

# Rush County Genealogical Society

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 4  
DECEMBER, 2016

## 2017 RCGS Programs

### Our Officers:

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

**January 14, 2017** – Marilyn Gray Roberts to give talk on the history of Mays – Raleigh area.

**February 11, 2017** – Genealogy Working Meeting. Bring a list of items you need to look up at the Library or questions or issues you are having on your search for your ancestors.

**March 11, 2017** – Program by Joan Hostetler, photo preservationist. Bring any old photo you would like help in dating. After her presentation: Do you need any of your old photos/documents scanned? I will bring my portable scanner and can e-mail them back to you afterwards.

**April 8, 2017** – Working meeting. Do you have anything you need help with? Open to suggestions for a mini class/instruction and then we will work together on our family research.

**May 13, 2017** – Larry Stout from the Orange Township has been suggested as the speaker. Marilyn Yager to be contact person for this program.

**June 10, 2017** – Cemetery trip - tips on how to find your relatives and how best to document/photograph their stones.

**July, 2017** – No Meeting

**August 12, 2017** – Field trip to Cincinnati Library for Family Research.

**September 9, 2017** – Working meeting. An opportunity to share Tips and Tricks of your Family Research. Bring 1 item to share of either something you have learned or a tool you use that really helps in your search.

**October 14, 2017** – Second Historical Homes Tour – Katrina Cooper in Charge.

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**November 11, 2017** – Presenter yet to be contacted. Carol Jones will be contact person

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If you simply go into Amazon.com first, we will not get any reward.

## Rush County People, Buildings and Businesses

### Walter Manley Pearce

Walter Manley Pearce was born in Asheville, North Carolina on July 28, 1854. He came to the Midwest when he was just eleven years old and was raised by his uncle, Pearson Henley of New Castle, Indiana who built a round barn on his property near Mt. Lawn Speedway. Having been orphaned at a young age, he worked on the farm using his spare time to study architecture. He served as an apprentice for three years in the building trade, working for eighty cents a day. He came to Rushville and for a year worked in a sash and door mill. Pearce ran a planing mill for a year. All during this time, he was building some of the most substantial homes in Rushville.



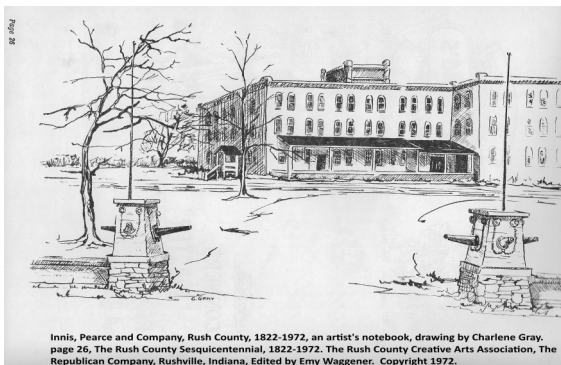
### Innis Pearce and Company

Walter Pearce and W. W. Innis, father of Robert A. Innis, bought the Swain and Worth lumber yard and planing mill located on the northwest corner of Harrison and Fourth streets. Robert Innis became involved and was gifted in finance and business. He was an stakeholder in this partnership for more than thirty years. Gradually the business was changed to a furniture factory. It originally had around 15 employees and grew quickly to 60 employees. However, nine years later (May, 1892) the plant burned down. When this happened a group of local businessmen concerned for the Rushville economy, raised \$50,000 to start an Industrial Park in an effort to retain Innis, Pearce, and Company and to encourage new industry.

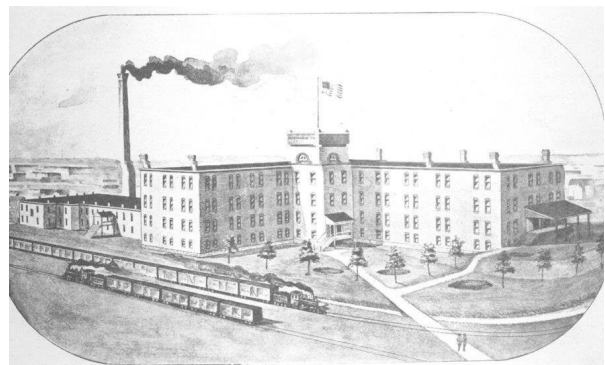
The grounds were park-like. They were guarded by 2 Iron Lions that sat atop the columns at the entrance along with aimlessly tilted cannons. Also, guarding the gates were two stone Norman Knights in full armor. There were latticed pergolas, fountains, blooming flowerbeds and trees. The ground also had a lilly filled pond with a live alligator and multi-colored carp sized goldfish.

The factory was re-built at Seventh and Oliver Streets in 1883. It was the most efficient bedroom furniture manufacturing operation known. Hundreds of carloads of furniture left the plant each year bound for all parts of the United States. Production was often sold out a year in advance in spite of its mere production of fifty bedroom suites per day. Wages for workers were low, but the manufacturer provided year-round employment. After almost forty years of uninterrupted prosperity, the factory fell upon the pre-depression days and bankruptcy proceedings closed its doors in 1928; never again would it make bedroom furniture. For awhile the building was a canning factory and then the buildings were bought prior to World War II by the International Furniture Company. The building was used by them for production of upholstered furniture and mattresses. It was abandoned in the mid 1960's by them. The land and buildings reverted to the City and after many failed business attempts, the building was torn down in 1968.

The Innis, Pearce, and Company Lions now protect the south lawn of Memorial Gymnasium. The limestone knights for many years stood at the northeast corner of Eleventh and Main, the final residence in Rushville of W. M. Pearce and later owned by Irwin Miller for many years. He had bought the home from J. D. Case for \$9,000 in April, 1916. W. M. Pearce appreciated works of art and particularly statues done in marble and bronze so while in Italy purchased the two gladiators chiseled from marble and the two lions which had been cast in bronze and had them shipped by boat to the states.



Innis, Pearce and Company, Rush County, 1822-1972, an artist's notebook, drawing by Charlene Gray. page 26, The Rush County Sesquicentennial, 1822-1972. The Rush County Creative Arts Association, The Republican Company, Rushville, Indiana, Edited by Emy Waggener. Copyright 1972.



### The Pearce Family

Walter Manley Pearce married Florence Etta Kennedy on January 19, 1881 in Rush County. Florence was the daughter to William and Sarah A. Kennedy. To this union was born five children: Nellie, Jessie, Edith Olive, Beulah and Harold Pearce. The family lived at 339 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Rushville in the 1900 and 1910 Census. The couple had separated/divorced before the 1930 Census. Florence continued to live in Rushville and Walter for a time lived in California where he had business interests. Florence Etta died June 23, 1952 at the age of 89 after having been in failing health several years. She was buried in Section 7 of the Rushville East Hill Cemetery.

Nellie Pearce was born July 13, 1883 and was married to Frank Abercrombie, prominent Rushville civic leader and businessman on September 28, 1910. He operated the Abercrombie Jewelers Store. Nellie and Frank had one son, Manley Abercrombie who also was part of the family jewelry business. Nellie passed away of pulmonary edema on January 15, 1959 and Frank died on Sunday, January 1, 1961.

Jessie J. Pearce was born August 18, 1885 and was a registered nurse who lived in Prescott, Arizona. She died September 14, 1933 of a heart attack while visiting her mother. She was buried at the East Hill Cemetery in Rushville in Section 7.

Edith Olive Pearce was born February 26, 1888. She married Lindsay Cain on August 28, 1918. She worked as clerk in several stores in Rushville and later had been a civil service employee at the Army Finance Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Her husband Lindsay worked as an agent for the B&O Railroad for 49 years 33 of those in Rushville. The couple lived at 327 North Harrison. Both are entombed in the East Hill Shrine Mausoleum – she died January 9, 1955 and he died September 4, 1950.

Daughter Beulah H. Pearce was born April 22, 1893 and died of Acute Miliary Tuberculosis on September 10, 1914 at the age of twenty-one. She is buried in Section 7 in the East Hill Cemetery on State Road 44.

Walter “Harold” Pearce was born October 20, 1894 and married Grace Flood of Terre Haute on November 24, 1920. Harold served in the Air Corps in World War I. He was the owner of Modern Audio Visual Aids in Indianapolis and resided at 924 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street there. He had been a RCA distributor for fifteen years. At the time of his death July 18, 1964, he was survived by his wife Geraldine Pressley Abell Starkey Pearce and two sons, Stan Pearce of Muncie and George Pearce of Lake Worth, Florida. He too was buried at the East Hill Cemetery, Section 7.

At St. Louis, Missouri on Wednesday, May 21, 1934, W. M. Pearce married Mrs. Bertha Fanning of Denver, Colorado. They came to Rushville for permanent residence - at 1102 North Eleventh Street. Bertha was the daughter of J. J. Roberts from Fort Worth, Texas. She had two daughters – Thelma Fanning and Martha Fanning from a previous marriage. In the 1940 U. S. Census, Bertha is found living with her former brother-in-law, Henry Fanning and wife, Claire in Dallas, Texas.





## Park Furniture

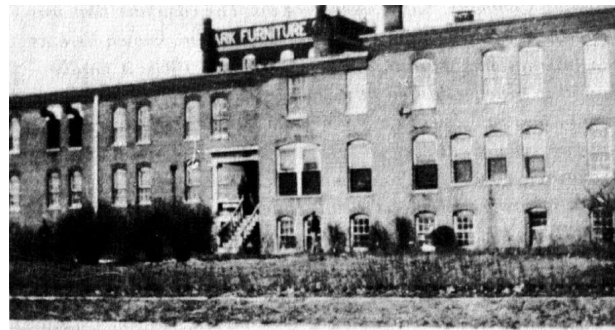
### The Park Furniture Company

Surprisingly when one looks at the history of the Park Furniture Company, you find Walter Manley Pearce as one of its owners as well. Park Furniture was organized in August, 1901 after a devastating fire on May 25<sup>th</sup> of that year which completely destroyed the main building of the Rushville Furniture Company sometimes referred to as the Kitchen Furniture. The Rushville Furniture Company, located at Tenth and Oliver, was built in 1893 by James T. Kitchen, a local furniture dealer, Emmett L. Kennedy who built bridges with his father, A. M. Kennedy, and Mason C. Kitchen from Kokomo. This business fell on bad times that first year when they experienced the effect of the Cleveland Panic which they never really ever recovered. So discouraged were the owners that they refused to rebuild after the fire and gladly sold out to J. D. Case. He in turn interested R. A. Innis, Manley Pearce, and Cyrus Mullin into building and reorganizing a company to manufacture furniture. They quickly rebuilt and were up and manufacturing around fall of that year as the had issued a catalog dated 1901. Due to the fact that a large part of the stock was owned by Mr. Innis and Mr. Pearce, the factory operated in close harmony with the Innis and Pearce. Their first records show that there were about forty-five men employed by the company in 1901. The new group gradually gained strength and added a new wing in 1911. The years after 1911 were prosperous, however, dissention within Park-Innis and Pearce ranks in 1919 caused a general change in the Park Furniture Company personnel. W.M. Pearce had purchased Robert A. Innis' interests out for both Park Furniture and Innis-Pearce and Company in 1918, leaving him with controlling interest in Innis-Pearce. At that point, his nephew, Walter Milton Pearce managed Park Furniture; however, by 1919 the Innis & Pearce interests were withdrawn from Park Furniture which resulted in a change of officers and policies. J. D. Case was retained as president, Bert A. Mullin was named vice president and Roy Waggener, new to the furniture business was appointed secretary and treasurer, assuming the duties of general manager. Eventually the interests of J. D. Case were absorbed by the remaining stockholders. While they did not continue to expand in physical size, the company made many improvements in their methods of manufacture and sales. Throughout the years, it manufactured high grade furniture and toward the end featured dining room tables and chairs, end tables and other items in cherry. The factory closed though on October 27, 1954 after suffering such financial difficulties that it was forced by creditors to complete the stock on hand and then hold a liquidation auction.

### Other Pearce Interests

Manley Pearce was diverse in his investments through the times. Articles from the Rushville newspapers note he was a stockholder in 1912 of the VanCanp's packing plant in Indianapolis. In 1913 he is cited as vice-president of the Mais Motor Truck company in Indianapolis. When Pearce bought out Robert Innis' shares of both Park Furniture and Innis-Pearce, it was noted that he was living in California at the time because he had valuable investments in copper and other interests. Pearce Veneers with offices in Rushville and a plant in Indianapolis was incorporated in 1927 with W. H. Pearce as president and Posey B. Denning also of Rushville as vice-president.

Walter Manley Pearce, died at the age of 84 at the Research Hospital in Little Rock Arkansas. He had been taken to Little Rock two weeks prior. He had been quite ill for about eighteen months. He was survived by his wife, Bertha and children from his first marriage. Pearce was active in the Masonic Lodge and was a member of the Blue Lodge Chapter, Council and Commandry. He was a 32<sup>nd</sup> degree Mason and a member of the Shrine. His body was cremated and his ashes sent to Rushville for burial. At one time, he owned the floor below the Masonic Lodge which was upstairs in the Princess Theater building. His ashes were buried in one of the walls and with the recent renovation, have had to be removed.



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## Madeline Gullion Knight

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### **Madeline Gullion Knight, Rushville High School Teacher of Botany, General Sciences, English and Math**

Madeline Knight was born December 22, 1896 in Rosston, Boone County, Indiana which is northeast of Lebanon. She was the daughter of Charles W. and Leota Blair Gullion. Her parents had been married the year before in Terre Haute. Her father worked many jobs through the years – glass making in Elwood, farming in Spencer, poultry and egg business in New Castle (from plucking chickens and cold packing for iced shipments to New York City to escorting live chickens feeding and watering them along the way to the coast) and working in a Granite ware company in Anderson. This is where Madeline had her first job as a wrapper of crocks and bowls for shipment at about 12 years old for around \$.10 per hour wages. With that money, she bought a long black plush coat and beaver fur hat. Her mother was a dressmaker. She had a brother named Blair (born 1901) and a sister, Anastasia (born 1905).



Madeline graduated from New Castle High School and first went to Teachers College at Terre Haute Normal. After a few months of grade school instruction, she got a job at age 19 at \$2.00 a day for about eight months in a one room schoolhouse ten miles west of New Castle along the Interurban line so she could still live with her parents. Since the interurban fare was less than a quarter round trip, she could save up funds and starting in 1916 she began a program of teaching in the winter and going to summer courses at Indiana University, Bloomington in the summer and was able to graduate from I. U. in 1920. She first got a job in Ligonier and taught English and Botany until 1923 when she got a teaching job at Rushville. It was just 23 miles south of New Castle and had two passenger trains each day. She first appeared in the pages of the Holcad in the Spring of 1924. Her arrival accompanied the first mention of the “Lions” as the name of the Rushville Athletic teams.

Several students have attested that she was a tremendous Botany teacher. Students probably learned and remembered more about wild flowers, trees, shrubs and lessons of conservation and ecology. She would take students on botany hikes all across town, up and down streets, alleys, and through vacant lots and fields – a challenge when you were trying to taking notes. She would give them memorization tools for look-alike, but different wildflowers such as Dutchman Breeches and Squirrel Corn. She impressed on her students that “Dutchman’s Britches don’t smell”. In Math and Algebra she was known to fling a piece of chalk or eraser at students who could not quite get the process down; however, when class was over, she was right there offering help to the student.

In most every year of her Rush County teaching experience she sponsored either the Holcad or The Rushlite. She produced many journalists and writers for the papers of the country. Her students won awards in many of the high school journalistic societies. Madeline coached the early girls’ basketball teams and instilled a spirit of competitiveness in sports for them. Unfortunately, after a few years, the girls’ teams were dropped. She directed dozens of class plays and other dramatic productions.

## RUSH COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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## Our Mission:

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

Her list of civic, social and church accomplishments and contributions to Rushville and Rush County is a long one. She served on the executive board for the American Red Cross and was chairman of the residential drive for Rush Memorial Hospital. She was a 50-year member of the First Presbyterian Church where she served as an ordained elder, trustee, President, choir member, Church Women's Association member, and financial secretary for 34 years. She was a member of the Rush County and National Retired Teachers Association; Pi Lambda Theta Educational Sorority; Komentri, Monday Circle; Order of Eastern Star; Martha Poe Chapter of OES; Garden Club; a 50-year member of POE where she served on the state board and President in 1941.

Madeline married Gearry Lloyd Knight who ran the Ben Franklin Store along with his brother Von Knight for many years. He was born September 19, 1884 in Zanesville in northeastern Indiana and his parents moved to Rushville in 1940. He was married first to Helen Lane and two sons were born to this union: Robert Knight and Gearry Lloyd Knight, Jr. She died in 1943 and in 1944 he was united in marriage to Madeline Gullion. Unfortunately, Mr. Knight died suddenly August 5, 1945 after suffering a stroke while at the Ben Franklin Store.

June 15, 1996 at the thirty-ninth annual RHS/RCHS Alumni Association Reunion Banquet held at the RCHS cafeteria, the Senior Distinguished Alumni Award was given to Madeline Gullion Knight. It was presented by her long-time friend and student, Bob Waggoner. Those in attendance sang "Happy Birthday" to her in anticipation of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in December of that year. Family and friends were planning a special celebration for turning 100. About forty-five family members were coming to Rushville to celebrate with her; however, they did not get the opportunity as she passed away July 24<sup>th</sup> at Hillside Haven Healthcare in Rushville. In the funeral bulletin, the minister pointed out that she had her funeral all planned out down to the pallbearers which after listing the names, she made the comment "unless I outlive them".



Squirrel Corn