



# LOOKING BACK

The **HISTORY**,  
**NEWS EVENTS**  
and **PEOPLE** that  
shaped **RIPLEY**  
**AND FRANKLIN**  
**COUNTIES** over  
the **PAST TWO**  
**CENTURIES**

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF

**The**  
**Herald-Tribune**

# How wilderness became a city

Christopher Aune  
The Herald-Tribune

In this turbulent year of 2016, it's worth taking a look at how the city of Batesville got started, and consider the pioneer spirit that built this town. Luckily, Minnie Wycoff researched and wrote a two-volume book, "Builders of a City: A History of Batesville," in the 1930s. Her interviews with the village's early residents are invaluable in imagining its past.

Prior to becoming the United States, European governments gave the 13 colonies land grants to pieces of the American continent. These grants started on the East Coast and extended to the West Coast. Authorities of that time grossly underestimated how far it was across North America. After the Revolutionary War, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, the U.S. government negotiated treaties with the colonies and the American Indians, and began to divide up that land into smaller — though still huge — tracts.

At the conclusion of the Grouseland Treaty in 1813, Ripley County was opened to settlement. On Dec. 11, 1816, Indiana was admitted to the union as a state. On Dec. 21, 1816, the new state assembly

passed a law providing for the organization of Ripley County, which was named for Gen. E.W. Ripley, a Revolutionary War soldier connected with the campaigns in the Northwest Territory. The U.S. government began issuing land grants in Ripley County in 1813, and the greater number began in 1816.

The county government was established in spring 1818, and the first county officers were elected.

Batesville was formed late in the migration of settlers across the land. The first settlers came from Kentucky into the southern part of the county, and into the central part of the county when the county seat was located in Versailles in April 1818. Emigrants from Dearborn County and distant eastern states moved into the eastern side of the county at the same time. Settlements spread north and west from these southern, eastern and central beginnings, along the streams and Indian and buffalo trails through the heavy timber.

The northwest corner of Ripley County was out of reach by any of the tracks that settlers followed. The land was swampy and densely forested, so that few people moved onto the parcels

granted to them here until years later. It was considered too remote to be of easy approach by the Ohio River, and there were no routes otherwise developed.

William George and his brother built a cabin on the present site of Oldenburg in 1817. Oldenburg was laid out in July 1837, and its population in 1800 was 673 people. Huntersville, just northwest of Batesville near the intersection of present day Columbus Avenue and Huntersville Road, was laid out as a town in July 1841.

Before there was a Batesville, the territory was a primeval forest of mostly oak, beech, black walnut, hickory, sycamore, elm, maple, tulip-poplar, black gum, sweet gum, ash and wild cherry. Little Laughery Creek ran through the area, promoting growth of all sorts of fruit trees and berries along its tributaries. Any crack of sunlight or open meadow was filled with wild flowers of a thousand kinds. Wildlife of many types were abundant, from turkeys, rabbits and doves to beavers, bears and deer.

American Indian settlements were few in this vicinity, although hunting parties visited often. The new land treaties encouraged most native residents to move to the reservations in northern Indiana.

A land grant in Laughery Township in the locality of where the city of Batesville was established was issued to John Whetstone Sr. on Jan. 1, 1834, and signed by President Andrew Jackson. Ebenezer Bedunnah received



Photo courtesy of the Batesville Area Historical Society

**When a politician or another important person arrived by train in Batesville in the 1890s, a crowd gathered on Pearl Street near Main Street. The old freight depot is on the right.**

the second land grant on Dec. 17, 1834. There were none in 1835, and then several in March 1836, four in 1837, and one in March 1838.

Many of those who settled in Batesville and surrounding areas were of German descent, traveling 3,000 miles across sea and land. Having come so far, they chose this corner of America to settle. Edward Waechter was a good example of this. He was a wheelwright who came to Cincinnati from Germany in 1838, and to Oldenburg in 1840, living in the house built by William George in 1817.

They were drawn to this untamed area where panthers, bears and wolves roamed, and thousands of squirrels were reported to destroy fields and empty grain bins in a matter of days. These were the true and original pioneers.

Samuel Cook is claimed to have been the first to settle at Batesville with a house near the county line southwest of where the city was established.

Joseph Spillman had land in the east and south part of Batesville as of 1836 and had established a farm complete with several buildings by the time he sold in 1852.

Also in 1836, Frederick Foke had land near what became the intersection of Central and Western avenues.

Brothers Frederick and William Albers settled in the northeastern part of the town, but had a home on what became Mulberry Street.

But Teunis Amack — of Amack's Well fame — and his wife, Nancy, were likely the city of Batesville's first bona fide settlers. He received two grants for a total of 120 acres. He is

known to have built a log home and lived in it from 1836-52. His well was walled square with logs instead of circularly with stones.

On Oct. 15, 1852, Amack sold his acreage for \$1,600 to the John Callahan Trust Co., a group interested in building a town along the new railroad under construction between Lawrenceburg and Indianapolis. The survey for the railway included Amack's well, which served for years between the main track and the switch-track. It was believed to be near the first depot. The deed was recorded on Nov. 9, 1852, for the site of the new town.

The Batesville government was set up on Dec. 11, 1852, and 15 months later — on March 4, 1854 — part of that land was laid out in 45 lots as the city of Batesville.

## On the cover

**Top left:** Father Franz Rudolf's first attempt to found a Sisterhood in this Oldenburg building, located on Wasserstrasse, failed in 1847. A few years later, he was successful in helping found the Sisters of St. Francis.

**Top right:** Two years before the first Batesville mayor was elected, officials stand in front of the town hall in 1907.





Photo courtesy of the Batesville Area Historical Society

**John A. Hillenbrand II** (clockwise from left), August, Ray and Dan Hillenbrand worked and served on company boards together for years. Dan Hillenbrand died at 86 in 2010. The rest have retired. John II and Gus live in Batesville and Ray in South Dakota.

# Hillenbrands left mark

Debbie Blank  
The Herald-Tribune

One of Batesville's most well-known families is also among its oldest.

John Hillenbrand Sr. was born in Spades, Adams Township, according to the book "The Batesville Area," written by Jean Struwing for the Batesville Area Historical Society. In 1861 during the Civil War, John was 16 and orphaned, caring for two infant sisters and a brother, William, reported Brian Schwettman in his 1999 history of Hill-Rom.

Remarkably, over the next two years as a teen, he bought and cleared forests and sold the hardwood to railroad companies for track ties, then

sold the cleared land to farmers. At 18, John Hillenbrand owned 16 sawmills throughout south-east Indiana. From 1863-80, the enterprising young man diversified into farming, store operation, saloon keeping and also owned a livery stable and stone quarry.

In 1880, the man purchased American Furniture Co., which later became Romweber Furniture Co. His son, George M., suggested concentrating on bedroom furniture.

The patriarch divided his businesses among his two sons, John A. and George M., keeping one-fifth for himself. The Hillenbrand Co. purchased the Batesville Coffin Co. in 1906 and its name was



Photo courtesy of the Batesville Area Historical Society

**John Hillenbrand Sr.**

set the family bar high for ambition and ingenuity.

changed to Batesville Casket Co. His father urged John A. to study the casket market. The company moved from making cloth-

covered caskets selling for \$6 to very fine hardwood ones, Schwettman noted.

Seven years later, the Greenman family persuaded Hillenbrand Co. leaders to buy Greenman Brothers Manufacturing, located on East Pearl Street. The name was changed to Batesville Cabinet Co. and the business specialized in dining room furniture.

In 1923, the company purchased the Sherman House, which was needed to house and feed businessmen, salesmen and other visitors.

In 1927, when a mother and daughter, John Sr.'s wife Margaret and Mary

See **HILLENBRANDS** / 15

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# Oldenburg has a rich history

Diane Raver  
The Herald-Tribune

The town of Oldenburg was platted July 10, 1837, by John Ronnebaum and John Plaspohl from the farm of William George, according to history and stories compiled by Gilbert Munchel in "Oldenburg, The Village of Spires" by the Indiana Junior Historical Society, Indianapolis.

The population of the town in 1870 was 560. Other population figures include 1890, 690; 1900, 957; 1910, 956; 1920, 628; and 1930, 575.

## Flour mill

A steam sawmill located

on Hamburg Road and Averdick Street was set up by Fisher and Dickman in 1853. Later they added a run of stones and ground flour. This mill burned in 1884, and a new one was erected and operated for 10 years by Joseph Luesse, who sold it to Frank Moorman. In 1915 Moorman's enterprise had a capacity of 50 barrels per day and did a custom exchange business. It was razed in the early 1920s.

## Holy Family Cemetery

At one time, a 5-foot-tall limestone rock wall surrounded the old part of the cemetery. The rock was probably used as

crushed stone on the Oldenburg-Batesville Road (now State Road 229). There is a tombstone on the old cemetery (Fette's) that was imported from Italy in the 1800s at a cost of \$1,000, which was a large sum in those days.

## Location of the famous 14 stations of Oldenburg

From 1870-80, there were 14 saloons in town. It was not uncommon for the young men of the town to attend Friday night services and say the Way of the Cross in the church and then visit the stations, which included Golden Mama, Joe Macke Hotel and Tavern, Kessing's

Store (bar in rear), Frank Scheper Tavern, Gibson House, Hackman Store (bar in rear), Ben "Pan Kooker" Fisher Saloon, Hoelker Saloon, Huerman Hotel and Tavern, Kuntz Saloon or Kellerman's, Fisse Store and Saloon, Stuerwald Store and Saloon, Haverkos Bowling Alley and Saloon and Sellermeyer Store and Bar.

## Confederate John Morgan's Raiders

In 1863, two troopers appeared at Oldenburg one Saturday afternoon and rode into J.H. Kessing's blacksmith shop. They told him they wanted their horses shod at

once and insisted on having new shoes put on their animals. Kessing told them he did not have any, but he did have some hanging from the ceiling of the shop. There were some farmers in the shop, but the troopers demanded that their horses be shod at once, and they told Kessing when he was finished to bring them to the Kuntz saloon, and they would pay him. He shod them and took them to the saloon, but they immediately jumped upon them and rode off without offering any money. They went to St Mary's and met Dominic Siefert along the road. Siefert had just sold a horse and had the money in his pocket, but the

troopers relieved him of his burden. Before reaching St. Mary's, they appeared to have passed into Dearborn County, since they were next heard of at New Alsace.

## Balzser Roell Brewery


This brewery made "common beer" and was located where the farm dwellings stand on the Sisters of St. Francis farm on the east side of Indiana Avenue (State Road 229).

## Oldenburg Herald

This was established as part of the Batesville

See **OLDENBURG** / 23

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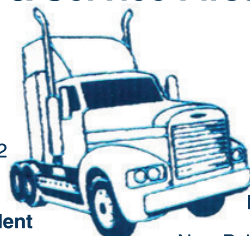


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# Sunman's name evolved

Diane Raver  
The Herald-Tribune

In 1851, John Tangman selected a location at 104 S. Meridian St. to erect a building that would be the first business of a town called Sunmanville. This prompted others to look at this area to settle. At the same time, the railroad was making plans to build a track through the area to Indianapolis. On Oct. 3, 1853, the first train traveled through Sunman and on to Morris, where there was a turntable for the railroad. This action created a lot of interest for homes and businesses, according to "The Chronicles of Sunman, Indiana."

In 1856, James Vanness purchased land and laid out 43 lots south of Eastern Avenue, south of the railroad and east of Meridian Street. Later that year, he purchased more land and added 116 lots west of Meridian Street. Before it was called Sunmanville, the town was called Vanness Switch, Leffliers Station and Smith Switch. When the post office was established, the name was changed to Sunman.

Balsar Trautman had his home and wagon-making business at 127 S. Meridian St. There was also a large garden plot. Lewis Sieg erected a large two-story building at this location, and in 1913 the early telephone exchange was located in the structure's corner office with apartments upstairs. Through the years, a dentist office, barber shops, restaurant, typewriter service and other shops have been housed there.



Photo courtesy of "The Chronicles of Sunman 1856-2006"

**Sunman's first blacksmith shop** was established before 1873 by Ira Struble and then sold to Michael Fritsch. It was located on the east side of South Meridian Street just north of Raintree.

At one time or another, barber shops were in almost all of the buildings. The first barbers were William Ostings, Charles Hashagen, Norman Dreyer, Charles Morrow and William Koenig.

The first post office was established in 1860. William McMullen received the appointment as postmaster under President McKinley and served 16 years in that capacity.

In 1858, citizens constructed a brick building, which they called Old Church. It was used as a town hall, for social gatherings and as a house of worship. The first school was part of this building. In 1881, a frame building

was erected at 126 Western Ave. for school purposes. It was later moved to 118 Vine St. and a new brick building was built in its place. In 1920, a brick school building was erected at 323 N. Meridian St. It was enlarged in 1928 and held all 12 grades.

In 1865, Theodore Kern, a young soldier, took the position as an agent at the Big Four Railway Depot when he returned home from service. In 1868, George Ashton succeeded his brother, Miles, as one of the first night telegraph operators. The depot closed in the early 1960s. The first blacksmith shop in Sunman was

started before 1873 by Ira Struble and then sold to Michael Fritsch. It was located south of the old Balthazar Trautman home and wagon shop. In 1901, it was sold to Richard "Dick" Behlmer, who after 20 years, sold it to Holman Laws, Aurora. Behlmer then started his own shop on Fillmore Street. In 1931, George Hillman acquired the Laws Blacksmith Shop and renamed it the Hillman Blacksmith Shop. A fire destroyed it in 1935. Maurice Neufarth had a blacksmith ship for 48 years at 323 Vine St. before moving it to State Road 48.

In 1883, Bielby and Dunn purchased property at 122 S. Meridian St. from Trautman. They erected a one-story building and established a general store. In 1889, Bielby became the sole owner and a few years later, he erected a large brick building. In 1902, Henry Bushing and Richard Beer purchased the Bielby and Wetzler hardware

interest. In 1920, Laura Wetzler conducted a grocery store business under the name of Beer Brothers. Later Richard and Leonard Beer changed the name to the Regal Store.

On Oct. 18, 1884, a group of interested citizens saw the need to form a volunteer fire department and filed the necessary papers at the Ripley County Courthouse. It was called the Sunman Fireman's Association. After a disastrous fire in 1886, association members got serious and purchased a hand pumper. In 1905, Sunman experienced the largest fire on record when buildings adjacent to South Meridian and West Washington streets burned. Fourteen buildings were lost and three buildings were partially damaged.

In 1886, George Price erected a building on the property purchased from Charles Stephens, located at 123 S. Meridian St. The large two-story brick business structure was

called the New Comers Building. Price built the lower story, and the upper story was built by the New Comers Association, a stock company composed of 12 businessmen. In 1901, Henry Price embarked in a confectionery and gents furnishings business there.

George Price also constructed a large frame building and established a hotel in 1886 named Price House at 119 S. Meridian St. About 35

See **SUNMAN** / 15

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# Forests became furniture



Christopher Aune | The Herald-Tribune

**How fitting** that two Romweber Viking Oak chairs and a carved lamp are in use in the lobby of the Memorial Building, the administration building of the city where they were manufactured years ago.

Christopher Aune  
The Herald-Tribune

*Author's note: Much of this article was excerpted and edited from Minnie Wycoff's book "Builders of a City: A History of Batesville." Others parts were taken from member reports by Batesville Historical Society study groups, [www.Weberding.com](http://www.Weberding.com), [www.RomWeberMarketplace.com](http://www.RomWeberMarketplace.com) and past issues of The Herald-Tribune and its predecessors.)*

The dense wooded forests that attracted German woodworkers and cabinetmakers to the Batesville area in the early 1800s were also the basis for the growth of furniture

making. Business leaders improved on that strength so that, by the mid-1900s, Batesville was dubbed "The City of Fine Furniture."

The story of the furniture industry here is a weave of numerous events and many players, and there are many versions of what actually happened and when. But a rough timeline of events can be carved out. Perhaps it looked something like this.

What eventually became Schrader Furniture Co. was perhaps the earliest operating furniture business in Batesville. In 1864, Herman Schrader brought Frederick Holverscheidt from

Germany to work for him, replacing an earlier business manager, according to Minnie Wycoff's "Builders of a City: A History of Batesville." The business became the company and flourished until the factory burned in spring 1875.

Another early factory, Union Furniture Co., was established in 1867, but its factory burned in autumn 1874, just months before the Schrader factory. Neither business was insured, but both factories were rebuilt of brick in 1875 and resumed production early in 1876, according to Wycoff's history.

Schrader Furniture Co. included a general dry goods and grocery store next to its factory. In 1876

Schrader sold the store to brothers John and William Hillenbrand.

On April 21, 1879, Herman Schrader and his associates reorganized into a stock company, American Furniture Co. It was created from the assets of Schrader Furniture Co., as well as some assets of Batesville Carving Co., founded by Frederick Greeman in 1866. After Schrader died in 1882, the Hillenbrand brothers operated the furniture company. The business came under new management in 1885 with John Hillenbrand as a principal investor. The Hillenbrands dissolved their

See **FURNITURE** / 17



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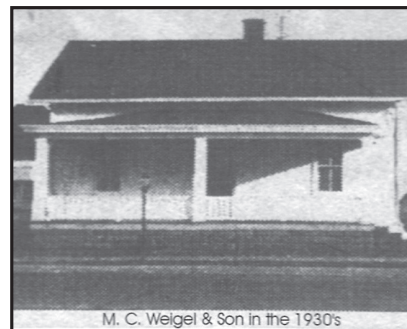
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# Explosions rock the area

Diane Raver  
The Herald-Tribune

Two explosions attributed to gas leaks in the Batesville area, one in the early 1990s and the other in 2006, changed people's lives forever, but, fortunately, no one was killed.

On Jan. 17, 1992, at 8:50 a.m., a massive blast rocked the downtown area when a building at the northwest corner of Boehringer and Walnut streets exploded, according to The Herald-Tribune's Jan. 22, 1992, issue.

Marge Moenter, who lived close to the accident, told the newspaper she thought an earthquake had struck the region. "I was scared to death. It knocked open some of my kitchen cabinets and knocked my phone off the receiver. The glass on my back porch was shattered."

Jeff Emsweller, editor of the newspaper at the time and working one block away, said, "I thought it was a car that ran into the building. When I walked out, there was debris thrown a block away. The building looked like someone had placed a bomb in it internally. It just blew outward."

Then Fire Chief Don Weigel explained, "With the ground being frozen, gas followed a line of least resistance and got into the house. Something inside of the house ignited it."

After an odor of gas was detected earlier that day, three Batesville Water & Gas Utility workers were investigating. Scott Dower, Steve Wintz and Mark Eckstein were marking lines on the street in preparation for digging up the



Debbie Blank | The Herald-Tribune

On the day of the blast at 3:45 p.m., friends and relatives were still at the Wietlisbach property pitching in. "They came because they knew someone needed help," Lili Wietlisbach pointed out at the time.

gas main when the force of the explosion knocked two of them down.

According to the newspaper, Ron Simons, who was doing construction work at The Bookshelf across the street, ran outside and saw a man who he believed to be Dower bleeding from a cut to his face. "He crawled across the street to the gas shut-off right here in front of the bookstore and got up on one elbow and shut it off and then he yelled, 'Call 911!'"

The Herald-Tribune reported, "Kathy Metcalf saw the explosion from her car when she was at the corner of Boehringer and Main streets. 'I pulled up to the intersection and looked left and when I did, that is when it exploded. There were flames shooting up at the back end of the house.'"

Batesville Volunteer Fire Department firefighters, assisted by Morris and Oldenburg volun-

teers, extinguished most of the flames within 20 minutes. In the meantime, Rescue 10 volunteers and employees of the gas utility, street department, wastewater treatment plant, Batesville Police Department, Indiana State Police, Indiana Department of Transportation, Bruns-Gutzwiller and Gunters Trucking cleared debris and searched for victims and survivors.

The structure contained two businesses, Dr. Thomas Edwards Optometry and Concepts Frame and Art Studio, and two apartments. One apartment had been vacant since Dec. 31, but a person was seen inside the two-story home at 7:15 that morning.

Fate played a hand in there not being any fatalities. The family living in the apartment left it early that day when inside temperatures were cold enough to make it uncomfortable. Pat Steinfort,

owner of the framing and gift shop, was running late that day. Edwards, owner of the building, also felt lucky because his nurse was running late that day.

Firefighters, rescue personnel, city workers and other volunteers were on the scene until about 6 p.m. A gas rupture was determined to be the official cause of the devastation.

After the rubble was cleared away, with all the inside contents destroyed, both businesses had to start completely over.

Steinfort and Edwards worked out of separate, temporary quarters for a while. Edwards rebuilt on the same spot, while Steinfort re-opened her shop in a house on Walnut Street several blocks north of the disaster.

It was a fluke John and Lili Wietlisbach weren't still sleeping when their home at 27128 Last Road, Batesville, was leveled by a liquified petroleum gas

explosion at 7:57 a.m. Saturday, July 8, according to the July 11, 2006, issue of The Herald-Tribune.

She usually didn't work on Saturdays, but was called in. Because Lili Wietlisbach got up, John did, too. He was pushing his motorcycle out of the garage, getting ready to leave to meet a friend for a Saturday ride, when the explosion occurred, his wife told the newspaper.

Seconds saved him from tragedy. "He would have come back (inside) for his cellphone and billfold," sister-in-law Marge Wietlisbach said family members figured.

The first relative who called Lili about the blast didn't know if John was alive. Her emotions upon hearing the news? "I can't put it into words. I just came straight home. I was there with John" when Batesville EMS 10 arrived.

According to his wife, Wietlisbach, who is retired, "was knocked unconscious for a while." He had been thrown on the ground, facing away from the structure. Brother Otto Wietlisbach reported, "He really didn't know how bad the house was."

Fire Chief Todd Schutte said John Wietlisbach's brother, Joe, who lived down the road, was pulling debris off of his sibling when about a dozen Batesville firefighters arrived.

According to Joe's wife, Donna, John "couldn't hear you well at first," but was conscious. He does not remember anything about the explosion, his wife said.

When asked what the site looked like, firefighter David Abel answered,

"Devastation. There was nothing left of the house. It was completely demolished. I've never seen anything like it. It was just amazing." According to brother-in-law Frank McDonough, "It blew a truck up and on its side in the garage" before the building itself collapsed.

Articles of clothing were blown 20 feet up into tree branches. Pink insulation and scraps of lumber were floating in a pond in front of the house.

"I know a lot of people felt that blast," Abel said. Even though the incident occurred about five miles southwest of Batesville in Franklin County, residents close to Kroger and firefighters near Liberty Park could sense the rumble.

At Margaret Mary Community Hospital, the victim asked his wife to go to the house to retrieve medical records, not realizing the mementos of their lives were now scattered in bits and pieces.

Wietlisbach sustained a shoulder injury, lacerations that required stitches and bruising to his entire body, Lili Wietlisbach said. He also had surgery on dislocated fingers.

How did the explosion occur? The chief said the couple "made mention of a lightning strike" and damage to the home on the Fourth of July. Later the wife "possibly smelled gas."

"It was a gas leak," explained Abel. "It just basically built up somewhere in the house and somehow ignited," perhaps due to a spark from a

See **EXPLOSIONS** / 22



# 1937 flood tragic in many ways

Christopher Aune  
The Herald-Tribune

The Great Ohio River Flood of 1937 was so significant that it became a turning point in the nation, and particularly in Lawrenceburg and Cincinnati. It was the disaster that spurred citizens and leaders of industry to lobby Congress to create a system of dams and levees for flood control, including the now famous Tennessee Valley Authority.

The Ohio River at the Cincinnati river gauge is considered to be in flood stage when the water hits 52 feet. In Jan. 13-24, 1937, there were record rainfalls over a large area of eastern Indiana and western Ohio, according to National Weather Service reports in 1937. The month remains the wettest one ever recorded in Cincinnati at 14.6 inches of rain, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The result was that on Jan. 26, the river's depth at Cincinnati measured 80 feet, the highest recorded since the earliest record in 1773, when the water crested at 76 feet. There has never been a flood before or since recorded that matched the Great Flood of 1937. That inundation started in Pittsburgh and impacted people clear down to the boot heel of Missouri. The water finally fell below flood stage in Cincinnati (52 feet) on Feb. 5, 1937.

On Thursday, Jan. 21, according to Paul Oswald, an employee of The Herald-Tribune at that time, the people of Lawrenceburg "had seen such a stage before without becoming alarmed



**About 150 tents were set up near U.S. 50 north of Greendale to house displaced Lawrenceburg families. Each could sleep six and was equipped with a coal cooking stove — but how cold it must have been to live there.**

Newspaper clipping

because they had every faith in their levee, which several years ago had been heightened to turn back over 70 feet of the raging waters of 'The Beautiful Ohio.' But, alas, the river was not to remain stationary at 65 feet, but rather was rising at the alarming rate of about a half foot per hour. Rain was continuing to fall as much as 6-12 inches per day in various localities up the river. This tremendously fast rise, with the steady downpour of rain, made the situation alarming to these many veterans of the river."

By 8 p.m. that day, volunteers and 200 Civilian Conservation Corps workers from Rising Sun and Versailles were putting "up a great battle, but a losing battle, because at 12 midnight the fire bell began an ominous toll, very similar to a death knoll, warning all in hearing distance that, although

the gallant rescue workers toiled feverishly, the river was getting beyond control. There was every fear that the levee was soon to give way, and it was time for everyone to be on their way to high ground."

"At 12:40 a.m., the bell broke into a loud fast clang, clang that told everyone that the levee had broken. In the space of just a few hours that industrious, peaceful town was transferred into a sea of raging, surging, muddy water, carrying on its crest the homes of many who lived near to where the break occurred."

The result was that, after 24 years of safety behind the 72-foot levee, almost 7,000 inhabitants of Lawrenceburg were turned overnight into homeless refugees. Water was entering the second floor of the courthouse, and county records were feared lost by Alvin Eber-

hart, clerk-treasurer of Greendale.

Cook Co. leaders set up a place to feed employees and the displaced, and the Lawrenceburg distillery was transformed into an emergency hospital with the second floor being used for church services, according to later reports in the Lawrenceburg Register, which suspended publication during the flood.

Three-fourths of Aurora was flooded and 3,128 people were driven from their homes. Every factory but one there took in water, and more than 100 homes were demolished. The city was put under martial law.

Train tracks and utility poles were utterly removed from their places. Several bridges were declared unsafe. Long distance gas lines were shut down, leaving the region without heat. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of

store stock were ruined.

While the newspapers in Lawrenceburg and Aurora were shut down, high-powered radio stations in the region broadcast as long as they could, relaying news and emergency messages to area U.S. Army units and government agencies. But finally the radios were silenced as well when electrical power was lost. Messages were relayed by telephone to a radio station in Nashville, Tennessee, where they were broadcast to some areas in Indiana that could receive them. Soon after that, a state police radio transmitter was installed in the Lawrenceburg distillery offices and continued to operate until the waters receded.

On Jan. 26, the refugees loaded onto school buses and cars, and began to be evacuated from the hill at Greendale to Batesville, Milan, Sunman and other

high points, according to a clipping from an unidentified newspaper in the Lawrenceburg Public Library historical collection.

Lee Corns is the only known drowning victim in Indiana, reported George Chappars, a Hamilton (Ohio) Journal correspondent. His wife was saved, but he refused to leave his home and died when the levee broke. There were six deaths due to exposure, 20 cases of pneumonia and several cases of scarlet fever reported in Lawrenceburg.

In all its extent, more than a million people were made homeless by the flood, 385 dead and property loss at \$500 million (\$8.7 billion in 2015 dollars), reported a story in the Cincinnati Enquirer. That was in the depth of the Great Depression and just a few years after the Dust Bowl.

In the following years, civic and industrial groups lobbied national authorities to create a comprehensive plan for flood control. In 1941, the Army Corps of Engineers began to engage communities in planning for a series of dams and high water levees. After 1945, the highest water levels began to get lower due to the construction of a comprehensive flood control system on tributaries above the Ohio River. After March 11, 1964, when the Ohio River reached 66.2 feet at Cincinnati, it has never crested above 60 feet, according to NOAA historical records.

*Some information came from Lawrenceburg Public Library newspaper clippings, which were not dated and did not show newspaper names.*





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Submitted photo

From right, Ron Fledderman, Dan Fledderman, Doug Bessler, (not pictured) Jackie Fledderman and Whitney Johnson were the founding members of the business.



Submitted photo

Batesville Tool & Die (shown here in 2011) has had many expansions since 1978.

# BTD continues to be successful

Diane Raver  
The Herald-Tribune

Batesville Tool & Die was established in 1978, reports Jody Fledderman, president and chief executive officer.

“My father, Ron Fledderman, was the founder of the business. The others that supported the effort were Jackie Fledderman, my mom; Whitney Johnson, Doug Bessler and Dan Fledderman .... I believe my father founded BTD because he wanted to provide opportunity for his community, his family and others,” he says.

A 3,200-square-foot block building behind the Quail Meadows neighborhood would serve as the company’s first home, according to “Batesville Tool & Die Inc. 35 Years — A Success Story” by Ronda Green and Terry

Giesting.

The first parts orders came from Ranco Controls, American Standard and Delco Products. The majority of the company’s business is for the automobile industry. Initially, most of the parts produced ended up on General Motors vehicles. At the start, the company was able to fit its entire inventory of equipment in only about half of the existing building space. Within two months of startup, the business was profitable.

In its first five years of existence, four major expansions were made to the original building. Square footage increased almost 700 percent, sales increased almost 500 percent and another 59 employees were added. Major acquisitions included a 220-ton Aida press,

200-ton Minster press and various smaller presses and supporting equipment. BTD was now producing not only automotive parts, but also many parts for General Electric appliances.

Titles and ranks had no place in this company. Everyone worked long hours and had the same benefits regardless of their functions. The belief was that those in management or supervisory positions would lead by example. Ron Fledderman always believed in rewarding those who worked hard by including them in the company. Shares were routinely offered to employees who showed good work ethic and character. This tradition has continued throughout the company’s history.

In 1987, BTD was selected as one of only

nine metal stampers in the United States to supply the Honda Manufacturing plant in Marysville, Ohio. The opportunity marked a pivotal time for Batesville Tool & Die, allowing the company to add welding as a value added service. In addition, the company now had its first experience in dealing directly with an automotive manufacturing plant. Until this time, parts had been shipped to second and third tier suppliers.

In 1989, BTD moved into heavy press work, increasing the variety of parts it could provide.

From 1996-2000, sales did not increase as drastically. This was by design to allow the company to grow at a more controlled rate; nonetheless, there were five expansions and a large increase in the number of shareholders.

A large majority of them were company employees.

In October 2000, a 53,000-square-foot facility was opened in Queretaro, Mexico, named Troqueladora Batesville de Mexico (TBM). It employed 20 people. Today, it has grown to 150,000 square feet and has 400 associates, the CEO reveals. “It has a similar product line and capabilities to Batesville, but has smaller products. BTD provides the logistical and technical support for this plant. Everything we make at the Mexico plant gets shipped to a customer in Mexico.”

In 2007, the Indiana plant opened a health clinic on site that provided free maintenance health care, including doctor’s appointments, lab work and generic prescription drugs to all of its associ-

ates and their families.

The year 2012 was a milestone year as BTD/TBM exceeded \$100 million in worldwide sales.

Through the years, there have been many other expansions. In addition, the company has received many recognitions, distinctions and awards.

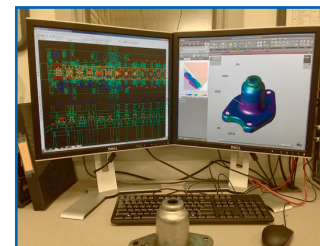
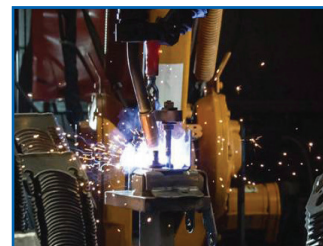
Fledderman says, “We will continue to be an anchor in the Batesville community and support our Mexico plant or any other future plants .... We will grow and increase Batesville’s footprint as business conditions require.

“BTD is a company that is not really small anymore, but still tries to operate like one. It’s a family-oriented business that provides growth opportunities for our employees.”



# Batesville Tool & Die ... Proud to be part of the Batesville community for 38 years!

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Bill Abplanalp	9	Ron Elliott	16
Mike Abrams	4	Tim Elstun	1
Greg Adams	31	Carla Enzinger	26
Bev Agapie	9	Kenny Erhart	2
Dan Agapie	24	Sam Ertel	19
Samantha Allen	2	Brett Fledderman	2
Teresa Allen	24	Dave Fledderman	32
Melissa Alvez	<1	Jay Fledderman	<1
Bill Anderson	14	Jody Fledderman	37
Allen Babbs	1	Joel Fledderman	26
Beverly Ball	<1	John Fledderman	36
Adam Bammel	4	Justin Fledderman	6
Carolee Barber	14	Shirley Fliehman	21
Ronald Barhorst	1	Pam Folsom	<1
Matt Bedel	16	Mike Forthofer	12
Scott Berkemeier	2	Rhonda Frye	2
Eric Blanken	24	Andy Gerdowsky	26
Troy Bolser	22	Melanie Gibbs	23
Cheryl Borgman	11	Randy Gibbs	4
Don Borgman	19	Rebecca Gibson	21
Tom Boyce	18	Tilly Gibson	18
Thaddeus Boyer	1	Kenya Gilbert	<1
Alex Brackman	2	Patricia Gilbert	11
Chad Brackman	6	Toby Gilbert	1
Dillon Brackman	<1	Karen Goetluck	<1
Chad Bradley	22	Doug Goldsmith	14
Amanda Brawner	<1	Brandon Goodpaster	<1
James Brock	1	Earl Goodpaster	3
Nathan Brockman	3	Daronna Gorrell	3
Bill Brunsmann	28	Jeremy Gorrell	2
Jimmy Burris	14	Gary Gosnell	<1
Kristen Cain	1	Glenn Gray	27
Clayton Calhoun	31	Paige Gray	4
Shanna Camarena	8	Kyle Green	4
Alan Carpenter	17	Robert Gridley	<1
Diana Carpenter	<1	Mark Gutzwiller	31
Ken Chambers	3	Jeff Hafer	28
Holly Cheek	22	Doug Halcomb	22
Don Christenberry	19	Ryan Hanna	2
Lowell Clark	4	Shilo Hanna	<1
Bob Clemons	21	Brad Harrison	2
Izvetia Coleman	2	Jamie Harrison	1
Rebecca Combs	<1	Roger Hartman	29
Travis Combs	<1	Jacob Haugh	<1
Larry Comley	28	Brad Hawk	26
Dan Couch	4	Paul Hawk	<1
Andrew Coyle	2	Jay Hayes	22
Starlette Creekmore	<1	Bill Hazelwood	19
Fred Dall	26	Rick Heinrich	9
Ed Davidson	17	Maggie Henson	21
Scotty Davis	4	Skyeler Henson	1
Steve Davis	28	Bobbi Jo Herbert-James	22
Barb Dickman	<1	Lindsey Hersley	4
Steve Doerflein	21	Tim Hillman	33
Alex Draeving	<1	Clifford Hiltenbeitel	2
George Dwenger	16	Art Hodapp	19
Scott Dwenger	3	Don Hoegeman	<1



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Victoria Hoegeman	Jarod Kerker	Jorge Lopez Garmendia	Dick Meer	Lauren Mynsberge	Aaron Reynolds	Lindsey Thomas
Brett Hofer	James Kirby	Kelly Luking	Steven Meister	Shelly Niemysyk	Jeff Reynolds	Russell Thomas
Beth Hoffman	Eric Kocher	Dave Lynch	Jason Merritt	Christy Northern	Bill Richardson	Jonathan Thompson
Kyle Hoffman	Abe Koehne	Mary Lynch	Joe Meyer	Pete Orozco	Jim Richardson	Jon Tomlin
Jan Holm	Collin Koury	Jason Mack	Lana Meyer	Chuck Osborn	Matt Richardson	Timothy Trabel
Chirs Honeycutt	Ron Kuntz	Chris Mathews	Mike Meyer	Marty Owens	Paul Richardson	Beth Troville
Dan Hooten	Greg Laker	Kevin Mathews	Regina Meyer	Isaiah Perry	Ed Richey	Anita Turner
Jacob Hooten	Marc Laker	Kyle Mathews	Rick Meyer	Jon Pettit	Kristin Richey	Arlie Turner
Chris Hornsby	Gene Lambert	Mike Mathews	Tom Meyer	Rena Phillips	Ronald Riffle	Trevor Turner
Marvin Hountz	Tim Lambert	Ben McCray	Adam Mobley	Teresa Phillips	Amy Riley	Melody VanAusdal
Caleb Howard	Michele Lattire	Brittany McCray	John Moll	Allison Pinson	Bob Riley	Samantha Varner
Kim Isaacs	Michael Leake	Don McDaniel	Shawn Moody	Kevin Powers	Bill Roell	Mike Velie
Mike Jewell	Blake Lewis	Michael McDaniel	Alex Moore	Jeff Prowse	Stan Roell	Lori Voegel
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Kelly Jones	Bob Linville	Jeff Mckittrick	Brent Muckerheide	Dennis Pugh	Anthony Roy	Danielle Wallpe
Ryan Jones	Lydia Lockhart	Pam McMullen	Tom Muckerheide	Dave Raab	Diana Salter	Jordan Walsman
Amy Keihn	Trevor Lonneman	Theresa McQueen	Daniel Murray	Dawn Renck	Tele Santiago	Toby Walsman

Aaron Reynolds	19	Lindsey Thomas	2
Jeff Reynolds	17	Russell Thomas	9
Bill Richardson	1	Jonathan Thompson	2
Jim Richardson	9	Jon Tomlin	19
Matt Richardson	9	Timothy Trabel	3
Paul Richardson	22	Beth Troville	2
Ed Richey	2	Anita Turner	17
Kristin Richey	1	Arlie Turner	17
Ronald Riffle	<1	Trevor Turner	2
Amy Riley	<1	Melody VanAusdal	2
Bob Riley	31	Samantha Varner	18
Bill Roell	31	Mike Velie	8
Stan Roell	31	Lori Voegel	17
Nora Rose	<1	Brandon Vohland	19
Debbie Rosenberger	11	Garlyn Walke	3
Anthony Roy	17	Danielle Wallpe	<1
Diana Salter	1	Jordan Walsman	1
Tele Santiago	11	Toby Walsman	28
Nikki Sarringhaus	17	Anthony Wardrobe	1
Jennifer Scarber	8	Mike Webber-Fowler	14
John Schiller	28	Kristopher Weber	2
Todd Schlotter	<1	Matt Weisenbach	14
Carol Schneider	16	Kevin Weiskittel	1
Kris Schneider	<1	Maria Wesseler	17
Pete Schomber	11	Bobby West	16
Andy Schwering	21	Lynn Westerfeld-Roberts	22
Hope Schwering	3	Matt Westerman	21
John Scott	22	April White	9
Keith Scott	<1	Tom Whitecotton	9
Steve Scudder	22	Charlene Whittaker	21
David Shrout	<1	Cheryl Whittaker	2
Clarence Shupe	21	Steve Whittaker	18
Tyler Shupe	<1	Travis Wilburn	3
Cody Sims	1	Mike Wilkening	21
Larry Snyder	3	David Willard	<1
Dale Sorber	3	Matt Williamson	18
Mike Sparks	24	Amy Wilson	3
Kayla Speckman	1	Erica Wilson	<1
John Spurling	<1	Melvin Wilson	31
Justin Starkey	<1	Mike Wilson	4
Brian Stirn	18	Paul Wilson	24
Henry Stoll	17	Zac Wilson	<1
Karren Streicher	3	Jim Wintz	34
Gina Sullivan	17	Sam Wintz	27
Jeremy Taylor	2	Rob Workman	21
Matthew Taylor	4	Pat Yeager	1



# Hardebeck murders made national news

Debbie Blank  
The Herald-Tribune

What looked like a single-car accident at the Hardebeck residence near the Ripley-Decatur county line 5 miles west of Napoleon quickly turned into a crime scene once police started exploring Tuesday, Aug. 24, 1993, around 10:30 p.m., according to The Herald-Tribune's Aug. 28 issue.

Five family members were found shot to death on a rural farm. "Autopsy reports indicated that all of the victims died from multiple gunshot wounds to their heads and chests," the newspaper said.

Officers saw a vehicle west of the house against some trees. Tire marks in the gravel "looked like

someone tried to take off real fast," said Indiana State Police Trooper Greg Allen. Betty Powers, 41, was dead in the car. Inside the house, her mother, Martha Hardebeck, 73, was found on a bed with a blanket over her. A son, James, 40, was discovered in the basement. He appeared to have been dragged across the floor.

Once three bodies were located, crime scene technicians and detectives were called to the scene. That night police brought in an ISP helicopter equipped with infrared and heat-detecting equipment as they began an air search for three missing relatives. At about 7:25 a.m. Aug. 25, police found the body of another son, Marlin Hardebeck, 33,

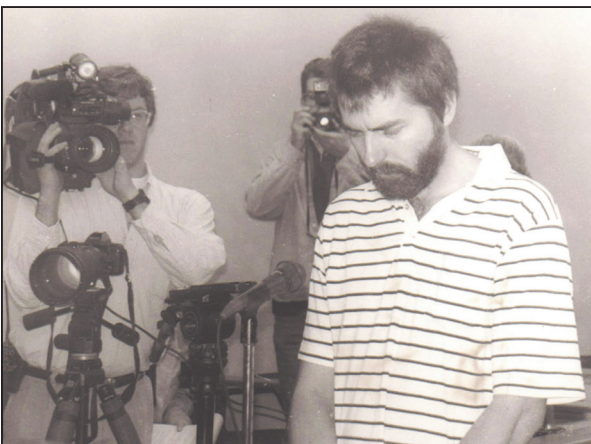


Photo courtesy of Jack Penchoff | Garrard County News

**After George Hardebeck** made a court appearance in Garrard County, Kentucky, he wore the same jeans and T-shirt at a hearing presided over by Ripley Circuit Court Judge Carl Taul.

behind a barn about 100 yards from the house. A TV videographer helped discover the fifth victim when he found blood outside of the roped-off crime scene area two hours later. Ripley County Sher-

iff's Department Deputy Dave Adams located the body of Virgil Powers, 55, Betty's husband, face down in a garden that was surrounded by corn stalks.

"There were signs of a struggle," ISP Sgt. John Mann said at the scene. "The only person we can't find is George Hardebeck, and a tan-colored early 1980 Ford Escort wagon."

He added, "Something went very, very wrong at the residence."

Ripley County Prosecutor Frank Arkenberg filed one charge of murder against George Hardebeck, 31, brother and son of the victims, on Aug. 26. Initially authorities said it was likely the unemployed man was still in the

area.

Indiana State Police set up a command post at the Napoleon Volunteer Fire Department. Two days after the killings police were conducting air and ground surveillance within 20 miles of the farm and established a checkpoint to question residents who may have witnessed anything suspicious. Area farmers were told to check their fields for signs of the suspect.

Family members said the suspect, formerly in the Marine Corps Reserves, had been "acting strangely" in recent weeks. "Reports indicate that the murders may have been committed due to a family argument,

See **MURDERS** / 23

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## HILLENBRANDS

Continued from Page 3

Mitchell, donated money for the construction of a hospital in Batesville, they also consulted the Catholic Hospital Association president, who suggested that the Hillenbrand clan make “livable furniture for hospitals.” Hill-Rom was formed two years later. The name is the combination of the first syllables of the surnames of Bill Hillenbrand and his cousin, George Romweber. When they were school-aged, the two boys raised rabbits and called their enterprise Hill-Rom and the name still appealed when the new company had to be registered with the Indiana secretary of state.

At that time, the Hillenbrand and Romweber families agreed to divide their holdings. The Romwebers acquired American Furniture Co., Batesville Cabinet Co. and some manufacturing facilities. The Hillenbrands gained Batesville Casket Co., Hill-Rom and various pieces of property, according

to the Hill-Rom history.

Innovations kept hospitals buying the company's furniture: hi-low beds in 1948, beds with short safety rails in 1949, electric beds in 1956, intensive care beds in 1961 and headwall units containing lights in 1970. Each year more patents are added.

In 1969, Hillenbrand Industries was established as a holding company with Batesville Casket Co. and Hill-Rom as subsidiaries, Schwettman reported. On July 11, 1972, three brothers — John W., Bill and George Carl — retired, so youngest brother Dan was named Hillenbrand Industries president. His nephew, August Hillenbrand, became Hill-Rom's second president. In 1989 when Dan Hillenbrand retired as CEO, Gus Hillenbrand succeeded him, holding that title until 2000, when he retired and the first non-family leader, Fred Rockwood, took the reins.

Always intent on being better, Hillenbrand Industries leaders recommitted to Kaizen (Japanese improvement method)

and the Toyota production system in 1996.

Local history was made April 1, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. when Ken Camp, Hillenbrand Inc. (formerly Batesville Casket Co.) president, and Peter Soderberg, Hill-Rom Holdings president, simultaneously pressed the button that rang the opening bell on the New York Stock Exchange.

“With that sound, Hillenbrand Industries disappeared as its two subsidiaries became separate companies,” The Herald-Tribune observed April 4, 2008. By late 2015, there were no Hillenbrands on either company's board of directors.

Quietly, the family always has been incredibly philanthropic. Three separate Hillenbrand foundations named for a father, son and grandson injected close to \$500,000 into mostly Batesville area schools, churches and projects in 2000 alone, according to an Oct. 17, 2001, Herald-Tribune article. And grants continue to be made.

The John A. Hillen-

brand Foundation was started many years ago by Gus Hillenbrand's grandfather. The William A. and Martha H. Hillenbrand Foundation was founded in about 1985 and is overseen by their surviving children, including Gus Hillenbrand. He founded his own W August Hillenbrand Family Foundation in about 1995 with his children serving on the board.

A beneficiary all three philanthropic arms have in common is CREATE (Committee to Review, Evaluate and Aid Technology in Education), which Hillenbrand founded in the mid-1990s after touring exceptional tech schools elsewhere.

Now the clan is on its fourth generation of givers. Gus Hillenbrand said in 2001, “The dedication of doing things for Batesville — that's very, very important to everyone in the Hillenbrand family.”

During that interview, he pointed out, “Individual (Hillenbrand) families have put money into projects, too.”

From its inception in 1998 until now, leaders of

the Joan and John Hillenbrand Vision Fund for Innovation have distributed over \$225,500 in the form of around 150 grants to all six schools — Batesville primary, intermediate, middle and high; St. Louis School; and Oldenburg Academy. The fund's mission is to advance the quality of education in the Batesville community “by providing the means for teachers to improve instructional skills, seek excellence, foster creativity in the classroom, create a better learning environment and encourage students to become lifelong learners.”

Liberty Park, Margaret Mary Health, Batesville Memorial Pool, Batesville Memorial Public Library and Southeastern Indiana YMCA had their beginnings through the generosity and foresight of one or more relatives. Gus Hillenbrand observed, “The interesting thing is none of the Hillenbrands are running those” now. He liked the fact that his family has founded Batesville landmarks that have since become self-sufficient.

Ray Hillenbrand retired as Hillenbrand Inc. board chairman in 2006 after serving five years in that role and 35 years on the board.

On the eve of accepting the Tom Didier Award for Excellence in Family Business in Rapid City, South Dakota, on behalf his family in 2012, Ray told the Rapid City Journal the importance of giving back “has been instilled in every generation of my family from my grandfather and his father right straight through. It was just part of life.”

And the family's share the wealth trend continues.

Last year Margaret Mary Health Foundation board Chairman Bill Hillenbrand II had an idea. What if the family donated some money and asked the community to do the same? Soon several different family branches and generations generously contributed \$1 million, leading to the successful Hillenbrand Family Leadership Challenge, which raised an additional \$1.1 million.

## SUNMAN

Continued from Page 6

citizens petitioned the county commissioners to charter the town — the charter was signed in the hotel — which made it an official town in 1896.

In 1888, William Huneke brought a cigar-making business to town. It was called Lean Hoo-siers and Dew Drops, and 5-cent cigars and twofers called Main Lines were also sold there.

In 1890, William Bruns and William Koenig built the Big Four Hall, 412 Eastern Ave. The Big Four Railroad originally owned the hall and used it as a warehouse. The hall

was purchased from Mike Harnish in 1921 for \$1,100 by the American Legion. That same year, the Kenneth L. Diver Post 337 was organized and named in memory of Diver, who was the first Sunman area soldier killed in action during World War I. The first commander was Arthur Schene. The first meeting was held on the second floor of the Red Men Hall building, 204 S. Meridian St. Legion members had a fair every year to make money. The hall was also used for dances, and the first area inside basketball game was held there. Hall additions were a bar room, meeting room and kitchen.

Cordt Bruns had a fur-

niture store and undertaking business. He had the first factory that made caskets and the first hearse. His brother, William Bruns, added a livery business in connection with the undertaking business. In 1895, after purchasing the wagon-making interest of Max Felix, Behlmer purchased the adjoining property to the funeral home and built a residence. He conducted a successful undertaking business called Behlmer and Bruns. The funeral business was also held in several other buildings in Sunman.

In 1900, V.W. Bigney constructed a large two-story building at 204 S. Meridian St. On the first

floor was his drugstore and William Osting's barbershop. The second floor became the Red Men Lodge Hall. When Bigney was appointed postmaster, the post office was moved to this building after the barbershop was vacated. The structure was sold to A.J. Schene after Bigney's death. Schene, a licensed pharmacist, called it Sunman Drug Store and ran it for many years. Then Viola Kaiser operated it as a convenience store and soda fountain. The building later housed several restaurants.

In 1902, the first firehouse was built at 122 W. Washington St. on property owned by the railroad. The town jail was

housed in one corner of the firehouse.

The first business to operate at 123 Vine St. was a brickmaking factory owned by two Hermans — Nieman and Dreyer Sr. In 1905, a stock company was organized under the name Cooperative Canning Co. A few years later, interests were disposed of to the Sheriff Preserve Co., Cincinnati. Naas Corp. purchased them. In 1926, Naas moved a small operation to Sunman and in 1928, the entire tomato catsup operation was moved there, operated by George Maxwell.

In 1919, Frank Galbraith, the son of Francis Galbraith, opened the first auto dealership in Sun-

man on Fillmore Street. His Buick was the second automobile in town.

John Schwing established a harness shop at 203 W. Washington St. in 1920. With the automobile fast appearing, he secured a dealership for the old Durant motor car and founded an auto agency and garage. His residence was in the back of the harness shop. Later he purchased the Baeuerlin Auto Agency and building at 105 S. Meridian St. and became a dealer for Ford Motor Car Co.

*Diane Raver can be contacted at [diane.raver@batesvilleheraldtribune.com](mailto:diane.raver@batesvilleheraldtribune.com) or 812-934-4343, Ext. 114.*



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## FURNITURE

Continued from Page 7

partnership Dec. 31, 1887, when John acquired William's assets.

In February 1888, American Furniture Co. reorganized yet again, this time with John St. Clair as president and John Hillenbrand as vice president. Its office building was built in 1909 at Main and East Pearl streets, facing Main and extending west to Walnut Street. Eventually AFC merged with Romweber Co.

### Greeman manufacturing

In 1876 Frederick Greeman's sons established Greeman Brothers Manufacturing Co. with \$5,000 capital. Their father served as president until his death Dec. 6, 1899. Many workers learned the trades of

carving, cabinetmaking and varnishing during their employment at the factory. The starting wage was \$1.50 weekly for a work week of six 10-hour days.

Despite continued success for a time, the company began to fail after involvement in manufacturing low-end bedroom furniture for mail order firms such as Sears Roebuck & Co. The Greeman company went into receivership in 1912 after the death of William Greeman, Frederick's oldest son. After a number of efforts to regain prosperity, it was purchased at auction in March 1913 by Hillenbrand interests.

Substantial land holdings were among the assets acquired in the Greeman purchase. After the acquisition, Batesville Cabinet Co. was incorporated in 1913. The Hillenbrand family focused this

company on the production of dining room furniture, whereas American Furniture Co. remained a manufacturer of "high grade bedroom suites."

By 1921 Hillenbrand had constructed a combined plant for American Furniture Co., Batesville Cabinet Co. and another acquisition, Batesville Casket Co., according to the Indiana Historical Society.

### Union furniture

Union Furniture Co. manufactured elaborately carved bedroom and dining room furniture. It was Batesville's oldest continuously operating company until the factory burned down in the 1930s. It was organized by George, Frederick and William Schultz as a mutual stock company. The employees owned a large portion of the stock. UFC finally

became a subsidiary of Jamestown Sterling Co., which owned it at the time production ended.

### Turn of the century

Western Furniture Co. was established in 1892. Its principle products were bedroom suites that were shipped to all parts of the United States. In 1922, Harry Canfield, employed as a bookkeeper, bought William Schweir's stock to become the principle stockholder. Canfield became known throughout the country as a furniture salesman and later a furniture manufacturer.

By 1900 Batesville had six furniture factories, two coffin and casket plants, two sawmills, a door and sash factory and a novelty works.

By the end of 1903, the furniture factories were selling about \$600,000 worth of merchandise each

year. Local furniture factories were using 150,000 square feet of glass and train car loads of knobs, buttons and handles in the production of furniture.

In 1906, Union Furniture Co. built a new four-story extension to its factory, and added on again in 1911.

A sub-cellar and engine room were added to American Furniture Co., which expanded again in 1909, 1912 and 1916.

### Weberding legacy

William Weberding was born in 1917 and began carving around the age of 6. His father gave him some chisels and wood while William was recuperating from an appendectomy and pneumonia. The young boy needed something to keep him busy, and apparently his father found the right solution. His dad had no

idea this would turn into his son's life occupation.

Weberding continued carving and honing his skills on his own, mostly for pleasure, until the age of 16, when he was hired as an apprentice in 1933 at Romweber Furniture Co. There he stayed for nine years, always holding to a desire to open his own business. To accomplish this, he carved religious statues in the evenings at home. In his spare time, he visited different parishes to show the priests his carvings and let them know what he could do for them.

He eventually started getting orders and his dream became a reality. In 1942, at 25, he opened his own carving shop. He retired in 1981, and his sons took over the business, which still operates on State Road 46 as Weberding Carving Shop Inc.

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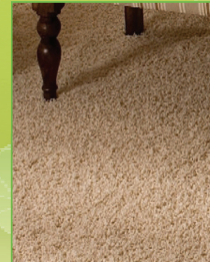
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# Batesville can claim two athletes

Peter Karbowski wrestled in the welterweight class, weighing 145 pounds or less. He trained in Chicago, where he resided. He won a gold medal at the Hawthorne Men's Club April 26, 1912, in the middleweight division. Karbowski was famous for some of his wrestling holds and relied on them to overcome his opponents.

At 25, his skill as a wrestler then won him the Olympic Gold Medal in Stockholm in 1912, recalled descendant and Batesville resident Don Karbowski in "The Batesville Area," a Batesville Area Historical Society book. The wrestler was



Benz



Karbowski

awarded his medal in Chicago in 1913.

When he was a young man, the athlete visited an aunt who lived in Batesville. He grew to like the city so much, he decided to move here in 1915.

Joe Benz's story begins in New Alsace, his birthplace, according to memories of a niece, Martha Huntman, in the Batesville Area Historical Society book "The Batesville Area."

The boy first demonstrated his baseball skills while playing for the Batesville Champion Royals.

When he was 17 and a high school senior, his father, an avid White Sox fan, decided it was up to him to help his son determine a career. He took Joe to Chicago to visit White Sox owner Louis Comiskey. "Mr. Comiskey," he said "Benz is my name. My son Joe here believes that he is a baseball player, what's your opinion?" He signed a contract with the White Sox in March 1910. After playing with the farm team one year, the athlete was a teammate in

the major league from 1911-19.

The media in Chicago tagged him with the nickname "Butcher Boy

Benz" when they learned that his family owned a slaughterhouse in his hometown. Joe pitched one no-hitter in 1914

against the Cleveland Naps and also pitched in the 1917 World Series. He died in Chicago April 22, 1957.



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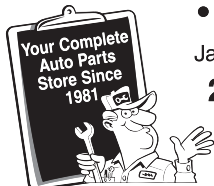
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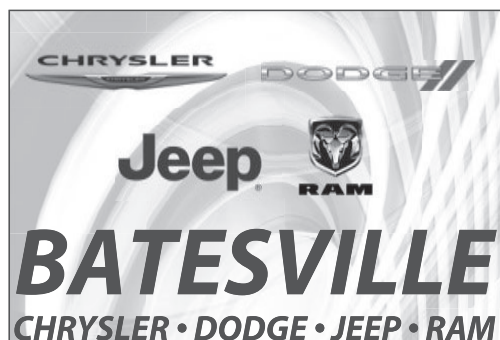
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## EXPLOSIONS

Continued from Page 8

furnace or water heater. "It's just one big flash of fire," then the force of the blast instantaneously put the blaze out. Otto Wietlisbach reported, "A dog in the garage was fine afterwards, although all of her hair is singed."

Before leaving the scene about six hours later, the firefighters found a small piece of burnt insu-

lation. "That's an indication there was an ignition," Abel noted.

By 3:45 p.m. that day close to 20 relatives and friends, some wearing masks, were sorting through the rubble, looking for items to salvage. One man was using a chain saw.

After John Wietlisbach was released from the hospital the following day, the couple returned to the site of their former home. "He personally wanted to

thank all of the friends and neighbors and family trying to help clear and clean up .... You can never thank them enough for everything they've done."

Lili Wietlisbach pointed out, "It was a good day because his hand was in mine."

The destroyed house had been about 18 years old, Otto recalled. "They just had it all decorated and fixed up the way they wanted it." When asked about the loss of their

home and its contents, she replied, "None of that matters."

The couple rebuilt a house at the same location.

Lili said, "We very much are aware of how fortunate we are that no lives were lost. The tears that we have now are really happy tears."

*Diane Raver can be contacted at [diane.raver@batesvilleheraldtribune.com](mailto:diane.raver@batesvilleheraldtribune.com) or 812-934-4343, Ext. 114.*



Debbie Blank | The Herald-Tribune

**A motorcycle** was one of the larger items salvaged from what remained of the Wietlisbachs' home and garage and their contents.

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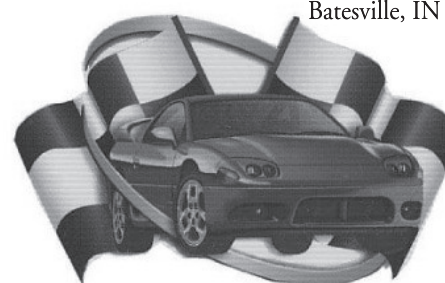
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# OLDENBURG

Continued from Page 4

Democratic Herald and was printed at its offices in Batesville. One page was devoted particularly to Oldenburg news and advertisements. It lasted from February through November 1910.

## Sisters' cow barn

Located to the east of Indiana Avenue, it was built in 1908. The largest barn in Franklin County, it was constructed of stone and brick. The Sisters did the barn work, which included milking cows and separating the milk, into the 1930s. After swimming in the reservoir, school boys were often offered cool glasses of buttermilk by the nuns as they passed by the barn on their way home.

## Koehler's Shrine

Located on Shrine Road a mile and a half east of town, it was built in 1871 to fulfill a vow made at sea

during a violent storm. The statue of Mary was salvaged from a church threatened by pillage during the French Revolution.

## Concrete bridge

Located on Hamburg Road and Averdick Street, it was the first concrete bridge built in Franklin County. It was constructed by Henry Koepple.

## Former postmasters of Oldenburg

Those serving in this position in the early years included Joseph Huegle, 1845; J.F. Niedhamer, 1849; J.F. Fisse, 1850; J.B. Fisse, 1864; Joseph Suhre, 1864; J.H. Sellmeyer, 1866; Conrad Mohr, 1881; August Hackman, 1881; Frank Scheper, 1885; A.A. Hackman, 1889; John Haverkos, 1893; A.W. Romweber, 1897; A.A. Hackman, 1901; Peter Schreiner, 1907; George Holtel Jr., 1913.

## Corpus Christi chapels

Two small chapels in

the woods on Holy Family Church land, just north of the church cemetery, serve as shrines during the annual Corpus Christi procession in June. An early resident, Ed Flodder, said they were already built when he was a boy in 1892. The procession has been observed annually since 1846 with benediction conducted at the two woodland shrines and at temporary altars set up in town.

## Casket factory

Casket prices were figured at \$1 a foot.

## Cradle shop

Erected in 1845 by Eberhard Waechter, it was used to manufacture wheat cradles and spinning wheels.

## Oldenburg Town Hall

Erected in 1878 by the Eagle Fire Department, it was built for the town as a civic center. It was dedicated on Washington's birthday in 1878 following a parade. In the 1930s, it

was used as a high school with John Frushour and Mary Hines as instructors. Franklin County historian Virgil Davis gave one of the earliest commencement addresses there.

## Huegel house

It was built in 1845. The lintel stone over the main entrance on Pearl Street contained the date and a carving of a slice of the moon and blazing sun. According to Huegel's plan, the pale sickle moon represented the tired, thirsty traveler just arriving. The blazing sun stood for the traveler as he left "all lit up." These same emblems are also found on the early German coinage, the Thaler and Brunswick.

## Public park

This was the site of the first Gehring Brick Yard, and it was here that the bricks were made for the first of the present convent buildings in 1858. This is the reason the park

is at a lower level than the street. The town's first log jail was constructed there in 1870.

## Holy Family Church

It was erected in 1862 at a cost of \$30,000. The bricks for the structure were kilned in William Gehring's Brick Yard. The 65-foot roof truss work was designed and built under the supervision of Dominic Siefert.

## Caspar Gaupel's tin shop

Gaupel, the master tinner who designed and executed the ornate tin work seen on many of the homes and public buildings in Oldenburg, was killed in a fall from the roof of the Sisters' building while making repairs. George Schmidt, who later ran the shop, married one of Gaupel's daughters. This building was also the studio of Maurice Schmidt, George Schmidt's son, who was a well-known oil and watercolor artist. During the

1930s, at the time of the Prohibition repeal, dances were held there, and it was known as the Bloody Bucket. It later served as a temporary school room while Holy Family School was being constructed.

## Oldenburg Garage

Built in 1860 by J.H. Sellmeyer, it was sold to Flodder and Co. in 1872. It was later owned by Duttenhoefer and Co., and in 1882, it employed about 40 people, but went out of business in the 1890s. A fire in the late 1800s destroyed the third floor.

## Little house

According to Father Joseph Thie, Father Rudolph attempted to establish a small convent (see left cover photo) in 1847 with Sister Clara and four postulants living there. The convent failed when a group of bigots from out of town stoned the building one evening and so frightened the residents that they gave up the project.

# MURDERS

Continued from Page 14

according to police," the newspaper reported Sept. 1, 1993. A week or two before the crimes, Hardebeck and Virgil Powers, who lived nearby, argued over the use of a phone and Hardebeck pointed a rifle at Powers and told him to leave, court records stated.

The phone line had been cut from inside the residence and a flammable liquid had been poured at locations throughout the home, according to testimony at an Aug. 26 probable cause hearing in Ripley Circuit Court.

About 300 attended funeral services for the quintet Aug. 28 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Millhousen. Police provided extra security.

Of the missing Hardebeck, ISP Lt. David Scranton said, "The possibility always exists that he has killed himself."

An intense search of the farm property eight days later by 60 police and volunteers turned up no new significant evidence. Through ISP, a surviving brother, Bill, 29, who was at work in Greensburg when the shootings occurred, said, This has been such a shock for my family and me, to lose five loved ones at one time in this manner. I appreciate

the kindness and concern shown by family and friends. I want to thank the state police and sheriff's department and all the people who have helped ... especially with the search today ..." He was there and had a handgun holstered to his belt.

Bill Hardebeck had words for his brother: "George, give yourself up. The police will continue to look for you until you are found."

The manhunt became nationwide when the story was featured on the TV show "America's Most Wanted" Sept. 14. After that program aired, a Kentucky woman spotted Hardebeck's 1984 station wagon that night south of Lexington in Lancaster.

Receipts from Georgia and Tennessee dated Sept. 2-3 were found inside. It took a while for police to tie the vehicle to the suspect. It had a Tennessee license plate, which had not been reported stolen, and the vehicle identification number had been removed.

There were so many possible sightings of the suspect that Indiana State Police traveled to Louisville to check them out in late October.

Police located Hardebeck, much thinner and with a beard, hiding in a barn seven miles from Lancaster Oct. 27 after a neighbor saw a man enter the building and called the owners, who said

nobody should be in the barn.

Bill Hardebeck, who positively identified his brother, admitted, "I want him dead. Some people might think that is a pretty harsh thing to say, but they're not standing in my shoes. He killed my mother, two of my brothers ... and my sister and her husband. They had a family ... they had four kids and now they have to go on without a mother or father."

Hardebeck pleaded guilty, but mentally ill to five murder charges March 7, 1994, in Ripley Circuit Court and Judge Carl Taul accepted the plea. Earlier the judge denied a defense motion to suppress a two-page

confession. The prosecutor agreed not to ask for the death penalty.

During the sentencing hearing, a clinical psychologist testified that Hardebeck was depressed and "he suffered from isolation and alienation. He suffered from paranoia that would have altered his state of mind." The expert said the man was remorseful and in a written statement, Hardebeck said, "I would like to express sorrow for the pain I have caused."

The defendant showed no emotion when the judge sentenced him April 7 to 240 years in prison, 50 years each for four of the victims and 40 years for James Hardebeck's death.



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