

Tracks in the Snow


LOOKING BACK, STEPPING FORWARD

by
JoAnne Shafer, Past President (2010)

While leaving the Kaske House one winter day last year, I looked back to see my tracks in the snow. There were other tracks made by the woodland critters, but since mine were the only human kind in the fresh snow that day, I took a moment to reflect. Although woodland tracks may be important clues to foresters and hunters, tracks could be useful in other ways, like a little boy's clever valentine wishes depicted in the photo below. It occurred to me that looking back at "tracks" is something that historians like to do. However, they are usually involved in hunting down someone else's "tracks", not their own. But then I had a thought: maybe you would be interested in memories of the Munster Historical Society from the time when I first became a member. If you are, then put on your boots, and follow the tracks along my memory trail!

It was a crisp, fall day in the early 1990s when Dave and I stopped by Bieker Woods East, later named Heritage Park. A community event called Olde Munster Day was going on there. A big General Store sign beckoned us to buy some old-fashioned candy. They had a blab school for the children, the Boy Scouts were cooking peach cobbler, and we warmed up with hot cider ladled out by Society volunteers. We didn't know anyone there, so we sat by ourselves at a rickety picnic table. While eating our simple little lunch, we admired the rustic barn, the old farmhouse, and the natural woodland. Having lived in Munster since 1977, we wondered why we had passed by this historic property for so many years without knowing anything about its rich history. Determined to find out more, Dave suggested we stop by the membership table to see if we could become members of the Munster Historical Society.

(Tracks in the Snow continued on reverse side.)



Thank you to
everyone
who helped
make 2010 a
successful year
for the Munster
Historical
Society!



February 2011

2010 Outstanding Volunteers

Recipients of the 2010 Outstanding Volunteer lapel pin are: September Alexander, Kelly Benoit, Norma Benoit, Beth Palmer, Jim Schmidt, Susan Schmidt, Shirley Schmueser, and Cindy Watson. Thank you to all of these dedicated volunteers for their outstanding service!

2010 Highlights

Annual Dinner—February
Brass Stagecoach Center Presentation—Feb.
Grand Hotel Movie Night—March
Chicago Architecture Program—April
Shovel & Spade Garden Day—April
Prohibition Book Lecture—May
A Century of Fashion Show/Luncheon—May
Kaske House 100th Birthday Party—June
Summer Concert Concession Stand
4th of July Parade Prizewinner
Underground Railroad Lecture—September
World War II Exhibit—September
Haunted History Event—October
Docent Workshop—November
Holiday Candlelight Open House—December
Conducted School & Scout Tours
Negotiated 5-Year Contract with Parks
Acquired Popcorn & Hot Dog Machines
Moved into New Storage Facility
Designed MHS Logo Shirts

Tracks in the Snow (continued)

As new members, we were very impressed to find out that some of the hard-working volunteers who had served us apple cider were current or former members of the Munster Town Council. In 1995, we learned that plans were under way to restore the house and barn, and later the Town offered the Society use of the house for its very first museum.

Somehow, I found myself on the Museum Committee. Although my work schedule prevented me from being as active as others on the committee, I learned a lot. They taught me why ideas can't be copyrighted: ideas, like dreams, have no substance until they are brought to fruition by planning, expertise, hard work, perseverance, and determination. By spring of 1997, the Museum Committee hosted A Brass Tavern Tea to welcome the public to the Society's new museum at the Kaske House, now known as the Munster History Museum.

In 1998, a Victorian-style gazebo was built by the Town. The park was renamed Heritage Park to

honor its historic significance as a stage-coach stop. On April 1, 1998, the Kaske House and Stallbohm Barn were listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Soon, I ended up on Sally Trent's Holiday Candlelight Open House committee. This was an ambitious idea to move the tree-lighting ceremony at Town Hall over to Heritage Park. The charm of the candlelit brick entryway to the rustic park, cookies and cocoa in the old barn, and the beautifully decorated farmhouse, complete with Santa and his elves, turned this event into a much-beloved tradition that continues to be held on the first Saturday of December, in spite of inclement weather and the loss to arson in 2002 of the old red barn.

Does it seem like we have been on this trail for quite awhile? Actually, we have only been walking long enough to cover a few highlights of 20 years. OK, let's take a break. But if you would like to continue making tracks in support of the Munster Historical Society, meet me below.



Warming Up in the Stallbohm Barn



Circa 1870s Stallbohm Barn



Where Do Your Tracks in the Snow Go?

I hope you will take a moment to reflect on where your tracks in the snow have taken you in the past, and where you think they will take you in the future. So often we have good intentions, and we say we care about the century-old Kaske House and Heritage Park. But tracks don't lie. If our tracks continue to pass by, then one day we'll look back and a local landmark will be gone from view. We need many tracks in the snow, in all sizes, coming and going often to help support the 1910 Kaske House and historic park.

Next time I see tracks in the snow at Heritage Park, I hope they are yours!



What year was the Heritage Park photo taken?