



The Brown County Historical Society **Newsletter**

ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION



Two paintings were recently acquired from "The Family of Harry and Jeanette Hollis" of Bloomington. The "Deed of Gift" was completed by daughters Susan Hollis Bassett, Martha Hollis, and Janet Hollis Selby (of Zionsville, IN). The family used to own a cabin near Story, and the girls spent every weekend there exploring and learning about nature from their father, a distinguished conservationist and naturalist. The small bird paintings were rendered by Ralph Emerson Lee (1894 - 1973), the notorious "**Bisbee Gray-Cap Bandit**".

Ralph Emerson Lee began studying painting in a federal prison hospital in Missouri, where he was recovering from bullet wounds. At this time and place, he also fell in love -- with his prison minister, Jessie Edna Edwards. With these developments, Lee finally reached a turning point and became a changed man.

Lee was born 1894 in Indianapolis to Mordecai Lee and May Yeagley. Following divorce, his mother with four young children settled in Brown County, on property homesteaded by his father's family, pre Civil War.

As a young adult in Brown County, Lee was drawn into criminal activity, which consumed his life for some 3 decades. On the night of his ninth-grade graduation, Lee broke into the O.U. Mutz Hardware Store, to steal guns and ammunition. The scheme ended with his shooting and wounding the town marshall.

After repeated offenses and convictions in Brown, Johnson and Bartholomew counties, the 20-year-old moved west. He would serve prison time in the states of Washington and Arizona. In Arizona, Lee achieved notoriety as the

Resources & Affiliations

Brown County Museum and Old Log Jail

Society's Archives and Genealogical Records

Pioneer Women

Member

Association of Indiana Museums

Indiana Landmarks

Indiana Historical Society

Society of Indiana Archivists

Meetings

General Pitch-in dinner 1st Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in Grand Hall, History Center

Board of Directors 3rd Monday each month at 9:30 a.m. in Hughes Room, History Center

The mission of the Historical Society is to collect, preserve, and exhibit the history of Brown County, Indiana, for the education of students, members and the general public.

Little Deeds

by Glenn E. Long (1899 - 1959)



There is ever a task for
the man who will,
And happy is he, indeed
Who sees the work that
is his to do
And cheerfully takes the
lead.

Perhaps he cannot level
mountains

Nor calm the waves of the sea.
He takes the task that's within his power,
Letting seas and mountains be.

There's a place for the small, and a place
for the great,
Tho over the world it's true
That people are fretting their lives away
On the tasks that they cannot do.

Somewhere nearby is the task for each,
Perhaps it is just to smile;
But that smile may become a
blessing
In the days that are after a while.

The littlest oak in the forest
May grow to the strongest tree
--
From a little deed that is done
today,
None knows what the end may
be.

Source: Long, Stanley E.. *"The Bard of Brown County,"* 2017.

ADDITIONS TO THE COLLECTION, *continued...*

"Bisbee Gray-Cap Bandit."

Back again in Indiana, Lee continued his prolific crime streak. Reportedly, he escaped prison 13 times -- once with John Dillinger.

But his life did turn, and Ralph married Jessie in 1947. Thereafter they made a fresh start in Brown County where he set up a studio to become a working artist.

Lee's past would haunt him in dramatic fashion (at least) one final time, when Indianapolis police descended upon his Brown County home in August 1949. He was charged with murder -- for a 25-year-old outstanding case.

In short, Lee received a sentence of forgiveness. This changed man had won over the hearts of his community and ultimately the Johnson County judge.

As an artist, Lee received commissions from the American Legion and its members. Two of his artworks decorate the American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis. He also earned state and national honors for poetry and art.

Jessie passed away in 1955, and after remarrying, Ralph passed away in 1973. Their final place of rest is the Nineveh Christian Church Cemetery in Johnson County.



Reference: Pearson, Julia. *"Ralph Emerson Lee, On the Edge" Our Brown County,* Nov/Dec 2019.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS



A fresh coating of snow hides all that went in to constructing the History Center, dedicated in 2014.

BROWN COUNTY HISTORY CENTER FACTS

- **18,000 Square Foot building**
- **Architect: Kirkwood Design**
- **General Contractor: Dunlap Co.**
- **Woods used: Tulip poplar trim, cherry and walnut doors. Cedar siding and solid cedar porch posts. White oak floor in Grand Hall. Oak stairs with walnut trim.**
- **100 tons of Brown County Stone installed by local artisans, Paul Bay and Sons.**
- **800 cubic yards of concrete for footers, floors, walls**
- **36 tons of reinforcing steel within concrete**
- **91 tons of structural steel**
- **1200 sheets of 4'x12' drywall**
- **48,000 feet of wiring**
- **250 light fixtures with various types of energy efficient bulbs.**

THE ABE MARTIN AWARD



At the Christmas Dinner, Kathy Shields & Rick Kelley were recipients of the 2024 "Abe Martin Award", which recognizes individuals who have made significant contribution to the cultural or historical heritage of our community.

Historical Society Parking Lot Mural,
plaque reads:

**Mathis/Bond: "A Brown County
Ancestry"**

by A.W. (Amanda Wallace) Mathis

The economic engine of Brown County has always been family-owned small businesses. This mural depicts one example - the Bond Funeral Home in the 1940s, owned by the family of the artist's husband. The Mathis and Bond families, like many in the county, have been here for generations, represented in the mural by Green Valley Mathis Farm and the Bond Home in Helmsburg.



FROM THE TREASURER

GENERAL ACCOUNT:

Balance 1.1.24	4,674.68
DEPOSITS	
Archive	115.00
General Donations	39,073.00
Distributions: BCCF, Trusts	9,339.38
Membership	2,475.00
Parking Donations	23,871.50
Donations	952.00
Programs and events	1,620.00
Building Use	9,605.00
Total Deposits	87,050.88

WITHDRAWALS

Administrative	334.00
Advertising	635.00
Archive	4,193.14
Curator	134.00
Dues & Subscriptions	620.24
Insurance	13,933.00
Maintenance	17,467.11
Other	240.50
Payroll	12,914.00
Pioneer Village Repair	0
Tax Preparation	1,675.00
Program	2,248.50
Event deposit refunds	1,730.00
Repair	0
Supplies	2,240.69
Security	228.00
Telephone and internet	3,547.00
Utilities:	11,524.18
Electric: 8214.65	
Gas: 1140.42	
Water: 2,168.81	
Total Withdrawals	73,663.97
Balance 12/31/2024	18,061.59

GAMING ACCOUNT:

Balance 1/1/2024	4,868.21
Deposits	2,405.00
Withdrawals	5,757.94
Balance 12/31/2024	1,515.27

GIFT SHOP:

Balance 1/1/2024	13,265.65
Deposits	2,360.79
Withdrawals	1,150.04
State Sales tax	157.82
Balance 12/31/2024	14,476.40

PIONEER WOMEN:

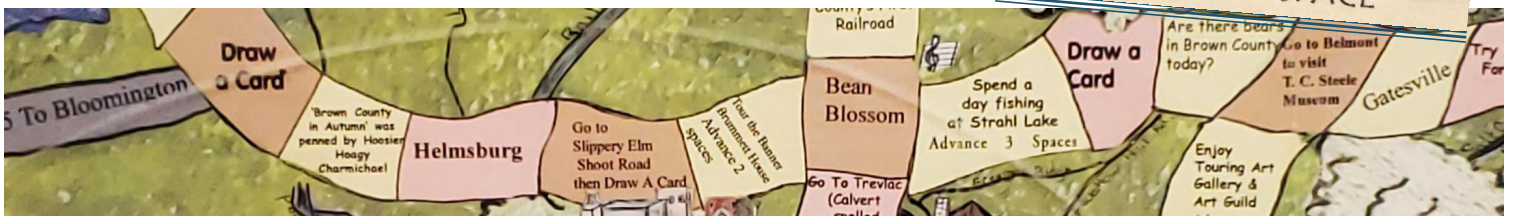
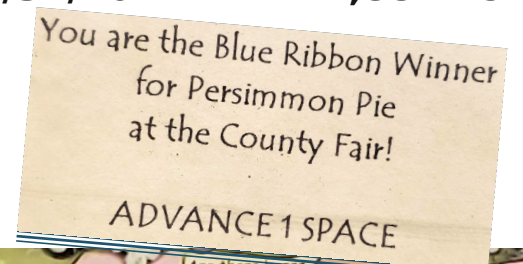
Balance 1/1/2024	10,252.25
Deposits	3,463.96
Disbursements	5,297.68
Balance 12/31/2024	8,418.53

SAVINGS ACCOUNT:

Balance 1/1/2024	190,669.39
Deposits	72,100.00
Interest (3.92%)	7,958.22
Balance 12/31/2024	270,727.61

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FUNDS:

Agency Fund	
Balance 1/1/2024	10,298.50
Balance 12/31/2024	10,993.77
Designated Fund	
Balance 1/1/2024	39,428.00
Balance 12/31/2024	41,881.29



FROM THE COLLECTION

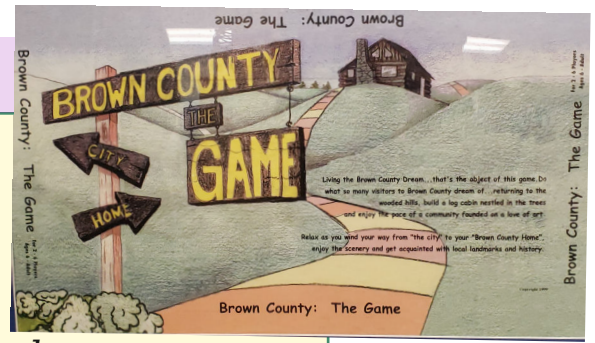
Brown County the Game

Letter from Marcia Norton:

During the 1998-99 school year, the Commercial Art class, under the direction of art teacher Mike Beam, accepted a project to help me create a Brown County game. When I approached Mr. Beam with the idea, the game board concept was very abstract and I needed artistic help!

The ideas that came from Mr. Beam's students Ryan Burton, Erik Eagelman, Andi Rogers and Amber Williamson were terrific. The game that you see here is the result of a lot of hard work by these people. As it was a class project, it was decided that I would make donations to the Art Club as restitution for the work. An initial donation of \$100 would be followed by donations of \$1 for every game that is sold in the retail market.

I appreciate the opportunity to not only see this idea manufactured, but also the opportunity for these students to see their artistic efforts go from ideas to finished commercial product. We all hope that the Art Club is able to do wonderful things with the funds made available!



Erik Eagelman
Amber Williamson
Ryan Burton
Andi Rogers
M. Beam
Marcia Norton



MEMBER NEWS

Reminder: If you have not yet paid your 2025 dues, it is time to do so. See the payment form on the last page.

Volunteers needed to host our monthly Pitch-In dinners. At least 3 couples are needed each month. Contact Marcia Sledd to sign up: mrsledd@icloud.com.

PIONEER WOMEN'S CLUB



With instruction from Jennifer Coons, Pioneer Women crafted paper necklaces, on a sunny January day.

Pioneer Women welcome interested parties to their upcoming programs:

- **February 12th, Crocheting a Granny Square -- Susannie Straus-Stevens** (need to have basic crocheting skills)
- **March 12th, Cordage & Rope Making -- Carol Alvarez**
- **April 16th, Tea Tote Kit -- Bobbie Mentzel**

PEACEFUL VALLEY HERITAGE



We are grateful for Peaceful Value Heritage members who provide and decorate a perfect Christmass tree each season. PVH notes that they in turn receive help from Nashville's Christmas Committee as well as society members.

DONATIONS

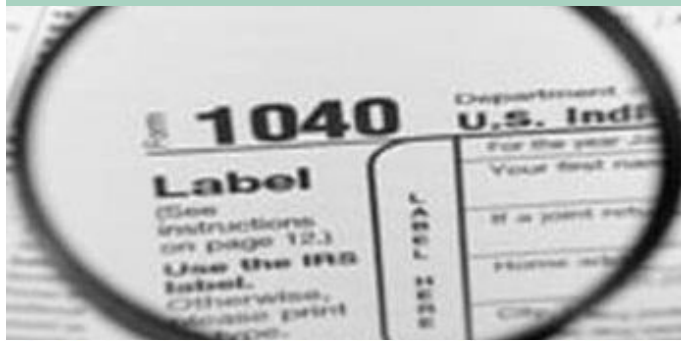
November, December, January

General Donations

Pioneer Womens Club
Bright and Williamson Insurance
Barbara Livesey
Pete and Ginnvor Bullard
Donna and Layton Tackett
Rita Simon
Ellen Carter
Alice Lorenz
Nancy Coulter
Lorenz Family Charitable Trust
Brown County Community Foundation:
Alice Lorenz Fund
Fred and Mary Jane Lorenz Fund
Jim and Renee McDermott Fund
Bill and Gini Percifield Fund
Board of Directors of the Historical Society

For BC genealogy inquiries contact info.bcgenealogy@gmail.com.

OUR LOYAL SPONSORS



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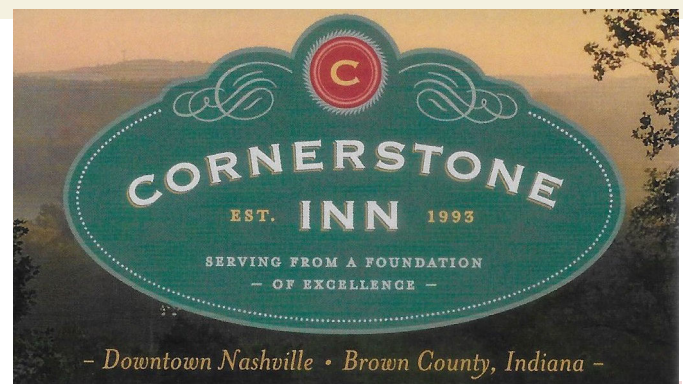
2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

President	Rebecca Patton
1st Vice President	Cathy Kazimier
Recording Sec.	Pauline Hoover
Treasurer	Alice Lorenz

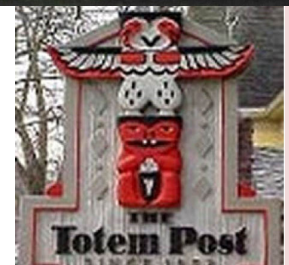
Board Members

Kathy Shields	Richard Frenzel
Kathy Evans	Jim Watkins
Mitzi Kummerer	Vince Milnes
Jenn Milnes	Mike Kazimier
Krista August	



The Totem Post

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www.thetotempost.com

Brown County Historical Society
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Nashville, IN 47448

Membership Application or Renewal

Benefits of Membership

- Informative and educational meetings throughout the year.
- Quarterly Society newsletter
- 10% off any gift shop purchase
- Association with others interested in historic preservation

Categories of Membership (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Student (under 18) -----	\$ 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer Women -----	10
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual -----	20
<input type="checkbox"/> Family -----	35
<input type="checkbox"/> Business (business card size ad in newsletter & website) -----	100
<input type="checkbox"/> Life -----	1000

Name _____ New _____ Renewal _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Dues are payable January 1 of each year. Dues paid in the 4th quarter of the year will apply to the remainder of the current year and the next calendar year. Make check payable to Brown County Historical Society. Mail to: P. O. Box 668, Nashville, IN 47448