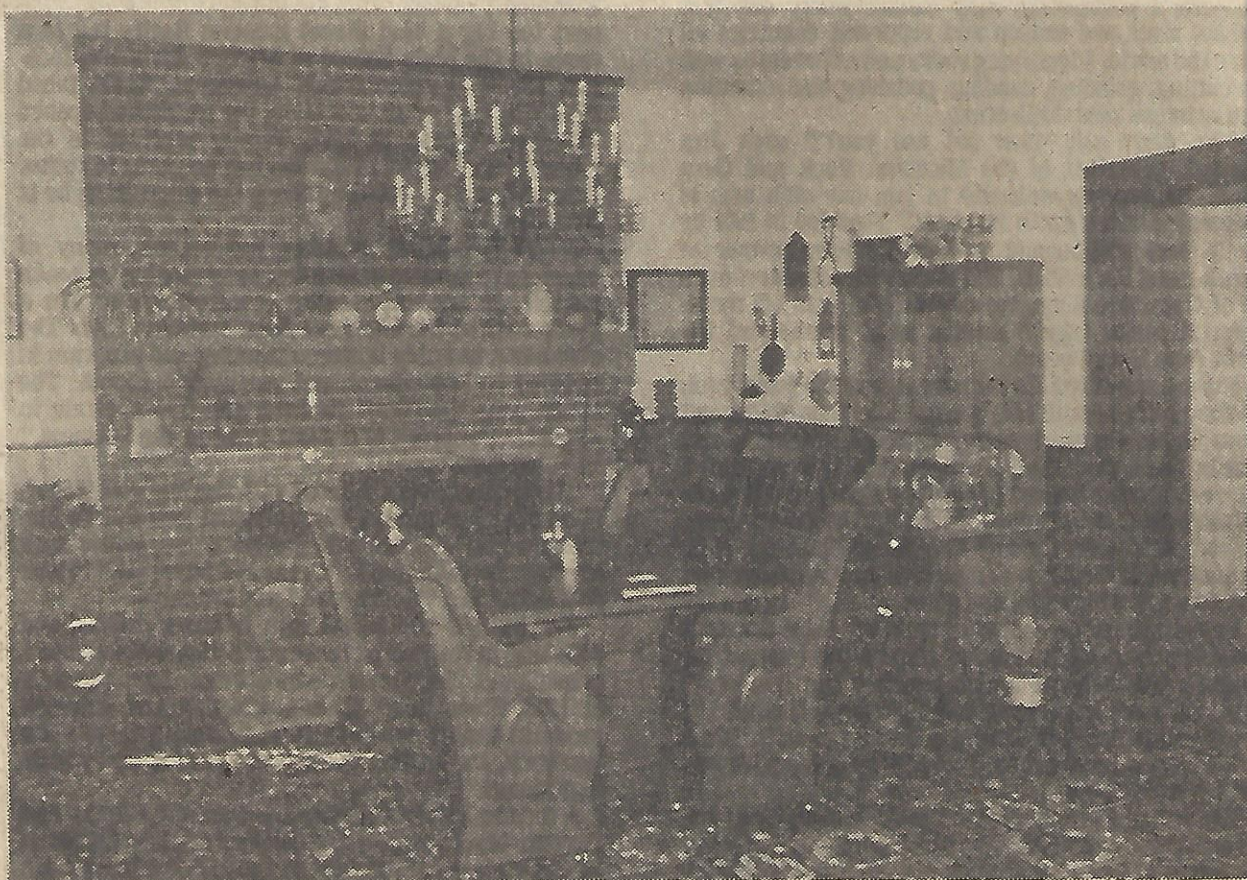
Vows exchanged





"MERBRINK," an elegant, turn-of-the-century cottage at Winona Lake is the first stop on the Annual Kosciusko County Historical Tour. The

tour, from noon to 6 p.m. Oct. 2, will include seven historical sites around Warsaw and Mentone.



HIGHLIGHTING the large country kitchen in "Briarwood," the Terry Hammer home near

Mentone, is a brick fireplace. The 1866 Italianate home is included on the tour.