

SAHC eNews

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Historians to Offer Armchair Tour of Area Ghost Towns



Local historians Richard L. Cooley, left, and Kevin Maynard pose with the historic marker at the ghost town Denmark, surveyed 150 years ago in Williams County's St. Joseph Township. The duo will offer an armchair tour of area ghost towns at the Williams County Public Library's West Annex on March 24. (SAHC photo)

Do the words "ghost town" conjure images of deserted Old West towns, tumbleweeds rolling down dusty streets and creaky saloon doors swinging in the breeze?

Not all ghost towns fit that description, and local residents may be surprised to learn that the Williams County area is home to a dozen or more failed communities.

Local historians Kevin May-

nard and Richard L. Cooley will lift the veil on the area's extinct and forgotten villages with an armchair tour of local ghost towns at the Williams County Public Library's new West Annex on March 24.

Cosponsored by the Stryker Area Heritage Council and Williams County Public Library, the presentation features the stories behind such unfamiliar names as Edinburg, St. Joseph, Freedom, Southport,

Parkersburg, Williamsport and Pleasant Hill.

"These towns were all formally surveyed and legally recorded," Maynard said. "Some, such as Pleasant Hill, existed only on paper. Others flourished for a time with businesses, homes, churches, post offices and schools before fading into oblivion."

"A number of ghost towns, such as Freedom, were platted in hopes of becoming the Williams County seat," Cooley stated. "Others vanished due to a rival village or lack of good transportation facilities."

"It's a story of dashed hopes and dreams," Maynard added.

Maynard and Cooley have researched, written and presented local history for more than two decades. Both men have served as president of the Williams County Historical Society, and they coauthored the WCHS publications, "A Guide to Williams County's History" and "Temple of Justice: The Story of Williams County's Courthouses."

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SAHC Releases Historic Driving Tour DVD



Local historian Tonya Bockover shares details of Lockport's history in a new SAHC DVD of area historic sites. Other featured sites include the Goll Homestead, the ghost town Williamsport, and Evansport. (Photo courtesy of *The Advance Reporter*)

Ever wonder how the family for whom Goll Woods is named came to the area, and why is their barn so unique? Do you know what thriving business used to be in Lockport or that there was a large business built upon selling trees to settlers southwest of Stryker? Is it true that there's a favorite place for skinny-dipping in Evansport, or is it two?

These and other questions about the history of the area are answered in a new video

just released by the Stryker Area Heritage Council. The video, which is being shown by area cable outlets, is based on a historic driving tour the Council sponsored two years ago.

"The original idea was to record and then replay the driving tour in 2006," says SAHC Board Member Bill Priest, who produced the new video. "But there were some glitches with the original recording, and it looked like it wasn't going to work."

Instead of letting it go, Mr.

Priest contacted the presenters and asked them to reshoot some of the segments. He noted that the farther the group got into the project, the more they saw that they wanted to add to it. So, by taking the extra time, they were able to add interesting information that wasn't presented on the tour.

The tour begins at the Goll family homestead and barn, travels to Lockport, then to the former home of the Stryker Nurseries where the Pine Grove Mennonite Church is today.

There is a stop at the ghost town Williamsport, which would have grown up around where the Boynton Cemetery is now had the town flourished, then the Prayer Chapel, which used to be the Oak Grove Methodist Episcopal Church. The tour ends at the Evansport mill.

"There are clips of the original tour in the show...complete with the sound of wind and cars driving by," Priest laughs. "But along with that, some of the presenters came back and redid their segments, expanding on what they said."

"That's what really makes the show, the historians who delved into the backgrounds of their topics," Priest notes.

Local historians who served as site interpreters include Kris Jemmott, Don Julliard and Pete Wilhelm at the Goll Homestead and barn, Tonya Bockover at Lockport, Kevin Maynard at the Stryker locations, Sue Buehrer at the former Oak Grove church and Jean (Coy) Bartholomew and Tanya Brunner at Evansport.

A number of area cable television outlets are presently airing the program, including DC-TV in Defiance, who assisted with the program's production.

DVD copies of the program are available at SAHC events, through the SAHC's website, www.strykerhistory.org, or by contacting the SAHC via email at info@strykerahc.org. Copies of the program are priced at \$10 each for SAHC members and \$12 for non-members. 🐾

Local Historians Offer Armchair Tour of Area Ghost Towns

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The program is part of a SAHC series designed to promote the area's rich historical and cultural heritage. There is no charge to attend the event, scheduled for 6 p.m. on March 24 at the Local History Center in the Library's new West Annex (former Citizens National Bank), northeast corner of High and Main streets, Bryan.

For additional information, check the SAHC website at www.strykerhistory.org. 🐾

WCGS Adds Quaker Cemetery to Website

The Williams County Genealogical Society has added information and photographs on each of

the headstones in the Friends or Quaker Cemetery in Brady Township northeast of West Unity to its website, www.wcgs-ogs.com. Website visitors can now view photographs of each tombstone in this area cemetery, accompanied by tombstone inscriptions transcribed by local researchers. 🐾

SAHC Monthly Meetings

The Stryker Area Heritage Council Board of Trustees meets at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday each month in the historic Stryker depot, 203 North Depot Street. The next SAHC Board of Trustees meeting will be held on March 12. All members and the public are welcome to attend. 🐾

STRYKER AREA HERITAGE COUNCIL Membership Form

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STRYKER AREA HERITAGE COUNCIL

P. O. Box 180
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Make all checks payable to the Stryker Area Heritage Council

SAHC Sponsors Lincoln Bicentennial Program



The Stryker Area Heritage Council sponsored Myrna Grove's multimedia presentation "Abraham Lincoln in Illinois" on February 21 at the Stryker American Legion Hall to mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. (SAHC Photo)

Evansport 175th Anniversary Committee Begins Planning

The Evansport Terquasquicentennial (175th Anniversary) Committee held its initial meeting on March 5 at the Tiffin Township Fire Station, Evansport, with 23 people in attendance.

SAHC representative Kevin Maynard called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.

Following introductions, committee members discussed

possible activities to mark Evansport's 175th anniversary in 2010, including a parade, recording oral histories, burial of a time capsule, a contest to create a 175th anniversary slogan, selling commemorative t-shirts, a community garage sale, street fair, street dance, youth activities, and canoe races on the Tiffin River.

Cecelia Brown of the Defiance County Genealogical Society reported the DCGS is willing to host a beginning genealogy workshop as a terquasquicentennial event.

Tanya Brunner has compiled vintage images from the Evansport area, accompanied by historic information, in two photograph albums. Rose Burkholder is digitizing these photographs for use in publications, websites, presentations or placement on CDs for the public.

Committee members felt a printed history of Evansport should be included in the commemoration activities, and that producing small quantities would help keep the upfront costs manageable.

The group discussed issuing a collectible wooden replica of a local historic structure such as the Evansport Mill, school or United Methodist Church. Pre-orders could be taken to help defray the cost of issuance.

The committee agreed to meet the first Thursday of each month to continue planning. The next meeting will be held at 7 p.m., April 2, at the Tiffin Township Fire Station. Anyone with an interest in the Evansport area and its heritage is welcome and encouraged to participate. ☺

The SAHC eNews is an occasional publication of the STRYKER AREA HERITAGE COUNCIL, a non-profit organization. Complimentary subscriptions are provided to SAHC members. To join, contact the SAHC at P.O. Box 180, Stryker, OH 43557, by telephone at 419.373.0310, or via email at info@strykerahc.org. The SAHC eNews is edited by Kevin Maynard, 1436 Muirfield Drive, Bowling Green, OH 43402; email kevinmaynard@woh.rr.com ☺

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