

## Seasons Greetings and Happy Holidays from the Rush County Historical Society

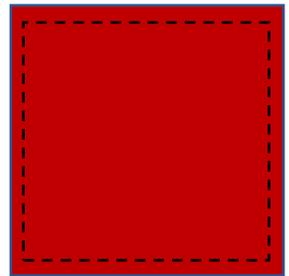
This year has been unlike any other that we have seen in recent years. We have had to cancel many of our annual events and have missed seeing our visitors at our monthly open houses. The health and well-being of our friends, families, and members cannot be taken lightly, and we have kept this in mind when making decisions affecting the museum. We hope that 2021 will reunite everyone again and that we can get back to many of our scheduled activities.

On behalf of the Rush County Historical Society Board, we want to wish our members and their families a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year! We hope to see you in the coming months. The 2021 schedule of events will be posted on our website at [www.rushcountyhistory.org](http://www.rushcountyhistory.org).



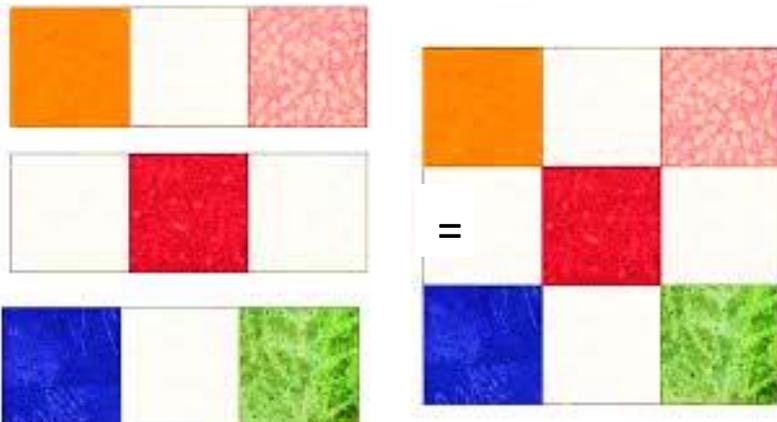
## Bicentennial Quilt Project 2022

We invite you to become a part of the Rush County Bicentennial Celebration by joining our Nine Patch Project. All finished quilt blocks will be 9 inches in diameter. Individual squares for piecing must be 3 ½ inches. You will need 9 3 ½ inch squares for your Nine Patch Quilt Block. Your seams should be ¼ inch. Blocks can be hand stitched or machine stitched. Your stitching need not be perfect. It's a quilt – and the best part of any quilt is all the imperfections that make it totally perfect.



3 inch block. Dashed lines indicate stitching for ¼ inch seam stitching.

*A sample middle square and directions will be sent to all members in January 2021.* You can go ahead and use it for your center block or simply as a guide piece.



**Quilt Blocks are due no later than July 1, 2021.** This will give us time to piece and quilt in preparation for the Bicentennial Celebration in 2022.

Quilt Blocks can be dropped off or mailed to the Rush County Historical Society Museum at 619 North Perkins Street, Rushville, Indiana 46173 or at the home of Marianne Scott, 811 North Harrison Street, Rushville, Indiana 46173.

*“Come – be a part of history.”*

# Rush County Bicentennial

## Taxes, Taverns, and Jails

Written by John Wilson, Rush County Historian

This is the fifth article I have written concerning the Rush County Bicentennial in 2022. After the land sales at Brookville in 1820, the organization of Rush County took a lot of time and effort.

In April of 1822, by state statute Rush County was established with three County Commissioners. They were Amaziah Morgan of Union Township, Jehu Perkins of Noble Township, and John Julian of Orange Township. All three had north/south streets named in their honor in the county seat town of Rushville.

Initially only six townships existed in Rush County (Union, Ripley, Noble, Washington, Richland, and Orange). Today there are twelve. As the county grew, there was a need for more township voting centers and public school locations.

Several of the first organizational meetings for the county took place at Stephen Simms' cabin. His home was located just south of the Flatrock River where State Road 52 and State Road 3 now come together (where the new Casey's store is located). There is a large stone and plaque at the point to commemorate the location.

Other meetings were held at William Laughlin's cabin. At a special meeting on June 17, 1822, the commissioners approved the seat of justice in Rushville.

One of the biggest responsibilities of the commissioners was to raise revenue to support Rush County. Originally the main source of money was from the sale of 151 lots sold in the town of Rushville.

Money was scarce on the frontier. Most business was done on a trade or barter system. Gold coins were always good. Interest rates on loans or IOUs were ten percent or higher.

Additional revenue came from taxes. One tax was a poll tax of 50 cents on all white males over 21 years of age. (Remember that white women, African American men and women, and Native American men and women did not have the right to vote.)

A second tax was placed on personal property. The rates were: stud horse – the price of one breeding, mule – 37 ½ cents, yoke oxen over three years old – 25 cents each, four wheeled carriage - \$1.25, two wheeled pleasure carriage - \$1.00, gold watch – 50 cents, and silver watch – 20 cents.

Taverns were taxed from five dollars to ten dollars per year. Also the county set levels for tavern prices: whisky – 12 ½ cents per ½ pint, meals – 25 cents each, bed – 6 ¼ cents per person, and a horse standing at hay overnight – 18 ¾ cents.

A third tax was the one set on real estate in 1826. Each 100 acres of the first rate was taxed at 50 cents, each 100 acres of the second rate - 40 cents, and each 100 acres of the third rate - 30 cents. Town lots were taxed at 50 cents on every 100 dollars of assessed value.

So from the get-go personal property and real estate taxes became our primary sources of Rush County revenue.

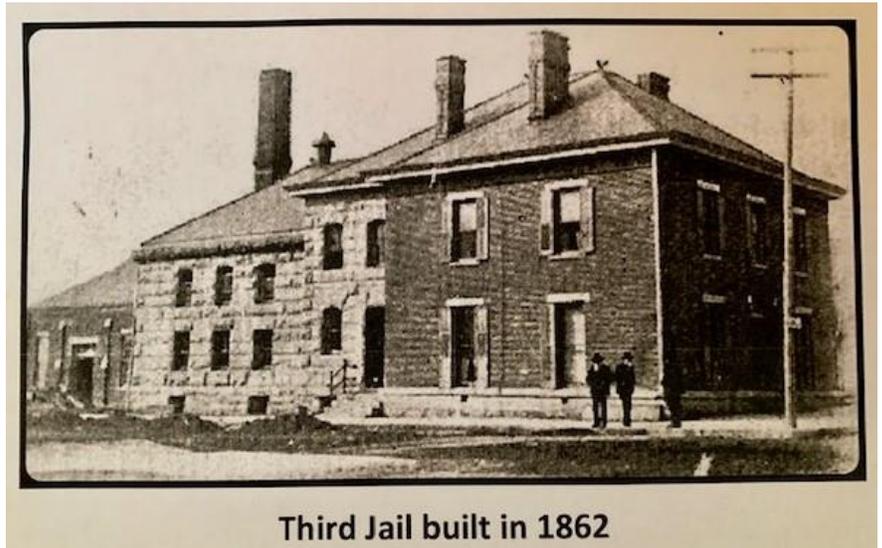
The organization of the Rush County Circuit Court took place on April 4, 1822, at the cabin of Stephen Simms. Those judges confirmed were William Wick (President Judge), and North Parker and Elias Poston (Associate Judges). Also appointed were Robert Thompson as County Clerk and John Hay as County Sheriff. Other decisions about court organization were made at John Perkins' cabin five miles southeast of Rushville. He owned a distillery.

It appears the early court preferred to do business where there was a still or tavern. The fall term of the court convened on October 4, 1822, at John Lower's place three miles south and west of Rushville. He owned a tavern. When the court met in Rushville it was usually at the home of Robert Thompson. He owned a tavern also.

Rush County's first Sheriff, John Hay, evidently had an impaired mind. After a year as our Sheriff he ended up in Hancock County. There he was arrested for some reason and put in their log jail. Hay set the jail on fire and perished in the flames. Greenfield has never forgiven us!

In 1824, Justices of the Peace (JP) in each township were given responsibility by the state to run county government. JP laws were strict for swearing in public, one dollar per swear word. The fine for fighting was 25 cents. There were problems with the JP system, so it ended in 1828 and the County Commissioners were back in business.

The first Rush County Jail was a two-story log building, 14x18 feet. It was constructed of hewn timbers one foot square. The lower floor had no doors or windows on the 8 foot sidewalls. Entry was from a door in the floor of the second level. On the second level were two rooms, one for women prisoners, and one for male debtors. Debtors were released during the day to go to work. The building was constructed on the east block of the public square, and Richard Hackleman was the contractor. The building was completed in November of 1823.



The second jail was completed in 1844 at a cost of \$3,250. Rush County has just completed their fifth jail at a cost of approximately \$22 million. The third jail was built in 1862.

Rush County's first courthouse was built on the west block of the public square. Prior to that, cases were usually heard at Stephen Simms' cabin or at the tavern of Robert Thompson. The new courthouse was still unfinished in 1826, but was used anyway. It was completed by November of 1826. It was a two-story brick structure 40x40 feet. It had a cupola on top similar to the one at Connersville. The lower floor contained a courtroom and jury rooms with a ceiling 18 feet high. The upper floor ceiling was 14 feet high and contained three rooms for county officers. The building was constructed at a cost of \$2,500 under the direction of contractor Reynold Cory.

Rush County's third courthouse still serves well. It was completed in 1898. We will discuss more about it in a future article.

It is pretty amazing that much of the groundwork our founders laid for our local government is still with us today.

# Rush County Bicentennial

## Rush County Hogs

Written by John Wilson, Rush County Historian

This bicentennial article is about Rush County Hogs.

The pioneers brought livestock with them when they settled in Rush County. Hogs were allowed to run “hog wild” in the woods. Those feral pigs fed on nuts and other forage on the forest floor called “mast”. As long as there was a convenient water supply they were content.

In the fall the fat hogs were rounded up and driven on foot to Cincinnati. You could identify your hogs out of the “drove” by checking the notches cut in the ear(s). Notch marks were registered at the courthouse.

Feral hogs were beneficial in the county seat of Rushville. When you threw out your table scraps in the alley, the hogs roaming the town would “collect the garbage”. The downside was there were hog wallows on Main Street, and some feral hogs were mean and nasty. There was a holding pen on the courthouse square for feral and unclaimed marked hogs that were a nuisance. Those animals were auctioned off with the money going to the county treasury.

Historian Dr. John Arnold described the hog drive to Cincinnati like this. “To drive 50 or 100 wild “elm peelers” 70 or 80 miles through an unfenced country was a heavy contract, for it implied the necessity of frequent races after those that would make a break for home, the tramping through deep mud, wading of rivers, and exposure to inclement weather.”

A round trip to market usually took 20 days, and the men received 37 ½ cents per day. Hogs were sold for \$1.00 or \$1.50 net weight. A good drove would average 125 pounds. Often the weight of animals in a drove was “guessed off”.

According to Sarah Newby ([Rush County Sesquicentennial Edition History](#)), the stories about hog drives were numerous. She wrote that Nathan Pearson related “the largest drove he ever accompanied from here was 2,270”. In 1845 a sixteen year old named Henry Phelps made the first of 18 trips to Cincinnati during his lifetime.

Madison, Indiana later became a good market for Rush County hogs. The K and S Railroad ran from Knightstown and Carthage to Shelbyville. From there the line went on to Madison. Hogs were shipped in the fall and winter from Henry Newby’s “hog lot” in Carthage. Each railroad car would carry 15-20 pigs. One of the early court indictments in Rush County was against John Ray for illegal hog marking. He was acquitted because the offense occurred before the county officially organized in 1822. Another early case was Israel Cox vs. James Greer. Greer had accused Cox of hog stealing. So Cox was suing for slander. Oliver Smith was Greer’s lawyer. At one point Greer yelled out: “Don’t lie Smith. I did say he stole my hogs, and I stick to it.”

Fast forward 100 years. Prior to WWII, Rush County ranked number one in hog population in Indiana with 78,545 hogs. At the end of the war in 1945, Rush County still ranked first with 110,407. Nationally Rush County ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in 1940 and 23<sup>rd</sup> in 1945.

When Wendell Willkie ran for President in 1940, his family's farms and hogs were featured in some national publications. He wanted to promote himself as a man of the soil.

When was the last time you saw a field of hogs fenced in by woven wire fence? In the first half of the twentieth century there were hundreds of miles of hog fences in Rush County. Farmers had purebred hogs: Duroc, Chester White, Tamworth, Poland China, Hampshire, and Berkshire were some of the more popular breeds. In my lifetime crossbred hogs have gained in favor, and today a more lean variety of crossbred hogs are raised in confinement facilities. The fences are gone.



Frank Oesterling and Wendell Willkie (Picture – Rush County Historical Society)

Today there are 51 hog confinement facilities in Rush County: Six are farrowing operations, and 45 are finishing operations. Most of these facilities do business on contract and finish out 1,000 hogs in each building in four months. A recently constructed confinement barn holds 2,480 animals and maintains the feeding and ventilation on a computerized system. These hogs finish out in five to five and a half months.

There are still several pork production related businesses in Rush County. One of note is Laird's Premium Blend Genetics west of Arlington. They sell show pigs, semen, and seed stock based on highly sophisticated genetics. Laird's deals in purebred and crossbred hogs, and they do business coast to coast.

Please tolerate a personal story about feral hogs from 35 years ago. One of my neighbors had a vehicular incident. Several hogs escaped, but the owner thought they had most of the group accounted for. But, weeks later when I was checking my property along Little Blue River, I noticed what looked like numerous new deer trails in the woods. There they were, a half dozen liberated hogs. They were in "hog heaven". The owner brought a low-boy trailer down to the valley, baited the trailer with grain, and the pigs ambled right in for us. To this day I tease my neighbor about owing me a feed bill.

So remember the next time you want to be the "big hog at the trough", don't "pig out" too much. Don't be "pig headed". Vote for the candidate that offers the least amount of "pork barrel". If you play football, keep the "pigskin" dry. Above all else, don't be a "ball hog" on the hardwood. You can't win unless you are willing to "root hog or die." If your "piggy bank" is busted, "pigs in a blanket" is good comfort food. You can't make a "silk purse out of a sow's ear", but you can make a great sandwich from the "Que". And always remember it's not "hogwash", we are still "hog wild" in Rush County.

The Rush County inventory reported by the USDA on December of 2017 was 118,966. That ranked 131<sup>st</sup> out of 2,856 hog producing counties in the United States.

Thanks to Rush County Extension Agent Wilber Schakel, Ty Kalas from the USDA, Gregg Duke from Rush County Area Planning, Jacob and Mitch Laird, Jason VanOsdol, Steve and Curt Schwering, and Charlie Smith for their help with this article.

# Rush County Bicentennial Public Opinion

Written by John Wilson, Rush County Historian

This Rush County Bicentennial article addresses how public opinion has affected our county's history.

Over the years Rush County has dealt with circumstances that polarized public opinion in an extreme way. Other than the events of 2020, the last time there was a vast difference of public opinion was the Vietnam War.

One other period of our history when we were polarized was during the Civil War. The presidential results of 1864 were an eye opener. Abraham Lincoln was up for re-election. Of Rush County's twelve townships, five of them voted for the Democrat ticket of McClellan and Pendleton over the Republican ticket of Lincoln and Johnson. Those townships were on a diagonal pattern across the county from the northeast to the southwest: Washington, Center, Jackson, Posey, and Walker Townships did not vote for Lincoln/Johnson. County wide Lincoln/Johnson won with 1,881 votes to 1,680. In Rushville Township Lincoln/Johnson won by a slim margin of only 18 votes, 294 to 276.

To understand why there was a vast difference in local public opinion we have to examine the times. In February of 1861 there was a Peace Conference in Washington, D.C. to avert a civil war. Rush County's delegate to the conference was Pleasant A. Hackleman (the only general from Indiana killed during the Civil War). When the Peace Conference failed, both local newspapers, the Republican and the Jacksonian favored allowing the south to exist as a separate slave holding nation!

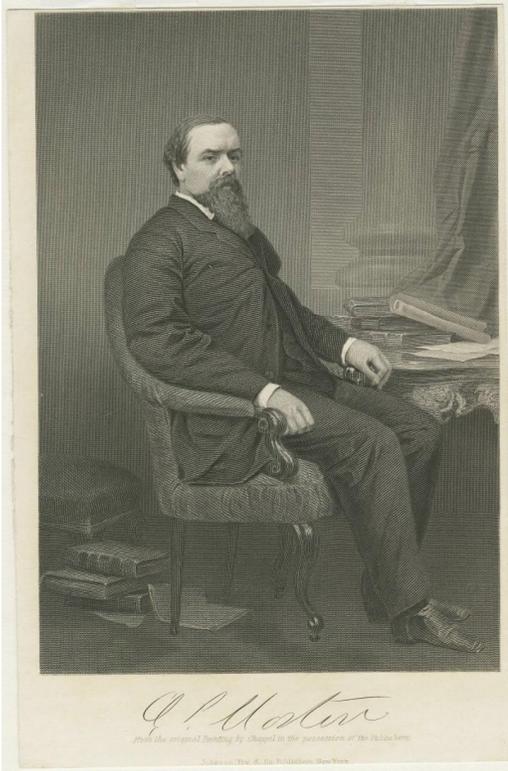
But when the south bombarded Ft. Sumpter the tone of feelings changed. Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. From April 15, 1861, to December 19, 1864, there were nine calls by President Lincoln to quell the rebellion. According to historian John H. Hughes, Rush County furnished 2,305 soldiers for the Union. Of course some were re-enlisters. The percentage of men from Rush County serving the Union during the war from Indiana was exceeded only by Delaware County.

Needing more manpower, on October 6, 1862, Lincoln instituted conscription (the draft). The draft quota for Rush County was 150 men with the apportionment as follows: Posey 18, Walker 24, Anderson 2, Rushville 3, Jackson 26, Center 30, Washington 19, and Union 34. The townships with the low draft quotas had supplied more volunteers. Note that five of the eight townships are the ones that voted against Lincoln/Johnson two years later.

By 1864, Rush County citizens from all corners were tired of the death, destruction, and failure to close out the war. According to historian Dr. John Arnold, "It is probable that few portions of the north were more deeply agitated than Rush County. Soldiers at home on furlough wearing their uniforms were the universal object of attention. It was not infrequent that they overstepped their bounds of reason and duty in maintaining their principles. They often became insolent and intolerant, and imagined their coats of blue were sufficient excuses for whatever excesses they saw fit to indulge."

Abolitionist efforts before and during the war were admirably aided by the efforts of the Quakers and African American freedmen in Ripley Township. Carthage was a station on the Underground Railroad. Presbyterians and Methodists in the southern part of the county also aided the underground effort. On the other side, Southern sympathizers in Rush County formed lodges of the Knights of the Golden Circle. These "Copperheads" were a thorn in the side of local war efforts. Politically the Lincoln Republicans wanted to preserve the Union and abolish slavery. The Radical Republicans wanted to do the same, but they also wanted retribution for the war. They wanted to punish the South. Most Democrats were in favor of preserving the Union but were opposed to the abolition of slavery. Another group called the Union Party

resolved they were against slavery but they were also in favor of the absurd idea of creating a separate territory for African Americans! We were searching for answers for racial equality, and we are still searching for answers for racial equality in 2020.



One incident of note occurred in 1863 in Walker Township. Several locals had refused to sign up for the draft. Officials visited the home of the widow Hilligoss on June 10. She reported her three sons were not at home, and she refused to give any information. Two officials from Greensburg, Richard M. Craycraft and John S. Stevens, left the home and were going along the road when someone rose up out of a wheat field and shot and killed them. According to former Rush County Historian Jim Scott, Governor Oliver Morton sent a troupe of cavalry and a company of infantry to Manilla. They camped in the schoolyard for a week and later arrested two men, Isaac Hilligoss and James V. Sylvester. The two were taken to Ft. Harrison but were released to the Rush County Sheriff because it was deemed a civil matter, not a military one. They were not charged!

On one occasion early in the war, Rushville citizens awoke to see what was said to be a Confederate flag flying from the Rush County Courthouse. But which flag? The Confederate states were represented by a variety of flags. Initially their flag was the Bonnie Blue Flag, a rectangular blue flag with a single white star in the middle. At the battle of First Bull Run, the Stars and Bars led the South into battle. Then came the Battle Flag we are familiar with

today. Recently some southern states have removed the Confederate emblem from their state flags. NASCAR has followed suit and banned the Battle Flag from their races.

During the Civil War, death from disease was 250,157 for the Union armies and 164,000 for the Confederate troops. So total death by disease was estimated at 414,152 for the armies over a four year period. In 2020 during only an eight month period the U.S. sadly had over 225,000 civilian deaths in the war against COVID-19. Doing further math, COVID-19 has killed more Americans than those that died on the field of battle during the Civil War (204,070).

So once again during an election year Americans are divided about what to do. How do we end this pandemic, how can we solve racial inequities, how can we pay for our health care, how can we improve our economy, and most importantly how soon will we return to a sense of normal. Hopefully the future holds the answers.

## Contact Information



In this day and age it seems we are all bombarded with mail, messages, and e-mails. We know that this can be frustrating and want to assure you that your Rush County Historical Society tries to communicate with you in an efficient and professional manner. However, we need your help doing this by keeping our member information current and up-to-date. This is especially true for e-mail addresses and phone (cell) numbers. ***Please*** let us know if we need to update your information by calling, texting, or e-mailing.

Thank you so much and we look forward to all of us coming together to be a part of history in 2021.

# Public Opinion Word Search

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JOHNSON

DRAFT  
LINCOLN  
DEMOCRAT  
TICKET  
KNIGHTS

SOLDIERS  
COPPERHEADS  
QUAKER  
SYMPATHIZERS  
PRESIDENTIAL

CONFEDERATE  
SLAVERY  
TOWNSHIPS  
HACKLEMAN  
HILLIGOSS

Rush County Historical Society

Gowdy House Museum

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