

ARCHIVES CURRENT

Newsletter of the Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc.

ROGUES' GALLERY

When Boyd Obermeyer of Carmel, Indiana, joined the volunteer program at the Indiana State Archives in 2002, he was not looking for a second career. A bio-chemist by training, he had retired



from Eli Lilly and Company in 1993 after a twenty-five year career as a research scientist. Since then he has been busy with family activities, volunteer work as a tax preparer for the American Association of Retired Persons, and research on his own family's history.

Boyd's chemistry background made him a perfect fit to assist in the State Archives' conservation lab. The lab has been without a Preservation Officer since 2001 due to budget restrictions. The Conservation Technician is only on-site part of the time. Volunteers such as Anne Moore have been coping with the backlog of materials needing conservation treatment.

The collection on the State Archives' "endangered" list that attracted Boyd's attention was the set of approximately 10,000 mug shots from the Indiana State Prison at Michigan City. The collection comprises photographs of virtually every

inmate confined at the prison between 1880 and 1927. Along with images of obscure thieves are pictures of celebrated criminals like John Dillinger and his gang. The photographs—front and side views—were mounted on special cards. Next to the pictures was room to record specific body measurements such as length of the head and little finger. These measurements, known as the Bertillon System, were used to identify inmates in the era before fingerprinting. The back of the cards contained space for information about the inmate, including the crime, date of sentence, physical description, and unusual marks, scars, and tattoos.



Marion Douglas, #1005

Prior to being transferred to the State Archives the mug shots had been stored at the State Prison under poor conditions. The individual cards were soiled with coal dust. Some cards were chipped or broken. Worst of all, the cards were badly warped from storage in an environment without adequate humidity. Many cards were so badly curled they could not be photographed when Archives' patrons requested reproductions for family history research or for articles about individual inmates and their crimes.

Boyd developed a conservation treatment plan in consultation with Jean Bennett, the State Archives' Conservation Technician. As a first step, he removes surface dirt by wiping the cards with a dry cleaning pad. The cards are then put in a special chamber to absorb sufficient humidity to make them pliable. After this, Boyd places the cards between layers of blotter paper and puts each layer on a board. He stacks the boards and puts each stack under a screw press for several days until the blotter paper absorbs the moisture and the cards are flat. At this point damaged cards are taken out for mending with strips of Japanese tissue and paste. Finally, each card is put in its own acid-free negative envelope. The envelopes are packed in special boxes, seventy to a box, with "spacers" of acid-free cardboard to keep the photographs under pressure. The boxes are stored in the State Archives' temperature and humidity controlled vault. Adequate humidity and the tight pressure on the photographs will prevent them from warping again. The cards are now available on demand when patrons ask to see them and to have reproductions made.

To date Boyd has treated over 3600 mug shots. In the process he has noticed many peculiarities about the prisoners. In the photographs taken before 1900 almost all the men wore a full beard. After 1900 the men had only

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VOLUNTEER NEWS

Friends of the Archives volunteers outdid themselves again in 2003, contributing a total of 3340.5 hours to projects at the Indiana State Archives. The previous high was 3082 hours in 2002.

Thirty-one individuals donated time in 2003, also a record number. One of them, Volunteer Coordinator **Barbara Wood**, gave over 500 hours. Eleven volunteers donated over 100 hours. They were: **William Dufner, Elizabeth Hague, Christy Hamlin, Walter Jolly, Ann Loyal, Pat Mills, Boyd Obermeyer, Sandy Ricketts, Marge Riedeman, Anne Rodick, and Carolyn Sichting**. The Friends is deeply grateful to each of these thirty-one individuals for the valuable time they gave to the State Archives in 2003.

The Friends has established two new recognition levels for volunteers who have donated 500 hours and 1000 hours of time respectively. "Volunteer 500 Hour Club" and "Volunteer 1000 Hour Club" plaques have been placed in the reception area at the State Archives next to the "Volunteer 100 Hour Club" plaque. Charter members

of the "500 Hour Club" are **William Dufner, Elizabeth Hague, Pat Mills, Anne Rodick, Carolyn Sichting, and Barbara Wood**. Charter members of the "Volunteer 1000 Hour Club" are **William Dufner, Anne Rodick, and Barbara Wood**.

New members of the "Volunteer 100 Hour Club" include **Diamond Mather, Glenn Mather, David Wright, Christy Hamlin, Sandy Ricketts, Patricia Lemieux, and Walter Jolly**.

Congratulations to **Elizabeth Hague**, whose quilt received a coveted Governor's Choice Award at the 2003 Indiana State Fair. To see the quilt go to the Friends' Web Site at <http://www.fisa-in.org> and click on the Volunteer Page.

The newest volunteers at the State Archives include:



Ron Darrah, director of the Genealogical Society of Marion County from 1995-2003. He has begun the arduous job of sorting and alphabetizing over fifty cubic foot boxes of Marion County wills dating between 1840 and 1986. Once the collection is organized Ron will assist in creating a searchable database for these documents. Ron is also on the Board of Directors of the Indiana Genealogical Society.



John P. Etter of Westville, Indiana, has a B.S. degree from Indiana University and a Masters in History from Butler University. He is expanding his thesis into a book about the Indiana Legion. At the Archives he is entering information on Indiana Civil War volunteers into a database that will eventually be searchable on line.



Shirley Fields of Avon, Indiana, is a consultant for a computer software firm. She is also entering data on soldiers in Indiana Civil War regiments into the State Archives' Civil War Service Database.

Visit Our New Web Site

www.fisa-in.org

STEVE TOWNE REELECTED FRIENDS PRESIDENT

Stephen E. Towne, Assistant University Archivist at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, was re-elected President of the Friends of the Indiana State Archives at the Friends' Annual Meeting on April 15, 2004. Other officers reelected to two year terms were Vice-President **Ralph D. Gray**, Treasurer **Dene B. Stratton**, and Secretary **Connie Rendfeld**.

President Towne began the meeting with a review of the Friends' accomplishments in the past year. These included the purchase of a LCD projector for the Archives' staff to use at lectures and presentations. Thanks to a sponsorship by the Friends, the State Archives had a booth at the Midwestern Roots 2003 Family History and Genealogical Conference in Indianapolis. Towne lauded the marketing committee of the

Friends for their work in developing the Friends new web site. Future marketing initiatives include a logo for the Indiana State Archives and a new membership brochure for the Friends.

Towne singled out the accomplishments of the Friends' volunteers, including the indexing projects for Indiana Civil War soldiers, Marion County naturalization records, and Vincennes Land Office purchasers. He also cited the volunteer efforts to preserve Indiana State Prison mug shots and Central State Hospital autopsy records. Towne recognized the extraordinary contributions of **Barbara Wood**, volunteer coordinator, and **Lloyd Hosman**, volunteer recruiter.

Election of Officers and the Board of Directors came next. In addition to the officers mention earlier, the following Board Members were reelected: **Jill**

Costill, Ruth Dorrel, Richard Enochs, Mary Ellen Gadski, Robert L. Gildea, Lloyd Hosman, Alan January, Thomas Krasean, James W. Merritt, Jr., Richard Newcomer, Jerry L. Sargent, and Virginia Terpening. The newly elected member of the Board is **Elizabeth R. Osborn**, the Assistant to the Chief Justice of the Indiana Supreme Court for Court History and Public Education. At the conclusion of the election President Towne presented a certificate of appreciation to **Ron Darrah**, who retired from the Board.

The special feature of the meeting was a talk by **Barbara Maxwell**, the newly appointed Indiana State Librarian. She shared with the audience her visions for "Future Directions of the State Library." A demonstration of the Friends new web site followed the meeting.

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE INDIANA STATE ARCHIVES

The Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc., is a not-for-profit organization of citizens concerned with helping the Indiana State Archives fulfill its role as the permanent repository for official records of state and local government in Indiana. The Friends supports the management, preservation, and responsible use of Indiana's public records and serves as an advocate for the Indiana State Archives. Join other Hoosier citizens in an effort to save Indiana History. Enroll today.

Enclosed is my check made payable to the Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc. Membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter and invitations to workshops, special events and the annual meeting. Gifts to the Friends are tax deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

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_____ Individual Member \$20

_____ Contributing Member \$35

_____ Sustaining Member \$50

Please clip and mail to: **Friends of the Indiana State Archives, Inc.**
6440 E. 30th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219-1007

**FRIENDS OF THE INDIANA STATE ARCHIVES
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Upcoming Events

October 12, 2004 12:00 Noon Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors, at the Indiana History Center, 450 West Ohio Street.

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moustaches. Boyd doesn't know whether this reflects changing fashion or a change in prison regulations. Boyd was especially struck by the large number of men imprisoned in the early years for minor offences, such as petty larceny. The punishments seem severe compared to today's standards for the same offences.



The mug shots compliment other information available at the State Archives about these early inmates of the State Prison. Each prisoner has a detailed summary of his personal and criminal history in the Prisoner Record Books. There are commitment records for some prisoners. "Life Men" recorded their crimes in special Life Prisoner Statement books. The State Archives has developed a searchable database for prisoners confined at Michigan City from 1860 to 1968.

With 3600 mug shots behind him, Boyd is now one-third of the way through his second career at the Indiana State Archives. When he is finished he will have preserved a unique and valuable part of Indiana's history for future generations. Hat's off to Boyd Obermeyer!

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