

HISTORY OF THE MOORESVILLE NATURE CLUB

PREPARED ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLUB

BY MISS MYRTLE KELLER on May 25, 1983

The Mooresville Nature Club was established in 1923 on the initiative of Mrs. Alma Worrell Miles with 26 members. Her deep interest in cultural things, prompted her to organize a music club in Mooresville prior to the founding of the Nature Club. She often expressed her thoughts in poetry and sent inspiring messages to her friends. The following lines were written on the twentieth anniversary of the Club, November 7, 1943.

It was an evening in November  
of nineteen twenty-three  
And gents and ladies gathered to  
form a coterie.

A high and lofty purpose  
was that for which they met,  
There were problems of the universe  
To figure out and get.

They would study the world's wonders,  
Learn more about the sphere  
And how celestial bodies  
Appear and disappear.

So once a month they assembled  
As the years have come and gone,  
They've delved deep in the realms of Nature,  
But much is left to ponder on.

They've studied the storms of winter  
And the welcoming awaking of spring.  
They've tramped through woods and meadows  
And follow birds on the wing.

It is an evening in November  
of nineteen forty-three  
And gents and ladies gathered  
to hold a jubilee.

May the Club go on forever,  
Forever and a day,  
Or at least, until the founder  
Has taken leave and gone away.

Her passing occurred June 17, 1960.

Mrs. Alma Worrell Miles moved to the Peabody Home in North Manchester, Indiana, after the death of Mr. Miles. She and her husband, Mr. Jeff Miles, natives of Hendricks County, lived in later years in the lovely, old brick home on East Washington Street north of the Citizens Bank. Mr. Miles was a farmer and owned the farm just north of the county line on the east side of State Road 267. He was an accomplished violinist. In the early years of the Club there was much music at each meeting, sometimes a duet by Mrs. Lenore Laurence and and Mr. Orville Templeton accompanied by Mrs. Miles on the piano with violin obligato by Mr. Miles.

I thought you might like to hear a little background on the Charter Members:

Walter and Alpha Edwards lived for many years at 116 West High Street. Walter was associated with Hubbard Scearce Lumber Company and later was manager of the Mooresville Milling Company. He was very much interested in horse racing and quite an authority on harness racing. Very frequently the Edwards kept teachers. Miss Miriam Hoover roomed with the Edwards while teaching in Mooresville and was a special guest at one of the meetings held in the Edward's home. Another guest, the same evening, was a young man, Mr. John Mills. It was the beginning of a lovely romance.

Miss Ida Fogleman was the granddaughter of Mr. Samuel Moore, the founder of Mooresville. She resided in the old brick house on West High Street. She never married but reared a young girl, who later married Mr. Richhart, the druggist.

Mr. Alden Hadley and his wife, Ruth, lived many years on a farm south of Monrovia, later moving to 203 West High Street. Mr. Hadley at one time was a representative of the National Audubon Society. In one publication he described 45 birds that are considered permanent residents of Indiana. That is, they are found in some parts of Indiana in all seasons of the year. He had a wealth of experience to draw on for in writing articles on birds as he had been interested in that field for more than a quarter of a century.

Paul Hadley, at one time lived in a frame house on Lockerbie Street. It was moved on the lot north and the Wheelers built their home on the site. John and Miriam Mills now live there. Paul, his mother, and brother then moved to East South Street, now the home of Horace and Marian Adams. Paul was one of Indiana's outstanding artists. Most of his paintings are in water colors. He also designed the emblem for the State Flag. In 1936 the Club began to have printed programs. Beginning in 1940 Paul Hadley made the covers using miniature water color sketches. Nearly all have been preserved.

Dora and Will Henley were dedicated members. Will was a farmer. He and Dora took an active interest in church and community affairs. In their later years they resided in the west part of town on West Washington Street.

Howard and Cora Johnson in their later years built the beautiful home on West High Street now owned by Mrs. Louise Van Bokkelen. Cora was always interested in nature. She taught Botany and Domestic Science (now called Home Economics) in our school before she and Howard were married. Howard owned and operated apple orchards both east and west of Mooresville.

Miss Verna Milner lived with her parents on East Harrison Street and helped rear a nephew and niece. She was an accomplished pianist. She held a position with the State Life Insurance Company for several years. She gave much of her time to the Nature Club before her marriage to Mr. Dell Hudson of Bedford, Kentucky.

Miss Elsie Record, better known as "Miss Elsie" taught primary school children for 47 years. She was a person who was always ready to help any one in need.

Chauncey and Isa Wilson lived in Mooresville a few years before moving to Florida. Isa taught for many years in the schools of Morgan County. After Chauncey's death she moved back to Mooresville, taught in our schools and again became an active member in the Nature Club.

Mrs. and Mrs. W.A. Rushton, known as "Ab" and Cophine lived on East Main Street in Plainfield. Mr. Rushton grew evergreens on his farm and was quite an authority on their growth. Their yard was always a beautiful sight with his prize-winning flowers.

Ab presented the Club with a gavel made from the Van Buren Elm tree which stood on Road 40 north of the Yearly Meeting Grounds. Cophine was a collector of colorful glass paper weights.

Misses Jennie and Mary Scott were sisters who lived with their mother in the large brick house on West High Street. Mary gave music lessons. Jennie commuted daily by interurban to Indianapolis where she held a position in the State Library.

Orville and Dean Templeton resided with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Comer, on East Harrison Street. Orville was associated with the Comer Searce Lumber Company. Very often the Club was their guest in their summer home, Beechwood, south of Mooresville.

Mr. A.L. (Alonzo) Wheeler lived for many years at Indiana and High Streets. Soon after his marriage to Rose Swain of Indianapolis, he built the house on Lockerbie Street, now the home of John and Miriam Mills. Mrs. Wheeler loved nature and was quite a bird watcher. Mr. Wheeler owned and operated the flour mill, known as the Banner Roller Mills. He also owned quite a few acres on the Greencastle Road. On one farm, far back from the road in the woods there is an old brick house at least 200 years old. The Wheelers restored it with antiques, naming it Roselon. (Using the given names of Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler). The Club was frequently entertained with picnics, and sometimes breakfasts at Roselon. It was an ideal place for nature hikes and identification of plant life.

The Club membership consisted of many talented and outstanding people. I will give you a few that added much to the life and standing of the Club.

Beginning in 1931-1936, Frank and Mary Hadley, brother and sister became members. Milford and Eleanor Carlisle, Dr. and Mrs. C. E. Miller of Plainfield, Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Searce, Miss Carrie Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Ethan Kendall, Wallace and Edith Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Royer Brown, Dr. and Mrs. O.S. Coffin, and Dr. and Mrs. Paul Haworth.

Dr. Haworth was the head of the history department at Butler University. One program given by Dr. Haworth was a talk on his Peace River Expedition in Eastern British Columbia, then an unexplored territory. A mountain was named Mt. Haworth by the Canadian government in recognition of Dr. Haworth's work in exploring the area. The Haworths lived in West Newton.

The Club's programs have been varied and very interesting and informative. Many subjects such as the Migration of Birds; The Sponge Industry by W.A. Rushton; Our Changing Flora; Bugs-Good and Bad; Indiana Weeds; Plants and Animal Life in the Arctic; and Seven Year Locusts have been explored.

A contest was held one Sunday afternoon at the Rushton's between the men and the women to see who could identify the Rushton's 70 varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers. The women won.

For sometime more than one subject was presented at each meeting, resulting in meetings that dragged far into the night. Some were so late in fact, several members felt it necessary to withdraw from the club. In 1937 a motion to limit the program to two hours failed to pass, but later it was decided that each program would be limited to one subject.

About 1931, the Club began having responses to roll call, usually to program related subjects.

An amendment to the Constitution concerning Honorary Members was passed unanimously - Article V Section II to read:

A member who has been loyal to the activities of the club for a number of years, but who for some reason can no longer assume his or her responsibilities, may be awarded honorary membership by the Club upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee.

Several years ago the idea of a living Christmas Tree was suggested. It was arranged for one to be planted in front of the Old Cemetery on West Washington Street. The Public Service Company cooperated by running a line for lights.

Christmas meetings have always been a gala affair, starting out with a 10¢ gift exchange and later 50¢ and \$1.00 gifts. During the depression years food items were taken to fill Christmas baskets for the less fortunate. Donations were made to Scouts. Also, \$100.00 was given by the Club to the Indianapolis Zoo.

Some delightful hours were spent at the Miller farm near Bunker Hill, and everyone always enjoyed staying late to hear the Whipperwills in the woods of Mary and Frank Hadley, a lovely area near Black Rock on State Road 267, just north of the home of Ann and Paul Myers.

Over the years the Club members have enjoyed several outings, most of them by chartered bus. These have included:

1. Links' Observatory in 1938.
2. Tour of Holcomb Gardens in 1957.
3. Brown County with dinner at the Nashville House in Oct. 1962.
4. A repeat trip to Brown County in October 1963.
5. Parke County Covered Bridge Tour in October 1964.
6. White Water Canal at Metamora with dinner at Copper Kettle in Morristown, October 1965.
7. Dinner with the Johnsons at their retirement home in Greencastle, October 1966.
8. Conner Prairie Farm with dinner at Hansel & Gretel Storybook Restaurant in October 1967.
9. Oldfields' with dinner at the Iron Skillet in October 1968.
10. On April 12, 1973, the Club enjoyed a hike and outing at the Blatchley Nature Study Club lands near Noblesville. That club was formed in 1922. The Noblesville Club has a beautiful Clubhouse situated on a 15 acre wildlife sanctuary.

In 1969 the members went by bus to Richmond, Indiana which included a visit to the Earlham College Museum of Natural History. Following dinner at Elizabeth Parker's, a stop was made at the Wayne County Historical Museum. The highlight of the trip was a visit to the Hays Arboretum near Glen Miller Park at the east side of Richmond.

October, 1970 a mystery trip was made by bus to Bedford, West Baden, with a stop at French Lick for lunch, then to Hindustan Falls and the State Fishing area located off of Road 550 southwest of Shoals. After a stroll there the members boarded the bus for the last stop overlooking the East Fork of White River. This trip was planned by Clark Kellum and Harry Spear.

In later years the Club has enjoyed many hours and picnics with the Kellums, the Becketts, Barkers, Ann Bray, the Lichtenwalters, Mills and Rogers.

The Club celebrated its 20th, 30th and 50th Anniversaries and now we are proud to be a part of the 60th anniversary celebration year.

During the research for the little data I have presented, I learned one thing, "Skunk Cabbage is the earliest wild flower that blooms".

#### Addendum

A history of the Mooresville Nature Club would not be complete unless a brief report of the famous "winter storm meeting" is given.

On January 12, 1971, the meeting was held at the home of Alice and Loy Beckett northeast of Joppa. Loy Beckett was President and Vivian Frederick Secretary.

While the meeting was in progress a great ice storm raged outside. Members attempted to leave for home, and only the Fredericks were able to reach home.

Carolyn Kellum later wrote an account of the night which she entitled, A Memorable Night.

"The morning of January 13, 1971, found 13 sleepy Nature Club Members still merrily marooned at the home of Loy and Alice Beckett, following the regular meeting of the night before. The night began and the night and day continued as follows:

It was beginning to sleet as we left our home for the meeting. Some wisely stayed at home. Others braved the elements and fared forth and spent a very interesting evening as the Minutes attest.

All evening it continued to sleet and with great caution guests re-entered their cars. A later report indicated the Fredericks succeeded in getting home. The Buells reached the first house east of the Becketts and decided the "better part of valor" was to ask for lodging. That could not be provided

because, the house was already filled with marooned travelers, but the head of the house offered to take Buells back to the Becketts in his truck.

Alice's work began as she prepared the spare bedroom for her guests, the Buells, offering Lois her best in attractive nightwear.

Soon Claire and Jean Sellars with Esther Rogers returned to Beckett's home of safety and warmth. Claire and Helen Cook also soon reappeared on the scene. In the meantime the Spears and Kellums, with Harry Spear bravely at the wheel, were inching and slipping along on their way to the first corner west of Becketts. Claire Sellars followed by Loy Beckett walked down to the corner and advised against continuing. Harry agreed the wise thing to do was inch his way back for the hospitality Loy so generously offered. (Poor man, what else could he do! What else could any one do?)

With the thirteen reassembled and very, very thankful that no one was hurt or ill, thoughts of other members and of families claimed our attention and kept the phone busy. However, 11:30 seemed too late for Clark Kellum to notify the Post Office of his whereabouts.

One disappointment was that Jean and Paul Henderson had no phone in Florida to receive a collect call. Inasmuch as they had called the Becketts that day with greetings for all and word of the 84° temperature in Florida, calling them would have been a malicious delight.

As all settled down for a long winter's night, Alice would quietly disappear for a few minutes now and then and quietly reappear. Finally Alice announced how we could sleep - The women were assigned the two bedrooms, three to a bed (shades of younger days) and one lady on cushions on the floor - The men were assigned to the living room to sleep on reclining chairs, davenport and air mattresses.

There were covers aplenty. While Lois had the only glamorous nightwear, Alice provided the ladies pajamas ranging from her summer weight ones to Loy's outing flannels. At last the women with wigs, hearing aids, dentures and a few other things were bedded down. Eventually, everyone quieted down secure in the knowledge that there would be breakfast. Alice had counted the eggs and there were fifteen.

It was nearly 7:30 A.M. before we began to arouse. No one really expected to sleep, but most admitted they must have slept since time had seemed to stand still. Exceptions may have been Jean, Lois and Harry.

The first item of business was Clark's call to the Plainfield Post Office. He learned they had the police checking on his house after receiving no answer there.

The gracious hostess, allowing a cooperative effort, soon provided breakfast: home canned tomato juice, scrambled eggs and bacon, toast and coffee. Loy kept the fire going and checked for the safety of his guests.

The T.V. News with reports of cars piling up, broken bones and falls on ice etc., gave us further reason for our heartfelt gratitude to the Becketts for their generous hospitality and a never to be forgotten experience."

All were homeward bound the next morning and reported safe arrivals.

Submitted by Carolyn Kellum  
(By V.E.F.)

Footnote:

On departing for the Club meeting; Myrtle Keller was unable to get her car up the hill to pick up May Hadley who resided at Stormy Acres. When Myrtle called Frances Lichtenwalter she advised that Frances' hill was a sheet of ice. May, Frances and Myrtle were thankful they were forced to stay at home that very eventful "Nature Night"!

Myrtle Keller

Presented to the Mooresville Library  
by Miss Myrtle Keller long time member of Sewing Club  
(8-3-1984)

MOORESVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
MOORESVILLE, INDIANA