Bell Library

Tippawawa - Published by the Senior Class of 1962

p. 82-83 by Morris K. White" Tippecanoe Schools Past and Present"

The summer of 1842 marked the beginning of formal schooling in Tippecanoe Township. Summit Chapel was the site selected for the one-room log building presided over by Esther Jane Birney. She had her pupils cipher and spell at the standing board as she majestically surveyed her charges.

This new school boasted two windows, hewn log seats, a puncheon floor and a mud stick chimney. It is indeed remarkable that Miss Birney did not have to pay her pupils for the right to rule over such a domain. But instead, she was awarded about nine dollars a month for all of the three, three-month terms she spent at Summit Chapel School.

It is perhaps an interesting item to note that this school was begun six years before the "Free School" question came up for a vote in 1848.

Somehow, it seems rather sad to pass the many abandoned buildings that once housed our township school system. Perhaps "abandoned" is not quite the proper word, for some have found use in storing hay, protecting machinery, and providing shelter. Nostalgia plays a large role in our lives--and it is a common pastime to dream and talk about yesterday. From our car windows we momentarily view a deserted school. The conversation turns to marble games outside the open school room window on a sultry autumn day; the smell of a freshly washed slate; the taste of the tin dipper; and those shivers that ran down your spine as someone's slate pencil squeaked. Do you remember the punishment for ringing the bell; for going fishing on a hot spring afternoon?

In some manner, our memory seems to picture again these things, only they are bathed in the golden light of yesterday.

By 1908 Tippecanoe Township boasted eleven one-room grade schools, and one high school. This high school opened in 1891 with Professor S. A. Laird in charge. The building had three classrooms which contained around one hundred pupils. Of this number, only forty were in what we would call high school.

It seems that an old frame church, located near the present fire house, became part of the town school. Grades one through five attended there while six through eleven-- and sometimes twelve--went to Professor Laird's domain.

From what records have been preserved, a four year high school did operate for some years, but then the school began to send its seniors-elect to Argos. During the turn of the century, through its first decade, the old Tippecanoe High School held a prominent position in the county. Professor Laird had a fine reputation as a teacher and his pupils had a thorough grounding in the fundamentals, as well as such subjects as, Advanced Algebra, Plane and Solid Geometry, and three years of Latin. At that time, it was figured that a girl's mother was probably the best person to provide a course in Home Economics.

The township provided; the parents prodded; and the boys and girls attended school.

Almost all of the one-room township schools continued in operation until the present building was erected in 1917. The idea of giving up the one-room grade schools was quite an issue. Many felt that it was "cruelty unlimited" to take their children so far from home just for grade school. There were other complaints about expense, loosing local control of the schools and so on. However, Tippecanoe Township consolidated schools came into being.

At the time the main building was built, Charles Crieghbaum was trustee. It was his job to relocate teachers and somehow transport pupils.

There was a rather unique heating system installed. The idea was quite good, but I've been told that the operation of this inventor's dream was next to impossible. This system was designed to heat, by way of man-sized shafts, the basement gym, shop, first floor grade rooms, and the few high school rooms on the second floor. Under the main entrance was one huge radiator--that leaked. In back of it was a large electric fan. The radiator was connected to a new "Kewanee boiler." In front of this monstrous radiator was a small room used as a heat-chamber. From this heat chamber went the hot-air shafts--complete with rope operated trap-doors that were intended to regulate the flow of heat.

To the cold air chamber, where the fan was located, went the various cold air returns.

The idea sounde quite good, but the operation and results were on the dismal side. Teachers and pupils longed for a pot-bellied stove in their rooms during cold weather, and opened the windows for fresh air relief from the heat during mild. The jaintor used to make frequent trips around the outside of the building to see just who had any windows open. An open window would send him running to the front of the heat chamber where the controls for the trap-doors were located. The offending window-openers would then be startled by a loud slamming noise from their heat source.

This problem was corrected with the addition of the new gymnasium wing in 1928, which also included two new grade rooms, a study hall, a library, and more rest room facilities.

The "Kewanee boiler" was moved into the old gym, and was given a mate of the same family. They were then connected to a system of raidators placed in the rooms, back in closets, and up cold air shafts. It was quite apparent that someone was completely fed up with freezing.

A new, large gymnasium also showed the trend in school athletics, and I don't mean for sack races. "Hoosier madness", basketball, was taking the lead in competetive high school sports all over Indiana. Tippecanoe didn't wish to be left out. Besides, the new gym did have a stage, somewhere, didn't it? That alone was designed to prove the harmonious existence between athletics and the arts--or arts and athletics, if you prefer.

The school curriculum began to spread out so that more and more things could be taught to the boys and girls of Tippecanoe Township. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were the fundamental subjects that made up Tippecanoe's academic backbone, but in addition to the "3R's" were Typing, Home Economics, Manual Arts, Agriculture, Music, Physical Eduacation, and Art.

Class plays became the order of the day. Scenery was made, painted, and erected. Parts were learned--and forgotten. Costumes were borrowed or made. Then came the moment when you appeared in front of the footlights. Broadway will never be any closer that it was to you that night. Someone once told me that when all the basketball games have blurred into one dim memory, you will still be able to remember the lines, the scenes, and the laughs and the tears of your class play. --Perhaps it is true.

The last addition to the school building was the construction in 1956 of a new wing to the south. This provided two modern grade rooms, a sound-proof music and band room, and a shop for wood and metal working. (The Kewanees in the furnace room had their privacay intruded upon by a blue oil burner to help them with their added heating load.)

I can't help wondering what Esther Jane Birney would say if she could see what her School became a part of. Perhaps she wouldn't be too surprised. After all, a school is basically composed of pupils and teachers--not bricks, desks, electrical gadgets and federal red tape. She might well point out that through the years this school has graduated boys and girls who have gone out into the community and the world; to become good citizens, good parents, doctors, businessmen, nurses, farmers, teachers, lawyers--the list is endless. I believe she would admit that from 1842 and the township schools, up to, and including Tippecanoe Township Consolidated Schools- the job that has been done, has been done well.

Acknowledgements:
History of Marsahll County, Indiana 1836 to 1880, by Daniel McDonald, pub. 1881 Chicago, Kingman Bros.

A Twentieth Century History of Marshall County, Indiana Volume 1 by the Hon. Daniel McDonald Pub. 1908, Chicago, The Lewis Co.

Much credit and many thanks are also due Jake Yantiss, Russ and Geneva Shiveley, and Adolph McIntyre for a more personal view of Tippecanoe School and town.

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Tippecanoe Town
(or, Where did Ilion Go?)

by Mr. Morris K. White

Once-upon-a-time there was a place named Tippecanoe Town. It was plotted and surveyed in 1850. For thirty years it was the only town in Tippecanoe Township. It was prosperous; it had a grist mill on the banks of the Tippecanoe River, and a woolen mill close by. Not only was Tippecanoe Town rather prosperous; it was also moderately quiet since the Indian Chief Ben-Nack and his following had left for lands farther west.

The trouble seemed to start, and the fun began when the railroad (Nickle Plate), went through the country just three miles south of Tippecanoe Town. With the railroad came workers, and an addition was made to the old town in 1882. It was called "Tippecanoe Town Station" until public feeling became such that this name was changed by the inhabitants in 1886 to Ilion. Ilion it remained until 1905 or 1906 when "Tippecanoe" was substituted for Ilion. By then, old Tippecanoe Town was little more than a ghostly reflection in the Tippecanoe River.

From 1840, when the mill dam was built, until 1878 when the woolen mill was burned, there was a general feeling that the swamp made by the backwaters of the mill dam was a thing of evil. This swamp gave rise to legneds of wild beasts, strange half-wild people, and a factual bad odor. It is not too surprising to credit these rumors if you remember that this protion of Indiana was still pretty much of a wilderness and that this swamp would have been a haven for almost anything that squirmed, climbed, or crawled. The only kind of two-legged haven it might have been, would have been one for a wanted man.

This, also, was possible. There have been a few mysterious murders in the immediate vicinity. Somehow the law never did seem to catch up with many of the wrongdoers. The swamp, and namely the dam were the objects of local hate.

One dark hight, the 25th of October, 1878, a young man set fire to the woolen mill, hoping that this would lead to the eventual destruction of the dam. The action succeeded, not without a great deal of hard feelings and personal sacrifice. The fire on that cold October night was the sentence of death for Tippecanoe Town.

Menawhile, down in Tippecanoe Town station, life was pretty interesting. The town was booming. Buildings, both public and private, were being erected at a breathless pace. This boom lasted until shortly after the turn of the century when the name "Ilion" began to be covered up with the name "Tippecanoe". Some people thought that the name "Tippecanoe" carried some sort of bad luck with it, and they were quite set against the change-- but the majority ruled, and "Tippecanoe" buried "Ilion."

Tippecanoe became rather baseball-minded about 1905. The team met such teams as the Ft. Wayne Wolves. The interest in baseball diminished only with the rise of basketball. One of the games played at Tippecanoe against the Ft. Wayne Wolves ended in tragedy when a Tippecanoe man threw a ball which gave a Ft. Wayne team member a fatal blow. The Wolf player died a few days later. As a result, the Tippecanoe player moved out West.

Again in the West, this freak accident repeated itself. After this, he quit baseball.

During the height of Tippecanoe's prosperity there were numerous horse races held--without benefit of a regular track. You needed a guardian angel, and lots of good luck to cross the main street on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. The owners of new rigs were intent on performance and not pedestrians.

Quincy Cram was a businessman who ran not only one of the town's two livery stables, but also had a hotel, dancehall, and a saloon to his credit. He enjoyed horse racing in all its forms and kept a race horse or two that he could count on to bring in a few extra dollars.

There was also one other hotel in town; and a rival saloon. To keep things in repair, Harry St. John operated a hardware store where Lewallen's Standard Oil Station is now located. Three dry goods stores, a drug store, two doctors offices, an undertaking parlor-restaurant-furniture-shop, and a bank made up the remainder of the downtown area.

During the spring, summer, and fall, the present school grounds was a favorite place for many tr aveling tent shows. At various times you could add to your education by seeing the bearded lady, or drink some Dr. Burkhardts' Konjola Oil to cure whatever was wrong with you at the moment. These were the wild days before the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed.

Henry Ford did what the horse could not do. Cars demanded paved roads. Paved roads brought more of the outside in and the inside out--faster. Tippecanoe was no longer forty-five mimutes from Bourbon.

Fires burned a protion of Tippecanoe. With other shopping centers near, rebuilding was forgotten. Slowly the town became more and more a settlement of permanent homes and had fewers businesses.

More changes are now taking place. New faces appear, old ones are gone. Lawns, sidewalks, and paved streets replace field, ditch and path. Churches have replaced the saloons; the fire house stands almost on the spot where Cram's hotel stood.

Who was it that said:

"The only thing that is permanent is change"?.....

Acknowledgements: Same as on School History

Pictures
Interior of the old Summit Chapel School
School No. 7 - Frame building and pupils, including Jake Yantiss
Old School in 1910 - Dr. Kizer and wife in car
Men at Work 1905 or 1906 Pouring sidewalk north of Moriarty's store
Main treet Tippecanoe, Ind. Could be a postal card
Qunicy Cram's hotel
THS classes 1922 and 1923
Mr. Sonafrank, principal 1929-1937
Tippecanoe Depot in 1908 removed by train wreck in 1955
Class of 1921
Ruth Shunk and Alta Fanning