

Genealogy  
Club of  
Montgomery  
County IN  
Corporation

Join us for a  
journey  
through  
history and  
time.  
An Odyssey  
for those  
beginning or  
experienced  
in genealogy.

Inside this issue:

Summarized Secretary's Report 2

Birch & Birch, and More 3

Templeton, In Railroad Memories 6

Making Connections 8

Upcoming Events 10

# Roots and Branches

Volume 15—Issue 3

May 2018

## "Sagamore of the Wabash"



Last fall the Genealogy Club of Montgomery County had the privilege of hearing Robert “Bob” Quirk share the family stories he had collected and recorded in a series of books of *Real American Stories*. On Easter Sunday 2018 Bob Quirk received the Sagamore of the Wabash Award for his work. The Sagamore of the Wabash is an honorary award given to astronauts, presidents, ambassadors, artists, musicians, politicians, and citizens who have contributed to Indiana’s heritage. State Representative Sharon Negele summed up the importance of knowing and sharing our history, “Many do not realize the importance of recording history, especially in rural Indiana.” Bob is fond of saying “everyone has an interesting story, so write it down.” Let us congratulate Bob and let us be inspired to share our stories with one another and to write them down.

\*Thank you to contributions to this notice from Wendy Davis of [newsbug.info](http://newsbug.info).

Feel free to find us and Like us on FACEBOOK!

<https://www.facebook.com/Genealogy-Club-of-Montgomery-County-Indiana-Corp-1814527675437018/>

The Family Bible Project is available on the Crawfordsville District Public Library web site at: <http://history.cdpl.lib.in.us/bibles.html> The Bibles have been transcribed and scanned and are searchable by family name. As of May 2017, there were 135 Bibles online with more being added every month thanks to an IGS grant and club volunteers.



**Summarized Secretary's Report      By Steve Simms, Secretary**

The Genealogy Club of Montgomery County, Indiana, continues to meet the second Tuesday of every month at Crawfordsville District Public Library at 7pm. Visitors and new members are welcome to all meetings.

**Steve Simms**

In February, we met at Bethel AME Church and had a wonderful presentation by Vick SWITZER, "A Tale of Two Churches."



In March, Elizabeth HENDERSON from the Linden Depot Museum came to speak to us about Railroad History. The Linden Railroad Museum is celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year.

In April, Fred SMITH came from Anderson to share "Germannia 101: Virginia to Montgomery County, IN."



**Extra! Extra! Read all about it!**

Ruth EVANS shares her memories of growing up near the train station in Templeton, IN that were sparked by the Linden Railroad Museum History presentation in March. It is a fun story that begins on page 6.

## BIRCH & BIRCH and More



**Karen  
Bazzani  
Zach**

On the very first day of July in the year 1842, a family arrived in America. John, Elizabeth, Thomas, Ann, William and little James BIRCH landed in New York embarking from Great Britain on the ship, Charles Carroll. The family came from Stockport, in Cheshire County, England. For some years, they lived on Hall Street where at least James was likely born. Upon arrival, for the next three decades, the family was all over the US and Canada, living in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and finally settling in Indiana, although dwelling in several places right here in our own state.

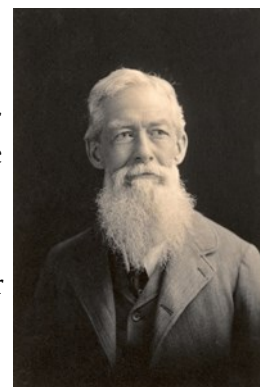
The BIRCH family bible states that John was born June 4, in

1808 in “England,” and died October 14, 1859 I would assume in Fountain Prairie, Columbia County, Wisconsin or possibly just after the move to Indiana. Although Elizabeth (Betsy in the 1850 census; Betty in the bible) was five years older (born 21 August 1803) she outlived him by many years (died in Kokomo 28 July 1877).

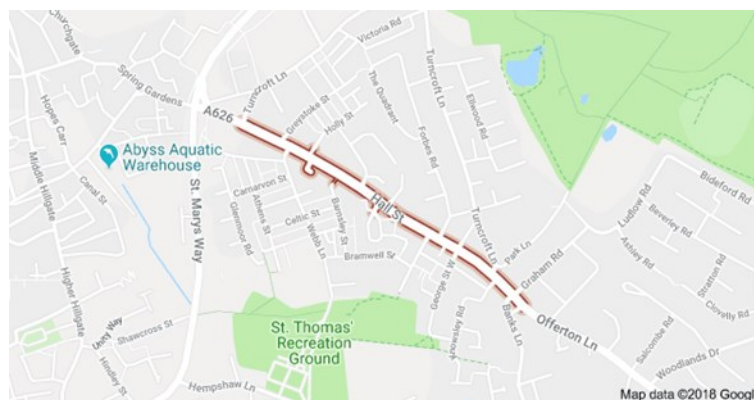
Certainly, these two immigrants can be so very proud of their sons and daughter carrying on in their new world.

Thomas, the oldest of the four BIRCH children, was born 7 February 1831 in Stockport and died in Indianapolis mid-May in 1905. Almost all the BIRCH family is buried in Oak Hill cemetery, 16 carrying the name as well as many other relatives. In York, Ontario, Canada on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of March in 1866, he married Jane BRAID and they became the parents of four daughters and three sons, Rebecca; Elizabeth; Catherine; Margaret (twins who were listed as artists in the 1900 Crawfordsville census and then I can not find them); William Thomas (who had his own manufacturing business in Chicago for several year, later working as a salesman for a pump company); John Henry (more later on him) and George Frederick (worked for Indiana Bell).

William H. BIRCH born February 6<sup>th</sup> in 1838 (Stockport), married Elizabeth Helen HAYS and they had three sons and a daughter: John “Hays” (stay tuned for him); Clementine; Harry (died at age three) and Charles Evan, called Todd (for many years, an engineer at Delco-Remy in Anderson). William was an expert in railroad and fire engines.



Young James died in Highland, Indiana but lived in Crawfordsville for some time. When the family ventured this way, James joined the Army in 1861, serving out the war in the Union Army, coming home unscathed. It is likely he served from Dekalb County, Indiana as he and brother William were tallied in the CW draft records there, William, 25, listed as a mechanic and James, 23 a blacksmith. Both single, both born England. James was married to Jennie MCCOLLOUGH (March 28, 1876) by Rev. S. CORNELIUS. They would have three sons, the first named for their minister, Cornelius, plus sons Arthur and Edwin.





While the family was in Missouri, Ann BIRCH, John and “Bettie’s” only daughter, married William SONGER on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October in 1859. She was born in Stockport, of course, November 6, 1836. They lived in Trenton, Grundy County, Missouri where happy plans to live and love forever were thwarted when William W. SONGER died on April 10 in 1869. She moved almost immediately with her children (one died at birth and these three all passed by the time of their mother’s death), John, Julia and Minnie to Meadville, Pennsylvania to join her brother, Thomas and his wife, Jane. She would live with them for the next thirty years, passing at his home, on South Water Street in Crawfordsville. In one census record, she is listed as a “book agent!”

The three brothers were all tall, good looking, and intelligent. Top that off with a natural knack for mechanics, and you have an amazing trio. Much of the time, they followed each other to a new place but sometimes worked alone in a different state, even. It is known for sure that in 1871, they owned and operated together, a foundry in Kokomo. Then, in late 1880, there was a committee of citizens who would make today’s entrepreneurs take note. In a study, they had discovered that Crawfordsville needed to put the common laborer to work. Contacting cities, dales, and almost everywhere with a dedicated recruitment in place, the workers began to flow in. As you have guessed, the BIRCH brothers arrived in full swing, and by the time an 1881 newspaper article appeared, the boys had a group of a dozen workers. Other new factories included Alfrey’s Heading, the Crawfordsville Coffin Company (employing 45), Indiana Wire, the largest employer with 75, along with a large creamery, Everson sawmill, the Body and Gear Works, competitors, Lyle and Smith Foundry, and the Brick Yard, all of which remained active businesses for a lengthy time. The average wage paid per week at the time in most of these factories was \$10.

By 1891, the boys were still here, only had changed their name to: Wabash Machine Works: BIRCH Brothers that manufactured engines with “repairs done promptly!” That same year, in October, John “Hays” BIRCH (son of above William and wife, Elizabeth HAYS) with “intimate friends and relatives of the contracting parties,” married Patrolman Charles HUFFMAN’s daughter, Myrtle, at the home of her parents; officiating the wedding was the beloved minister, George W. SWITZER. “The groom is an expert machinist and has a good position in the World’s Fair town,” was reported as the two rushed out of our little city on the next train north. They lived in Chicago for a couple of years where son, Howard was born (who died young). When they returned, Dwight was born in 1910. Dwight would do the bookkeeping work for the business in the future.



In the picture, Hays is on the left and John Henry the right. John Henry died March 10, 1927 and Hays continued running the business. At the time of his death, the business was listed at 1000 E. College (Plastene area).

## BIRCH & BIRCH and More (continued)



John Hays' cousin, the other John H. BIRCH suggested they come back to Crawfordsville and go into business together. I find it fascinating that John H. BIRCH had two brothers who were mechanics in their own right, but it was Hays with whom he desired to go into business.

John Henry BIRCH was the son of Thomas and his wife, Jane BRAID. He was born in Erie, Pennsylvania and was just building a beautiful home at 514 East College for he, his wife, Lena and their only child, Marcella who was married to Louis TOTH. While driving, he had a sudden heart attack and passed away with his hands on the wheel. Luckily, Lena was not hurt, but the prominent business man was no more. He and Hays created the BIRCH & BIRCH firm in

1902, although they had worked together before. The firm was a foundry that manufactured gasoline engines, box making machinery and did general machinists' work.

Hays would live to be 83 being in the business for over 5 decades; however, he ended his career with RR Donnelley's in its early years here.

The majority of the folks in these families were members of the local Methodist Church, although James was a Baptist. Some were active in other organizations such as Elks and GAR.

Certainly, they were beneficial to our little community. Most definitely, there is little doubt, after perusing professions of family members after these generations that John BIRCH began what would become an amazing group of mechanical geniuses with great prowess in their field.

\*\*\*

Note: Sources used were obituaries; findagrave (where I got the pictures – awesome) census, ship, Civil War records; and city directories. – Thanks to Bill PEEPLES and Jan BULLERS for all their help.kz.

Editor's Note: This is the another installment in the new series highlighting notable Montgomery County Families written by Karen Bazzani ZACH. This article was first featured on the INGenWeb site for Montgomery County that is populated thanks in big part to Karen's efforts. Thank you, Karen for your love of genealogy and efforts to preserve our history.

You can find this and other interesting information about Montgomery County at: The INGenWeb Project, Copyright ©1997-2018 (and beyond), Montgomery County GenWeb site <http://www.ingenweb.org/inmontgomery/>

“We are truly a nation of immigrants. But we are also a nation of laws.”  
**Brent Ashabranner** (1921-2016) born in Shawnee, Oklahoma: author,  
 World War II veteran, humanitarian and Deputy Director of the Peace Corps

## Templeton, Indiana Railroads By Ruth Coats Evans



Ruth Coats Evans

When I was almost 2 years old my family moved from Riverside, IN to Templeton, a town located in Benton County, Bolivar Township, Indiana just 20 miles northwest of Lafayette, IN. My father had purchased a filling station, machine shop and blacksmith shop from the family of a Mr. SHEETZ. A house beside the garage was part of the purchase. These buildings were located along US #52 and directly across from the railroad depot that serviced the Big Four Railroad and the Nickle Plate Railroad tracks. We five COATS kids grew up with the sounds of trains traversing those tracks.

Templeton, at the time I was there (1930 to 1946 when I went off to college), had a population of around 100 people. There were close to 29 homes, 2 grocery stores (one burned down in mid 1930's), 1 grain elevator, 1 filling station, my father's machine shop-filling station-blacksmith shop, 1 post office, 1 church, 1 school house and the railroad station building with its separate storage building. The town had been platted by Col. William J. TEMPLETON and his wife Melissa on December 23, 1873 and had 225 lots. Two railroad trains, the "Big Four" (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroads) and the "Nickle Plate" (Lafayette, Muncie and Bloomington Railroads) intersected there. That intersection was just half a block from our property. U. S. #52 highway, built in 1929, ran in front of my Dad's garage and along side of the Big Four Railroad tracks. Ten years after the town was platted, Templeton boasted of 2 dry goods & grocery stores, a notions & butcher shop, 2 doctors, one of which was also a pharmacist, a grocery store and the Railroad House.

I remember hearing a story about the how the two railroads (the "Big Four" & "Nickle Plate") came together. I have not found when this took place but it had to be before 1873 when Col. Templeton & his wife platted the town because it was supposed to be the reason they chose that spot for a town. Anyway, it seems the Big Four Railroad laid tracks down from Fowler, IN and they needed access to the tracks into Lafayette and points east. The Nickle Plate had already had tracks laid from Illinois east through Templeton and on east to Ohio.

The officials of the Big Four Company asked the Nickle Plate officials for the privilege of using their rails ("trackage rights") from Templeton to Lafayette. The Nickle Plate officials said "No!" so the Big Four just went ahead and laid their tracks up to the Nickle Plate track. Late one night the Big Four brought to Templeton their biggest train engine, the track was laid over onto the Nickle Plate rails and the engine started toward Lafayette. By this time, the word was received by the Nickle Plate officials as to what was happening. They started their biggest engine west down the track toward Templeton. The two engines met and the Big Four engine pushed the Nickle Plate back to Otterbein or Lafayette, thereby gaining the right-of-way and the use of the Nickle Plate's train tracks. An arrangement was made by the two railway companies for the use of the Nickle Plate rails, the Big Four agreed to pay the salaries of all the workmen that worked on the Nickle Plate track in that area. In Templeton there were 12 men on the "gang" that kept up the Nickle Plate tracks and only 4 men that worked on the Big Four "gang."



Photo credit <http://madisonrails.railfan.net/bigfour.html>

Templeton had a huge water tank that was built at the apex of where the two tracks converged. The well from whence the water came, was deep and plentiful and the steam trains filled their tanks there. As children, we often watched the big steam engines stop, hover the giant spout over the train engine boiler tank and fill it with water. There were water spouts on both tracks and I remember hearing that at one time the trains would switch the engineer, brakeman, and other train personnel at Templeton while the trains were being serviced. I believe the "Railroad House," located just south of the Nickle Plate rail tracks was a hotel to accommodate those people. One of my favorite persons in town was a Mrs. Julia FOX (born in Kentucky on February 4, 1865) who had worked in that facility sometime before its demise. I think it burned down.

During World War II, many trains loaded with G.I.'s as well as war materials went through our town. The track was busy day and night. It was a noisy time in our home when the trains went through. If you were on the telephone you often had to stop talking or shout to make yourself heard. It was much quieter when the diesel engines were introduced. By the way, we could tell the time of day by the regular routes of the trains. (For many years there were only 3 telephones in town and my family had two of them—one in the house and a pay phone in the garage office. The other phone was in the gas station in the north end of town.)

In 1943, my mother, Mrs. Nellie C. COATS, became the postmaster of the Templeton Post Office and the post office equipment was moved from Mr. Brady NICHOLS parlor to the front office of my Dad's garage. That became the center of the town's activities. Our mail came into Templeton via the mail trains. Mail bags were hung from a post on the Big Four tracks and as the train went by, the bag was caught by a catcher from the train and the Templeton bag was thrown out.

To hang that bag, the post office hired someone from the town. We had a midget by the name of Charlie that took that job and it was quite an event to watch him hang that bag. It was like watching a circus performance. Besides the Templeton mail, my mother also prepared mail bags for 2 star routes. Small towns west of Oxford, IN had lost their train service so people were hired to drive to Templeton six days a week to collect the towns' mail. Our town was the closest regular mail train route.

In regards to the mail bags, the lower class mail pieces were placed in the bottom of the canvas bag and then the first class mail was placed in the top. A belt strap was placed so the two groups were separated by that strap and the mail bag was locked at the top. My mother retired in 1964 and the post office was moved into Hall's Grocery in the north part of town. I don't know when the mail pouch was delivered by truck and the mail train no longer caught the mail bags. After the death of that postmaster, Mildred HALL at the age of 95, the town's mail is now delivered by a rural mail carrier. A series of mail boxes with locks stand in front of the building.

I am not sure when the Big Four stopped using the tracks down to Templeton but I think it was in the 1970's. Several pieces of track were removed from the track at the roadway near US 52 in Templeton. On January 10, 1983, grain railway cars were being filled with corn at the Swanington elevator, about 7 miles north of Templeton. In the process of trying to attach the string of filled grain cars to the engine, the cars got away and headed east on the old Big Four tracks. When the loaded cars hit Templeton where the rails had been removed, it was estimated they were going 35 mph. The 29 cars cascaded over one another and spilled 100,000 bushels of corn in the middle of town. One car ended up on old US 52, not far from the corner where our old house stood. What a mess! The news articles about this accident said they managed to retrieve most of the grain. The whole mess was reported as costing the company more than a million dollars to clean up.

Templeton has dwindled in population since I lived there. Being only 20 miles from Lafayette, many people have built new homes there and commute to work. The water tower and the water spouts were removed when diesel train engines took over. The east-west Nickle Plate railroad is still being used.



## Making Connections

---



Stephanie Simms

I am Stephanie SIMMS and I am slowly taking over the writing of the newsletter and training with Judi KLEINE. I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself to everyone. I am from Lafayette and work at Purdue. My interest in genealogy began long ago listening to my grandpa, Charles A. SIMMS tell stories of his childhood in and around Crawfordsville. I would tag along when grandpa and grandma (Delores (BLACKFORD) SIMMS would visit older family members, all of whom looked ancient to me as a child but I am realizing as I age, they were YOUNG,) and I'd tag along when they would lay flowers out on family graves on Remembrance Day (Memorial Day). I look back and wonder who all these people are that came before me.

My dad, Steve SIMMS, shared a lot of stories about his growing up too and I have always been one to dig for more information. Genealogy sits right in my area of interest. I have fun finding more information about family members and trying to learn about their lives.

One fun example has been learning how the World's Exposition in Chicago in 1893 impacts so many things. I got my dad the book *Devil in the White City* which was about H.H. Holmes, the first serial killer in the U.S. Visiting a museum in Lafayette, we learned the museum was a building that represented Connecticut at the World's Exposition in 1893 and was purchased and transported to Lafayette as a private home. Then we went to Houston to visit family and we saw where a painting that hangs in the Battlefield Museum at San Jacinto of Sam Houston in battle was sent to the World's Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Genealogy is just plain fun!



The Genealogy Club of Montgomery County cordially invites you to join us on Saturday, 9 June 2018—9am-noon at Deck Cemetery in Franklin Township (925 E north of 550N) to learn how to properly re-set and plumb stones.

We will also continue cleaning several more stones in the Deck and St James Cemeteries with the "No Harm" Method we learned last year. We will provide cleaning supplies—plan on bringing a gallon jug of water, eye protection and gloves. Please, let us know if you are coming so we have enough supplies—email: [judikleine@gmail.com](mailto:judikleine@gmail.com)

Additional stone cleaning dates forthcoming!

---

Genealogy: Where you confuse the dead and irritate the living  
~Unknown



---

## Upcoming events

---

**May 8, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting

**May 25, 2018—5-9pm**

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

**June 9, 2018—9am-noon**

Cemetery Stone re-setting/plumbing workshop at Deck Cemetery

**June 12, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting—Refreshments:  
Lynn Scharf and Judy Harvey

**June 22, 2018—5-9pm**

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

**July 10, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting

**July 27, 2018—5-9pm**

After Hours Program at CDPL

**August 14, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting

**September 11, 2018—6pm**

Genealogy Club Annual Dinner Meeting

**October 9, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting—  
Refreshments: Mary Cramer and  
Eva Legg

**October 26, 2018—5-9pm**

After Hours Program at CDPL

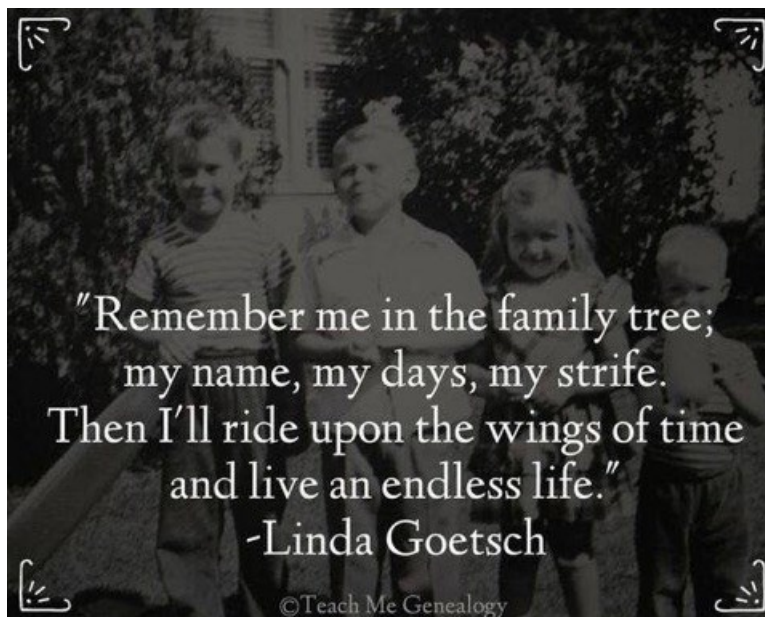
**November 13, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting

**December 11, 2018—7pm**

Genealogy Club Meeting—Refreshments:  
Everyone

All articles and other submissions for the September newsletter must be emailed to [stephief@live.com](mailto:stephief@live.com) by August 31, 2018.




---

We inherit from our ancestors gifts so often taken for granted. Each of us contains within this inheritance of soul. We are links between the ages, containing past and present expectations, sacred memories and future promise.

~Edward Sellner

**GENEALOGY  
CLUB OF  
MONTGOMERY  
COUNTY IN  
CORPORATION**

205 S WASHINGTON  
CRAWFORDSVILLE, IN  
47933

Phone: 765-362-2242

Ext: 118

Dellie Jean Craig

E-mail:

delliejean@yahoo.com

Web: [cdpl.lib.in.us/  
geneclub](http://cdpl.lib.in.us/geneclub)

Find additional  
interesting articles at  
[http://cdpl-  
history.blogspot.com](http://cdpl-history.blogspot.com)

Join us for a journey through history and time



The annual dues of the Genealogy Club of Montgomery County Indiana Inc. for the period October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019 are due in September 2018.

They may be given to Dellie Craig at the Crawfordsville District Public Library or mailed to the Club Treasurer (John Hooper, 1576 E 400 N, Crawfordsville, IN 47933).

You can find current and past Genealogy club newsletters and a membership application on the Crawfordsville District Public Library Website [www.cdpl.lib.in.us](http://www.cdpl.lib.in.us)  
Find us under the services tab and click on

**GENEALOGY CLUB OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY CORP  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Date \_\_\_\_\_  New  
 Renewal

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual      \_\_\_\_\_ Family      \_\_\_\_\_ Institutional      \_\_\_\_\_ Business  
\$10/yr                      \$25/yr                      \$15/yr                      \$50/yr

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Check if it is acceptable to email you a pdf copy of the newsletter

Family/Families you are researching

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail application and payment to: Genealogy Club of Montgomery County Indiana Corp., 205 S. Washington St., Crawfordsville, IN 47933