Historical Fun Facts

About Mooresville & Morgan County, Indiana

(<u>Sources:</u> Mooresville Public Library & Morgan County Public Library)

<u>EARLY SETTLEMENT & CITIZENS</u>

- Early in 1818 Cyrus Whetzel became the first non-Native American settler in Morgan County. He obtained permission from Delaware Chief Anderson, whose Indian village was situated where the city of Anderson, Indiana now stands, to cut a trace, or trail, from the White Water River in the eastern part of the state to the Bluffs, which were located 1¼ miles northeast of the present site of Waverly, Indiana. Whetzel moved his family to Morgan County in 1819.
- In 1824 the principal mediums used as money were silver coins, deer skins, ginseng, bees wax, and occasionally horns from male deer.
- Samuel Moore, founder of Mooresville, paid $2.00 per acre for the land upon which the town now occupies. Moore first moved to Brown Township in Morgan County in 1822.
- Samuel Moore Rooker was the first child born in Mooresville. (Date of birth: May 22, 1824.)
- In 1824 Asa Bales built the first house in Mooresville on the south side of East Main Street.
- In 1831, 140 lots were offered for sale in Mooresville.
- On April 6, 1826, I. W. Rooker and Polly Ballard, as well as Samuel Jones and Mary Plummer, became the first persons married in Mooresville.
- Samuel and Eliza Moore donated the land on West Washington Street for use as a cemetery, now known as "Old Cemetery," and to serve as the site of the first M.E. Church (built in 1839).
- Martha J. Worthington, Eliza Moore's first cousin, became the first person buried in Old Cemetery in Mooresville. She died at age 21 on May 15, 1829. Three buildings have been constructed at the location of the Morgan County Courthouse. These were respectively erected in 1824, 1839, and 1859.
- Benjamin Barnes was the first landowner in Clay Township, Morgan County.

- Abner Alexander was the first landowner in Ray Township, Morgan County.
- In 1822, James Shields became the first Morgan County Treasurer.
- Centerton is named because it is the geographic center of Morgan County.

POSTAL SERVICE

- Mooresville's first postmaster was Asa Bales. The town's first post office opened Aug. 30, 1826.
- In 1830 a weekly mail delivery route was first established between Indianapolis and Mooresville.

CHURCHES

- The White Lick Monthly Meeting of Friends built its first church in 1827 a mile west of Mooresville near the forks of White Lick and McCracken's Creeks. It was the first brick church constructed in Morgan County at a cost of over $900.
- James Hadley was the first recorded minister of the White Lick Monthly Meeting of Friends in Mooresville.
- In 1821 Reuben Claypool held the first Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) church service in Mooresville.
- In 1828 Eliza Moore, wife of Samuel Moore, established the first Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) church class in Mooresville. Mrs. Moore was instrumental in founding the first M.E. Church in Mooresville in 1839.
- The Society of Friends church was closely associated with the Underground Railroad.
- The Mooresville First Christian Church was constructed around 1850.

BUSINESSES

- The first goods that Samuel Moore sold in his Mooresville trading post were purchased in Louisville in 1823.
- Jacob Coombs and John Hiatt were the first cabinet makers in Mooresville.
- Dr. John Sims, the first physician in Martinsville, principally dispensed herbs, quinine, snakeroot, and ipecac as medicinal remedies. Dr. Sims' practice circuit extended across 60 miles of Morgan County. Dr. Sims travelled by horseback, using leather saddle bags to carry medicines.
- Cox, Blankenship and Jackson were early tavern keepers. The tavern stood across from today's Newcomer Lumber Co. An unsolved murder occurred there.
- In 1831, a group of women overran a Mooresville saloon, sitting two-by-two and knitting sweaters and baby boots. Business ground to a halt, as men would not drink in front of the ladies. The saloon soon moved outside town.
- John H. Bray operated the first fulling mill (water-powered cloth-spinning mill) in Morgan County around 1829 or 1830. It was located between today's Greencastle Road and County Line Road just southeast of the village of Joppa.
- John H. Bray and John B. Hadley opened the first brick kiln in Mooresville.
- James Richardson and Joel Landrum were the first "hatters" in Mooresville.

- Mooresville had five licensed physicians in 1897.
- The first telephone company in Mooresville was organized on March 31, 1900.
- Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Taggart moved to Mooresville from Indianapolis and started a bakery built by the Hornaday brothers. Around the turn of the 20th century, the Taggerts operated their bakery and restaurant on West Main Street, which was sold to R. C. Moore after Mr. Taggerts' death.
- Nick Banos operated a candy store in the Lindley Block before it burned down in Dec. 1925. He subsequently moved his business to Franklin, Indiana.
- McCracken House, a hotel and restaurant on West Main Street across from the Carnegie Library, was famous for its chicken dinners. Indianapolis residents often took the interurban trains to eat there on Sundays. The Electric Car Club, a group of electric automobile enthusiasts, was a frequent visitor, although there were sometimes frantic telephone calls for new batteries or towing back to Indianapolis.
- In 1915 the Mooresville town council voted to install a sewer.

SCHOOLS

- The first school in Morgan County was organized in 1820.
- The Mooresville Academy Building, constructed in 1861, was the first secondary school in central Indiana. The land for the school was provided by the Society of Friends, based on a higher education land trust created by Katie Malloy. Later, the Newby family donated the land to the Town of Mooresville to erect new school buildings. Newby Elementary School stands there today.

ENTERTAINMENT

- In the early 20th century chautaquas, or local entertainment gatherings, were popular in Mooresville. In 1916 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was performed for the public at an admission price of 10 cents.

FAMOUS LOCAL CITIZENS

- Clifford C. Furnas, a Mooresville High School and Purdue University graduate, was a member of the United States Olympic Team and competed in the Olympic Games at Antwerp, Belgium in 1920.
- Amos Wilson Rusie was born in Mooresville on May 30, 1871. He was called the "Hoosier Thunderbolt" and was considered the best fastball pitcher of his day in major league baseball. He held numerous pitching records while playing for the New York Giants and Cincinnati Reds. He died in Seattle, Washington on Dec. 6, 1942.
- William G. Bray was elected to Congress in 1950.
- Paul Hadley, a Mooresville artist specializing in water colors, designed the Indiana State Flag in 1916. He was an instructor at the Herron School of Art in Indianapolis (1922-1933). Several of his paintings are displayed at the Mooresville Public Library.
- James Whitcomb Riley, famous Indiana poet, had his stage debut in Monrovia in 1874.
- Mabel Leigh Hunt wrote many children's books, including *Lucinda*, which was based on local people she knew living in Mooresville.