

More Noble County Treasures

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By Jody Grismore Vance

Over the past few years, the Noble County Fun Guide has presented in-depth articles about several events and places of interest in Noble County. We have enjoyed learning the history and behind-the-scenes stories of the festivals and locales...and we enjoyed passing them on.

So we thought we'd take a few minutes to look back at some of those articles, pick a couple of paragraphs from a few of them...and refresh our memory and yours. If you'd like to read the full stories outlined below, go to avilla.org/funguide.html.

Windmill Museum

There were the doubters back in the early 90's when Russell Baker shared his idea of a windmill museum as a tourism attraction with people in town.

Baker heard the opinions: "It will never work," and " You're going to end up with a pile of junk."

They might have—if they hadn't worked at it.

And as Baker says, "It wasn't easy but there were a lot of good people helping out."

In those years the Mid-America Windmill Museum has earned the capital letters in its name: There are 42 windmills standing watch in the field, enough to give Don Quixote a second thought, and in total the museum owns 103. Baker says, "Every one is different." Windmill enthusiasts have come from all over to make a replica of one of the first windmills in the country. There is one other reproduction of this windmill—the Robertson Post Windmill—and that is in Colonial Williamsburg...not bad company for Kendallville to keep.

The Mid-America Windmill Museum is on the cover of the 2001 phone book; this is the first year it has been listed in the Indiana Tourist Book and it's right there is the festival booklet,

Baker says it's figured that about 23% of what tourists spend goes to the local merchants and service providers. Like the sails of a windmill, it is a "what goes round, comes round" situation.

Information about the museum, located at 732 S. Allen Chapel Rd. (1000E.) in Kendallville, IN is at www.midamericawindmillmuseum.com

Gene Stratton Porter

A lot of people think of Gene Stratton-Porter as an author and of the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site as a place where an author lived for awhile.

That is true, but there is a lot more to her...and the site is far more than just a "place." Stratton-Porter did write books, but she was primarily a naturalist, and her lakeside home at Rome City is not only a repository for many of her things, but the continuing home of the gardens she planted.

It is here, in the quiet woods, that she is buried, along with her daughter...and here is "The Cabin in Wildflower Woods"...the gardens, arbor, orchard and scenic paths.

Her great interest in birds and her desire to take realistic pictures of them in their natural habitat inspired her and she planted more than 14,000 trees, vines, shrubs and wildflowers. "Ninety percent were set by her own hand," according to a biographer. These gardens became havens for the birds.

They still are, but now the public can also enjoy the cool, sun-dappled woods and the blooms of the gardens. Visitors can also take scheduled pontoon rides on Sylvan Lake and watch documentaries in the new carriage house.

The Gene Stratton Porter Historic Site is located at 1205 Pleasant Point, Rome City, IN 46784. Hours for the 2006 season, April 1 - Nov. 27, are: Tuesday - Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday, 1 - 5 p.m. Last tour begins at 4 p.m.

Closed Mondays, Easter, Thanksgiving, Veteran's Day, Primary Election Day, Election Day and Columbus Day.

The gift store is open throughout the year. Further information is available at www.in.gov/ism/StateHistoricSites.

Indiana Historic Radio Museum

Silent words haunt The Historic Radio Museum in Ligonier. They are the words that were heard as clicks over the radio telegraph when the Titanic went down. They are the words of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats during the Depression...Silent music also hangs in the air: the swing tempos of the Big Band Era...the country ballads broadcast from the Grand Ole Opry. In all this quiet, a visitor can find the beginning of the age of mass communication.

The radios line the walls on shelves that go from floor to ceiling; they are stacked on two central display cases; and old floor models stand on, well, the floor. Cards identify each exhibit and, in many cases, mention an event to provide a reference point in history...."

The Museum is located at 800 Lincolnway South/S.R. 5 at the Visitor's Center and is open April—Oct. for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tuesday-Saturday. Off Season hours are Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Information is available at (888) 417-3562 or (260) 894-9000.

Stone's Trace

Three miles south of Ligonier, US 33 and Ind 5 meet. There—where the routes intersect, an inverted "V" is formed—a place they call "The Point." It is here that Stone's Tavern is located.

And it is here that people can come and see the past, thanks to the efforts of Stone's Trace Historical Society.

Sitting on the Ohio River, Indiana is a state that was settled first in the southern part. Up here in Noble County, Richard Stone in 1830 was only the fourth settler.

By 1839, when the area was still more wilderness than not, Stone had a good appreciation of the business potential and constructed in this locale of log cabins, a two-story, lap-sided, wood-floored and many-windowed tavern, as wayside hotels were known in that day.

But more than providing bed and food and drink for travelers, it housed quilting bees and town meetings and served as post office, jury room, dance hall and stage stop. At the tavern was a long horn, reputed to have been audible at 10 miles, which summoned people when the stage arrived with mail and parcels.

And so, at the end of each summer, the first weekend after Labor Day, they stage a festival. This year that weekend is September 8th and 9th.

The festival is centered around the spirit of this building and the dedication of those who restored it: education and authenticity are prime concerns. The idea is for people—especially young people so inured to modern items—to feel as if they are back in the time period, just not at a place where old things are displayed. And Richard says, "It's just a moseying along—a relaxing time."

More information on Stone's Trace is at www.stonetrace.com