

# Rush County Genealogical Society

VOLUME XI, ISSUE I  
MARCH 2018

## 2018 RCGS Programs

### Our Officers:

- *President:*  
*Carol Jones*
- *Vice-President:*  
*Bill Baetz*
- *Secretary:*  
*Katrina Cole Cooper*
- *Treasurer:*  
*Marilyn Yager*
- *Historian:*  
*TBD*

**April 14:** Working meeting—Obituary Project

**May 12:** Film Cemetery Videos at Fairview and Manilla

**May 19:** Film Cemetery Videos at Milroy, Aldridge and Moscow

**June 9:** Field Trip to Wilbur Wright Museum, near Hagerstown – Bill Baetz to organize

**June 23 – 30:** help Historical Society with Booth at Rush County Fair

**July 14 –** Working Meeting – Katrina to give demonstration on Paint.net

**August 18 –** Larry Stout–Boxer presentation– Marilyn Yager, contact person

**September 9 –** Film cemetery videos – Blue River Baptist and Barrett

**September 15 -** Meeting – Oral Histories with people in their 80's and 90's – Marilyn Yager

**October 13–** Historical Home Tour – Katrina Cooper, Marilyn Yager

### Inside this issue:

**November 10 –** Circuit Riders – Katrina Cooper, Election of Officers, Time for Dues

**December –** no meeting

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\*\*\*\*\*MEMBERS please meet at 10:30 a.m. for a short business meeting on the months that we have presentations so that we can keep current on business issues. \*\*\*\*\*



**Ora Thomas and Dessie (Hilligoss)  
Lower**

By Katrina Cole Cooper

Many Rush County students give thanks for the funds received from the Ora T. Lower and Dessie H. Lower Memorial Scholarship Fund. This couple's will made funds available for the education of Rush County youth. The first scholarship awards from this fund were made for the school year of 1968-69.

Most people do not know that this couple gave 18.64 acres of land adjoining Memorial Park to the County Agricultural Association in 1940 to be used for holding the annual livestock and farm products show for Rush County farmers and 4-H members. In their honor, it was named the Lower Community Center Fairgrounds. When they gave the land for the fair, they stipulated that it shall never be encumbered by any mortgage or lien. If for some reason it becomes impossible to use the ground for the site of various agricultural activities, it will revert to the city of Rushville's public park system with the understanding that the real estate shall at all times be available for use by organizations having purposes similar in the purpose for which the association is organized. The Lowers also gave the funds to build the secretary's office building in 1956 and were large contributors toward the livestock pavilion, livestock barns and industrial building.

Ora Thomas Lower was born January 21, 1881 in Walker Township, the son of James M. and Miranda M. (Heaton) Lower. His father was a farmer in Walker Township and the owner of 200 acres. They were the parents of six children: Daisy A., Ora T., Bertha A., Cecil E., Laverne H., and Elbert M. Ora attended District School No. 7 known as the Alexander School. Ora lived at the home farm until he married Dessie Hilligoss on January 10, 1906 and he purchased a small tract of land and added to it through the years, owning 960 acres at the time his biographical sketch appeared in the Centennial History of Rush County published in 1921. Mr. Lower raised hogs for breeding and market purposes – about 500 hogs a year.

Dessie Hilligoss was born in Homer, Indiana on October 11, 1880, the daughter of James V. and Mary H. (Hodge) Hilligoss. She went to school at the Homer school and then two years at Manilla High School and two years at Shelbyville High School, graduating from there. She also attended the Graham Music Academy at Rushville and served as Pianist and Organist at the Homer Christian Union Church where they were active members. In 1928 she organized and directed the Homer Concert Band composed of about 50 young people and the group continued for many years. She raised Speckled Sussex chickens, a breed that came from England and their home was one of the nicest in the county.

Mr. and Mrs. Lower were very community minded. They sponsored a 4-H girl to attend State Fair School for many years, provided many special prizes, trips and gifts for 4-H Clubs and members. Mr. Lower was a director of the Rush County Fair Board and member of the building committee and assistant superintendent of the Flower Show.

Ora Lower passed away January 4, 1963 and Dessie Lower on May 22, 1965. Mrs. Lower's will consisted of 21 pages with over 100 bequests showing again their community spirit. Gifts were given to Purdue University, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, township funds and other organizations and individuals.

A bequest of \$10,000 was made to the East Hill Shrine Mausoleum Association with income to be used for the upkeep of the mausoleum, with sufficient funds to be used for the purchase of flowers for the crypts of Mr. and Mrs. Lower.

Other gifts were given to other county cemeteries: Goddard Cemetery, Hurst Cemetery, Orme Cemetery, Manilla Cemetery Association and East Hill Cemetery Association of Rushville.

\$10,000 was given to Rush Memorial Hospital and \$3,000 to Riley Hospital with mention that the couple had given Riley an earlier gift of \$2,000.

Rush County organizations that were recipients were: Rushville Salvation Army, Rush County Chapter of the American Red Cross, Rush County Agriculture Association, Walker Township Fire Department, United Fund of Rush County, Tuberculosis Association of Rush County, Posey Township Fire Department, Rush County Heart Fund, American Cancer Society, and the Rush County Chapter of the March of Dimes for use in their polio fund.



Ora T. and Dessie Hilligoss Lower Home

## Rush County Fair

In 1851 a group of men interested in agriculture organized and held the first fair. The first site was close to where the lower cemetery is located on South Jackson Street. W. S. Hall was Grand Marshal. There were no horse races but many fine cattle and horses were shown in the ring. The principal attraction was a buffalo brought in by Pierce Guffin who live near Mauzy.

A second fair was held near the site of the old B and O Depot and the present Havens School.

In 1852 a Rush County Agricultural Association was formed. It was reorganized in 1853 and at the suggestion of the Republican Company the directors sold stock. On May 23, 1856, the Association purchased 11 acres for land from Joseph Lakin for \$950.00. The first fair was held at this site in 1857 two miles east of Rushville on Highway 44.

David Wilson was in charge of the first fair and 2,000 people thronged the grounds the first day. Entries in the various divisions numbered in the thousands.

The fair of 1863, during the Civil War, was the first in which Rush County Agricultural Society went out of debt and has a surplus of \$300.00.

The premium list published in the Rushville Republican June 27, 1866, for the 10<sup>th</sup> annual fair, to be held Sept. 11, 12, 13, 14, listed the cost of a single ticket at \$.25, annual member family tickets at \$1.50, horse and buggy \$.40, and man and a horse \$.35. The flower division had 17 classifications with a cash prize given winners in each class.

The big attraction was running and pacing horse races in the afternoons. The ring between the hills at the Fair Grounds was used for exhibiting and judging premium stock. Cattle, dairy and beef cattle of different breeds, draft horses, light harness horses, farm teams, Shetland ponies were featured in a parade at 4 P.M. For years, William Alexander acted as ring marshal. He would ride back and forth between the barn and the grandstand calling out names of show animals in the parade and awarding blue ribbons.

For years the C.H. and D. railroad ran a shuttle train to the Fair Grounds. The trains would take on passengers at Fourth and Main Streets and puff slowly out to the Fair Grounds. Later the Indianapolis and Cincinnati Traction Co. ran interurban cars to the Grounds. The Railroad Ran its last train in 1908.

A small bridge near the Fair Grounds operated for a number of years as a toll bridge. Persons were charged \$.02 for use of the bridge going out and \$.02 coming in from the grounds. Road 44 was as "dusty as a dirt race track."





## Rush County Fair

The business houses closed on Thursdays, the big day of the Fair, so employees could attend. For many years the local Post Office maintained a branch office on the grounds.

The last Fair was held on the old Fair Grounds in 1917. Because of the War and because interest in horse racing has waned, the Fair was no longer profitable.

The fair grounds and buildings were sold at a sheriff's sale.

After almost a decade without a Rush County Fair, a group of citizens in the fall of 1926 organized a Free Fair, with W. A. Alexander as president and Glen Foster, treasurer. In 1927, the Fair was held in Memorial Park.

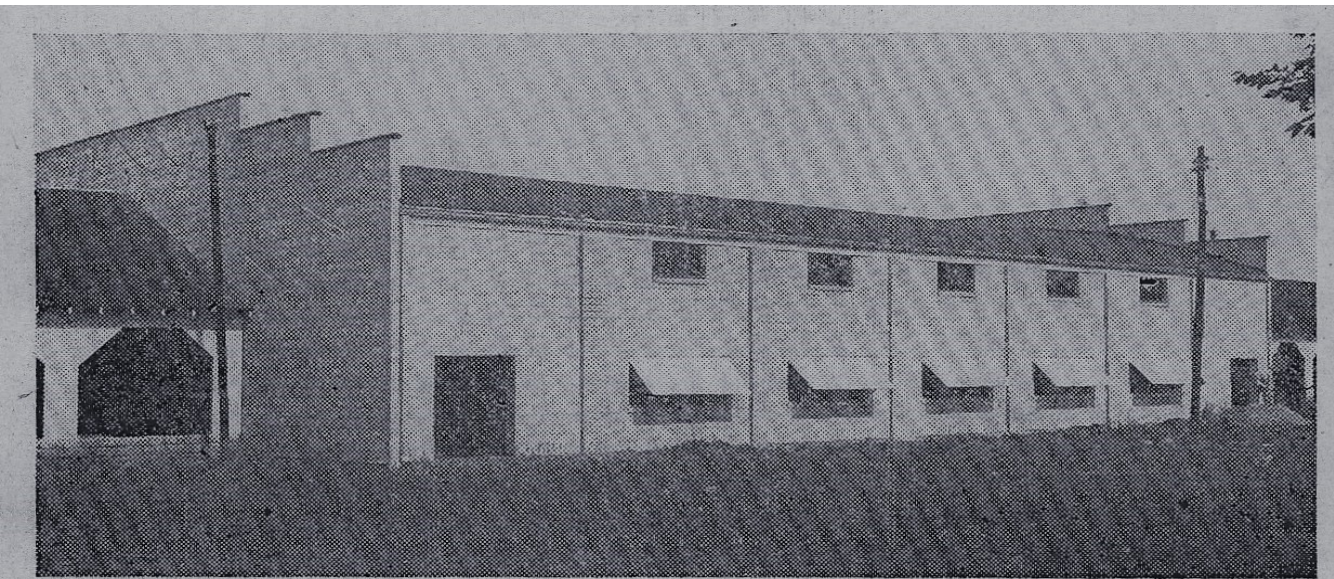
From 1931 until 1934, under the sponsorship of the Rush County 4-H Club Council, regular exhibits of the 4-H clubs were held in the Court House and on the streets of Rushville.

In 1935, under the sponsorship of the Chamber of Commerce, a horse show was held and a full scale adult show of all classes of livestock. The site was again moved to the Park. In 1939, the carnival and concessions were added and the exhibit of agricultural machinery.

In the fall of 1940, Mr. and Mrs. Ora Lower of Home purchased and deeded to the Rush County Agricultural Association 18.6 acres of land adjacent to the Memorial Park. In 1942, the Association erected two livestock buildings, each 40 by 144 feet to permit the showing of animals.

Since that time, the Rush County 4-H Fair has been an annual event. The Board of Directors consists of farmers, breeders, and businessmen selected from the county according to their ability and interests.

The officers of the Rush County Agricultural Association of 1972 are Wallace Wissing, president; John R. White, vice-president; Kenneth Brashaber, secretary; and Gail Abernathy, treasurer.



**NEW LIVESTOCK SHOW PAVILION** — Located between the two livestock barns on the "Lower Community Center" grounds. The building is of fireproof construction and is 80 feet by 110 feet. Bleachers will be located on two sides of the show ring which is in the center of the building. The structure was built through the contributions of many hundred Rush County people.

**RUSH COUNTY  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

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**Our Mission:**

*To bring together those interested in the  
history and genealogy  
of Rush County*

The Fair of 1971 had livestock, concessions, agricultural exhibits, implement and industrial exhibits in the Lower community center of the Fairground. The Home Economics exhibits, Homemaker Club Displays, Vegetable, 4-H Electric, 4-H photographs, Flower Show, Art, Ceramics, and 4-H conservation projects were shown in the Rushville Memorial Gymnasium, and the 4-H Home Economics projects and 4-H crafts in the High School Multipurpose Room. The recently constructed community building housed industrial exhibits, appliances, and home furnishings displayed by local merchants.

For several years the Queen Contest, with Wayne Logan as superintendent, has been held on Thursday. A Queen is selected each year to preside during the Rush County Fair Week and to compete at the Indiana State Fair in September.

Poultry, sheep, swine, dairy and beef cattle, horses and ponies are shown. The steer sale is held on Friday evening. The custom of having a Saddle Horse Show to open the Fair on Sunday continues. The local Tri Kappa Sorority awards a cash prize each year to the best painting representing Rush County.

\*\*\*\*Source: The Rush County Fair, Rush County Sesquicentennial, 1822-1972, by Jean Green, page 46, Rushville Public Library, 130 W, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Rushville, Indiana 46173, (765) 932-3496.



Donald Stoten, Jr.