

MENTONE EGG

Bell Memorial Public Library  
July, 1976

Probably because of the Bicentennial we have had many inquiries as to the origin of the large concrete egg that stands on the southeast corner of Main and Morgan Streets (State Road 25) in Mentone. This is what we have been able to learn:

The idea was conceived by Ed Ward who was the manager of the Northern Indiana Co-op Association, and some of the "egg farmers" in and around Mentone.

Hugh Rickel, of Palestine, designed and built the egg. It was built in the building next door to the late Dr. Davison's dental office which was on the northwest corner of Main and Morgan Streets. This was in late 1946, according to Mr. Rickel.

Mr. Rickel stated that Dobbs and John Miller, who operated a sheet metal shop in Mentone at the time, wanted to make it out of sheet metal but Mr. Rickel felt that it wouldn't last, so he himself used steel rods, welding them up and down and around, with a steel rod up the middle. He said the concrete plastering was done by Pete Goble, but we had another call that it was done by Clyde and George Reed. We do not know which is correct.

The egg was painted and lettered by Harry Meredith.

After the egg was finished it was loaded on a truck (it took 12 men to load it as it weighs 3000 lbs.), and taken to Warsaw and placed on the courthouse lawn where it stood for about two weeks to advertise the Mentone Egg Show. In searching through the Mentone Papers we found a picture of the egg on the courthouse lawn in the March 13, 1946 issue of the Mentone Co-op News, so I would assume that it was built early in the year rather than the fall.

Fred Besson, who was on the Board of Directors of the Northern Indiana Co-op Ass'n. told us that when the egg was returned to Mentone they did not know what to do with it so they donated the land where it stands today.

The first actual library service for the town of Mentone was the H. Parmelee Company of Chicago. By subscribing to a particular amount a town or neighborhood was entitled to the use of 2000 volumes for two years, sent by Parmelee in installments of fifty books. Parmelee also encouraged the establishment of book clubs, and would, for a fee, arrange for home delivery. The Parmelee library is first mentioned in the Mentone Tri-County Gazette in late 1899.

In April, 1916, a petition of fifty-five citizens of the Mentone Community subscribed a total of \$158 as a guarantee of good faith for a proposed library in Mentone. A Carnegie library was first suggested but was voted down. After the Court found the list was according to law, the Mentone Council, the Mentone School Board, and the Judge of the Circuit Court appointed the following people to serve as a library Board of Trustees: Mr. Charles Gillingham, Mrs. Flavia Myers, Mr. Levi Jefferies, Mrs. Emma Young, Mr. LeRoy Smith, Mrs. Allen Jefferies, and Mr. George Holston.

A room was found over the bank to serve as temporary headquarters and Mrs. Allen Jefferies was appointed as librarian for the first year.

The Board of Education donated all books in the school library, except reference books, and fifty books were borrowed from the State library. In March, 1917, the librarian reported a total of 644 volumes in the library and stated that 53 books had been loaned. Miss Marie Haignsey was appointed librarian for the following year.

On November 1, 1918, the library was moved to a room in a building owned by Mr. Carly Myers on the north side of Main Street and also that year Miss Frances Clark was appointed librarian. Miss Clark served until September, 1919 when Miss Madge Lyons was named to the position.

In October, 1920, Mrs. Cora Va. Glider was appointed librarian and she served until her death on July 7, 1946. Mrs. Nabel Edmons served as acting librarian until 1947 when Mrs. Walter (Pearl) Lackey was appointed.

In 1936 the Library Board voted to purchase a building and lot on the south side of Main Street for \$2600 as permanent quarters for the library. The Library remained there until 1960 when the present library building was opened to the public.

The new building was built with a \$20,000 grant to the town of Mentone from the will of Lawrence D. Bell, a Mentone native and owner of Bell Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, New York. Mr. Bell requested that the money be used for a suitable memorial to his parents, Isaac and Harriet (Barber) Bell, and the Mentone Board made the decision to use the money, plus \$4000 from the sale of the old building, to build a new library. The decision was also made to change the name from the Mentone Public Library to the Bell Memorial Library.

A one-room addition costing \$4500 was added in 1971, paid for from the Library Improvement Reserve Fund.

Mrs. Lackey retired in 1973 and Mrs. Harold (Madeleine) Fisher was appointed to take her place.

The library operates a "four-library" taxing unit (with Harrison, Franklin and Grand) for its operating funds) until the summer of 1985 when Harrison Township agreed to merge with the town to form a new library taxing unit.

From the first 500 books in 1916, the library now has over 23,000 volumes for