

# ~A Brief History of McCordsville~

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William McCord was one of the first settlers to arrive in the McCordsville area. The United States of America transferred 160 acres to him on October 5, 1833. The McCordsville "Village" area was laid out by W. Negley in September of 1865, with the original plat containing 35 lots.

## **McCords of McCordsville**

McCordsville was not settled by one McCord but by four different branches of the McCord family that came from Clermont County, OH. The current McCordsville area was first settled by brothers, first cousins, and even a sister-in-law.

In a historical essay written by John S. McCord, he states that he was not able to learn who the first settler was in the community, but he lists Little Elias McCord, Old Bill McCord, Lamé Jake McCord, Smith McCord, Big Elias McCord, Little Billy McCord, Straight Jake McCord, and Greene McCord as some of the first McCords in the area. Greene and Smith are straight forward, but one can only speculate as to the Little, Big, Lamé, and Straight McCords.

Various books and other documents claim that different members of this McCord family and its branches were the town's namesake.

## ***McCords of Scotland***

The McCord name stems from the ancient clan of James McKorda or MacCord who lived in the area called the Isle of Skye. The McCord clan moved to Northern Ireland (Ulster) in the 1600's. They sailed over to America during the period of 1720-1738. Many went to Pennsylvania; others went to New York, Virginia, and the Carolinas. Many McCords could boast of fighting alongside General Washington during the American Revolution.

While some McCords took the "fish hook" route of settling (going down through the Carolinas and back up through Tennessee and Kentucky); others took the "bee line" route (moving out of Pennsylvania and across through Ohio). The father of the McCord family of McCordsville, like most early settlers and founding fathers in Indiana, went across Ohio. The family founders were Richard McCord and his wife Rachel Hollingsworth who settled in Clermont County, Ohio.

(The full history of the McCord Clan may be found online from the McCord Family Association:

<http://www.mccordfamilyassn.com/>)

## ***Richard McCord, Sr. and Rachel Hollingsworth***

Richard McCord (b. 1767 d. aft. 1830) was born either in Pennsylvania or in Scotland. His wife, Rachel Hollingsworth (b. abt. 1775 d. aft. 1830), was born in Pennsylvania. She was the daughter of Elias Hollingsworth and Susannah Pearce. Richard and Rachel married about 1796 and had eleven children:

William, John, Joseph, Elias, Richard Jr., Aquilla, Jacob, Elizabeth “Betsy”, Samuel, James, and Mary “Polly”. Out of these eleven children, only four, William, Elias, Richard, and Aquilla, either made their way to Indiana or their children made the journey. They were drawn to the Hoosier State by railroad work, like many other Scotch-Irish people, and by friends, family, and neighbors. Looking at the history of people who populated McCordsville and Fortville, many came from Clermont County, Ohio.

Before the four McCord families moved to Indiana, William (b. abt. 1789 d. abt. 1830) married Hannah Warren (b. 1800 d. 1851). They had two children by 1820: Smith and Philo. Elias (b. abt. 1791 d. abt. 1819) married Lucinda Robb (b. 1792 d. 1875). They had three children: Lucy, William, and Elias Hollingsworth. Richard Jr. (b. 5 Sep. 1794 d. 1822) married Sarah Apple (25 Apr. 1792 d. 16 Oct. 1861). They had four children: Rachel, Catherine, Jacob O., and Commodore Perry. Aquilla (b. 26 Oct. 1795 d. 13 Oct. 1854) married Sarah Apple’s sister, Mary “Polly” Apple (b. 2 Mar. 1796 d. 21 Oct. 1873 or 1878). (Yes, folks, Aquilla is a man’s name.) They had at least four children by the time they moved to Indiana: Elias, William F., Richard, and Elijah.

So, who came first? Sifting through old government land grants from President Andrew Jackson, a William McCord bought 160 acres on April 16, 1835, in Hancock County. Richard Jr.’s wife Sarah Apple bought a total of 120 acres on March 20, 1837, in Hancock County. Aquilla McCord bought 80 acres on October 23, 1834 and another 80 acres on November 4, 1834, in Marion County. However, William McCord and Sarah (Apple) McCord did not move to the area right away.

The second branch on the McCord tree is that of Elias and Lucinda “Lucy” (Robb) McCord where we find McCordsville’s namesake and possibly the William who bought land in 1835.

Elias McCord was born in Pennsylvania about 1791. He married Lucinda Robb about 1810 in Clermont County, Ohio. She was born in Virginia in 1792 and was the daughter of William Robb and Mary White. Elias and his wife never moved out to Indiana. Elias died early in 1819, and was buried in Clermont County, Ohio. Lucinda married again to an Andrew Gray on April 5, 1829. Lucinda passed away in 1875 and was buried in Clermont County, Ohio.

Elias and Lucinda had three children: Lucy, William, and Elias Hollingsworth.

William McCord was born October 10, 1811 in Clermont County, Ohio. He married Laura T. Bragdon on May 3, 1838 in Clermont County, Ohio. Laura was born on May 19, 1817 in Ohio. Laura died in 1889. William died in 1893. Both were buried in the McCordsville IOOF Cemetery, Hancock County, Indiana.

This William McCord seems like the most likely candidate to buy land in the area in 1835. Unlike the other William McCords, he was of the right age, was married three years after the purchase (which always looks good to a young bride and her family), and he and Laura were both buried here instead of some other county or state. It also helps that his brother was the namesake of McCordsville.

Elias Hollingsworth McCord was born on December 23, 1814 in Clermont County, Ohio. He married Elizabeth Behymer on February 23, 1838 in Clermont County, Ohio. Elizabeth was born on August 20, 1816. Elias began a sawmill in McCordsville where he made crossties and other lumber for the Bee



Line, or Big 4, Railroad. After the Civil War, Elias H. changed his sawmill into a gristmill, but it burned down a few years later. Elias H. was also a charter member of the Oaklandon Lodge No. 140 F & A.M. which was instituted on December 8, 1852 in Oaklandon, Indiana. Elias Hollingsworth died at the age of 70 on January 7, 1885. Elizabeth died at the age of 83 on September 7, 1899. Both were buried in the McCordsville IOOF Cemetery, Hancock County, Indiana. Elias Hollingsworth and Elizabeth had ten children: Mary A., Lucinda, William Smith, Cassandra "Cassie", Elhanen Devore, Horace, Jacob H. M., Ann Elizabeth "Eliza", Delphia M.E., and one child who died in infancy.

J.S. McCord states in his historical essay on McCordsville that Elias H. McCord was the town namesake and that he came from Clermont County, Ohio. An article in the September 1995 issue of the Hancock Historical Society Newsletter by Dorothy June Williams states that the town was named after Elias Hollingsworth McCord because the people esteemed him for his gifts of lumber to the church and willingness to help church congregations.

## Notable McCords

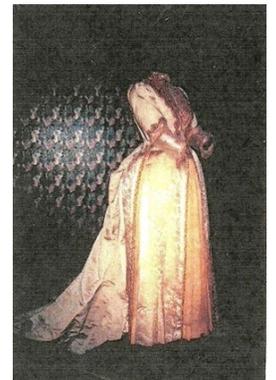


**Smith McCord** (b. 1819 d. 1915) was born in Withamsville, Clermont County, Ohio. Smith married Spicy Cline in December of 1839. Smith and his family did not actually come to the area until 1854 where they lived in a log cabin. He did not finish one of the doors on the cabin by the time winter came, so Spicy had to hang a quilt over the opening to keep out the cold. After Smith developed his clearing into a prosperous farm, he entered into the public life of his community. He served as Justice of the Peace for McCordsville for seven years. Later, Smith became an Indiana State Representative on March 9, 1875. It has been said that he helped build the Indiana State House. Smith and Spicy had six children: Sarah Jane, George W., James F., Indiana, Harvey, and Stephen A. Douglas.

**Indiana McCord** (b. 1850 d. 1949) and Stephen A. Douglas (b. 1862 d. 1948) never married. Indiana was a seamstress for President Benjamin Harrison's second wife. Indiana was also known for her paintings and for dancing a spritely jig to her brother's fiddle playing. She painted a picture of the log cabin her father had made, which was featured in the Indianapolis Star on April 23, 1939, with a picture of her, the painting, and her brother Stephen. Indiana was the oldest resident in Hancock County when she died.

**Green McCord** was born on December 28, 1826 in Withamsville, Clermont County, Ohio. He married **Susan Noakes** in 1849. Susan was born October 7, 1829 in Decatur County, Indiana. Green was a school teacher in Decatur County until 1850 or 1851

when he tried farming in Iowa but came back to Indiana and bought 80 acres in McCordsville. Green also served in the Civil War and became a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1864, at Fortville. He later changed his membership to McCordsville.



Pres. Benj. Harrison's 2nd wife's wedding gown made by Indiana McCord

Susan became nationally known for her quilts. About ten of her thirteen quilts are either at the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan and at the University of Michigan. Susan (Noakes) McCord is considered one of the top American quilt makers in the 19th century. High ranking quilters from that era exhibit colorful patterns, intricate construction, and excellent workmanship. Susan went a step above with the way she manipulated fabric, color, and the designs of her quilts. Three of the quilts at the Henry Ford Museum look like either paintings from the expressionism era in the early 1910s or abstract expressionism paintings that were popular after WWII.

[Susan Noakes McCord - Quilt](#)

**Jacob O. McCord** was born February 23, 1819 in Ohio. He married Martha Day on January 22, 1839. Martha Day was born on February 22, 1819 in Ohio and was the daughter of Isaac Day and Rachel Trout. Martha died on June 14, 1886, and Jacob died on January 30, 1892. Both were buried in the McCordsville IOOF Cemetery, Hancock County, IN. Jacob and Martha had nine children: Richard, Isaac, Sarah Ann, Rachel E., Mary Ellis, Laura Jane, Anna "Louisa", Missouri Adeline, and James William.

The iconic red brick home in McCordsville on Hwy. 67 (next to Kinsey's Italian Café) that now functions as a business was built in 1870 on Hiday's addition of the McCordsville town. The original owner is unknown, but Jacob O. McCord owned the home in 1880, and he became the reason why it was known as McCord Place. Between 1891 and 1895, the house was given to Jacob and Martha's fourth child, Rachel. Jacob and Ada Chandler owned the home from 1928 to 1962. Rachel's twin sister Mary Ellis married a John Chandler. One would assume that Jacob was related to John Chandler, so that, in a way, the house stayed "in the family". The home changed hands several times until it was turning into Input-Output Unlimited in 2003.



**Richard McCord** (b. 1839, McCordsville, IN d. 1894) married Eliza J. Kinnaman (b. 1840 d. 1932) in 1862. Richard was a school teacher for twenty years in Hancock and Hamilton County. In a cassette recording made by his granddaughter, Carol, Harry remembers his grandfather having a big white beard. Richard died of tuberculosis in 1894. Richard and Eliza had eight children: John Thomas, Amos Edward "A.E.", Dellah, Charles Edward "C.E.", Nettie B., Anna, William O., and Clara Rose.

Aquilla and Mary "Polly" (Apple) McCord beginning with their second son William F. McCord.

William F. McCord was born on May 13, 1818, and married Margaret Hanna on September 30, 1840. Margaret was born on July 22, 1823, near Fairfield, Franklin County, IN. She was the daughter of John Jones Hanna and granddaughter of John Hanna who was a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Margaret's father and grandfather were leaders of a band of immigrants from South Carolina that settled near Brookville, IN, in 1800. In 1835, her parents moved to Hancock County, IN, near McCordsville. After she married William, Margaret stayed in McCordsville on their farm until William died in 1883. She then moved to Noblesville until her death in 1908. William and Margaret had four children: Olive, Mary E., James Parks "J. Parks", and Alice Cary.

**James Parks**, or J. Parks, **McCord** (b. 1848 d. 1902) married Rachel, or Rattie, Riggs (b. 1849 d. 1932) in 1874. Rattie was born near Mechanicsburg, Henry County, Indiana, and was the daughter of Alfred Riggs and Mary Carter. J. Parks was rather wealthy from his grain business in McCordsville. J. Parks and Rattie only had one child: William. William (b. 1870) married Claudia B. Alfrey, but his life was cut short at age 22 in 1894. Another note of interest is that the people of McCordsville say that the founder of the town is the one with the largest monument in front of his grave. The graves that sit in front of the huge monument are J. Parks, Rattie, and William F. Obviously, they were not the founders, but they were prominent in the community, wealthy, and influential.



## Early History of McCordsville

In the early history of McCordsville, the area was booming with businesses. Nelson Bradley was a banker who went on to banking fame in Greenfield. Israel Fred owned a grocery and hardware store. Michael Quigley was a druggist with two pharmacists, Thomas P. Hervey and John D. Cory. Thomas McCord had a restaurant. Moses N. Creig owned a livery and feed stable. Aaron Vail was a stock trader. J. W. Negley was the copper, or barrel maker. The village had two blacksmiths, James M. Wright and Nelson Gaskins. The butcher shop was called Craig, Stokes and Morrison. J.K. Kinberlin and George W. McCord were carpenters. An African-American named Eli Chevis was the wagon maker. William Brooks owned the sawmill. The three grain dealers in the area were T.J. Hanna, H.N. Thompson, and McCord & Hanna.

In 1891, R.C.M. Smith bought the stock of Israel Fred hardware and grocery. Sadly, the building burned in 1906, and Smith sold the vacant lots to Cohen & Company. The company built a grain elevator on the lot.

In 1896, Charles Fred and John McCord erected a grocery. (At one point in time, McCordsville had four grocery stores!)

A post office has been maintained in McCordsville ever since it was platted.

Around 1895, S. Morrison and Thomas Springer established a telephone factory. The telephones were manufactured until 1905. In 1905, the designer of the Leader automobile, Luther Frost, Frank Martindale, and others converted the telephone factory into an automobile assembly plant and sold

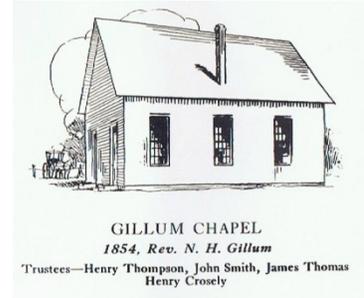


more than 125 Leader automobiles from 1905-1906. The plant was moved to Knightstown in 1907, but it only lasted until 1913, which some believe was due to Frost's failing health. The original factory was where the Hancock Rural Telephone exchange is now.

## Methodist Church

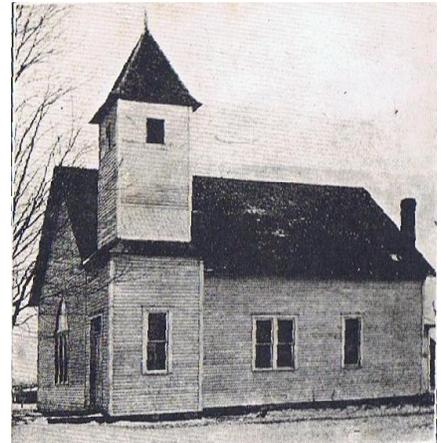
### Leader Automobile

A church class was formed at the Robb schoolhouse in 1849. About five years later in 1854, the class built the first church in McCordsville at the cost of \$1,300. It was built on the north side of the railroad tracks at the corner of Olio Road and Highway 67. The church was dedicated by Reverend N.H. Gillum, and it was named Gillum Chapel in his honor. On June 25, 1902, a storm ripped through McCordsville and destroyed the church. The second church was built near the telephone factory. Now the church, named McCordsville United Methodist, is located on Main Street, or Highway 67.



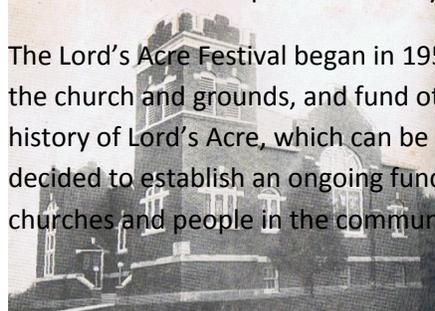
Even though the storm destroyed Gillum Chapel, the cemetery still remains. If you travel south on Olio Road, just before the railroad tracks, there is a road off to the right. Within a block and a half on that road, you will come across the Gillum Chapel Cemetery.

A new building was planned that would be farther away from the noisy Big Four railroad. The congregation bought some of Bradley and McCord's original town lots, then owned by Thomas P. Hervey, and erected the Methodist Episcopal Church in the fall of 1902 with the dedication ceremony conducted by Rev. W.D. Parr. This building was replaced by the brick church that we see today and dedicated on September 10, 1922. A new fellowship hall, updated kitchen, classrooms, and offices were added in 2009. The dedication took place in January of 2010.



McCordsville Methodist Episcopal Church 1902

The Lord's Acre Festival began in 1952. The church was in need of funds to build a parsonage, maintain the church and grounds, and fund other programs. According to the memoirs of Herman Literal on the history of Lord's Acre, which can be found on the church's website, a group of men from the church decided to establish an ongoing fund drive that would not fade away in time. After speaking with other churches and people in the community who were mainly farmers, it was decided that farmers would give the proceeds of one acre of harvested grain. This helped to set the time frame of the fund drive to the end of the harvesting season.



McCordsville Methodist Episcopal Church Sept. 10, 1922

Those who were not farmers gave in different ways according to their income. Some gave their first hour's wages from a Monday morning's worth of work, the grocer

gave money collected from the soda pop machine, and one woman gave the amount she collected from selling her chickens' eggs on Sunday. The fund raiser was a success and has continued to thrive for 63 years.

## Other Churches, Organizations, & Happenings

The Universalist Church was built in McCordsville in 1888. Services were conducted until 1902. The church closed its doors, and the building was converted into a residence.

The Christ Presbyterian Church was built between the fall of 1997 and spring of 1998. The dedication was on Palm Sunday of 1998. The current pastors are Dr. Frank Bean and Dave Comstock.

The Independent Order of Oddfellows (I.O.O.F) cemetery was laid out in March of 1871 with 105 lots including streets and alleys.

There have been two lodges in McCordsville. The McCordsville Masonic lodge was organized in 1852 and received its charter in 1853. The first meeting was held in an upstairs room in the home of Elias McCord. The lodge was moved to Oaklandon. The McCordsville Lodge #338 Independent Order of Odd Fellows was instituted in the upper room of the Thompson warehouse on November, 17, 1869.

(The Masonic Lodge was where the GT Service is now.)

The most historic disaster in McCordsville was the train wreck between 1903 and 1905 on the Big Four tracks. Train cars were strewn everywhere to the side of the tracks in the ditch. Not one car remained standing.

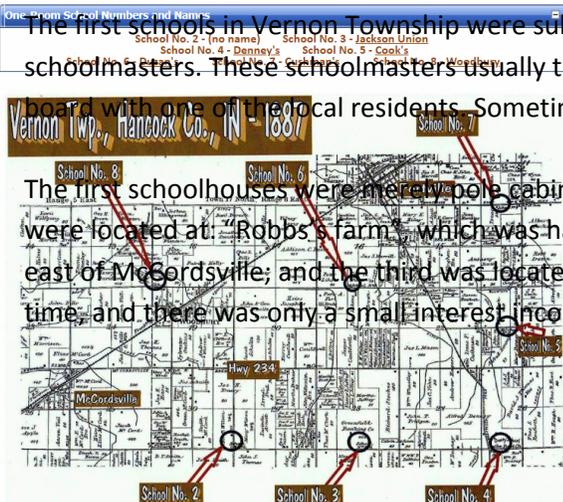


(Reference: Sandie Buckland's paper entitled *History of McCordsville, Indiana*.)

## Schools

The first schools in Vernon Township were subscription, or pay schools, taught by traveling schoolmasters. These schoolmasters usually taught by the term, or quarter, and took up room and board with one of the local residents. Sometimes the schools were taught by a local resident.

The first schoolhouses were merely pole cabins. The three pole cabin schoolhouses in Vernon Township were located at: Robbs's farm, which was half a mile south of McCordsville; the second was two miles east of McCordsville; and the third was located in Fortville. No special school tax was in place at that time, and there was only a small interest income from the congressional township school fund. This meant that the school houses had to be built by the



residents of the area. The residents also needed to provide the wood to heat the school. When a vote was called for on a “free school system” (a state-wide system that would make tuition free and open to all) in 1849, those of Vernon Township voted ‘no’ because they liked the old system.

In 1859, a trustee was appointed named Perry J. Brinegar. Levi Thomas was elected in 1861 and 1865. G. W. Stanley was elected in 1863. Andrew Hagen was appointed in 1866, Stokes Jackson in 1876, and Samuel Arnett in 1880.

By 1882, nine public schoolhouses were in the township. Seven were framed buildings and two were brick. The names of the schools and instructors in 1882 were as follows:

**School Number – Name -Instructors**

Dist. No. 1 – McCordsville -J.W. Smith, Jessie S. Jackson, Frank O. Forts, Ella Thompson

Dist. No. 2 – (no name) -Worth Trittipo

Dist. No. 3 – Jackson Union -Ed Crumbaugh

Dist. No. 4 – Denney’s -Frank Smith

Dist. No. 5 – Cook’s -Lawrence Durack

Dist. No. 6 – Duzan’s -Quitman Jackson

Dist. No. 7 – Cushman’s -C. Vanlaningham

Dist. No. 8 – Woodbury -J.W. McCord

Fortville -M. Caraway, A. E. Cummins, Anna Chittenden, Alice Cory

By 1916, all of the one-room schoolhouses had been abandoned except for Cook’s and Denney’s. All of the other students went to either the McCordsville or Fortville schools.



McCordsville School - 1916

After the one-room school house in McCordsville called School District No.1, a two-story, four-room brick building was constructed in 1874, thus making it the first graded school in Vernon Township. , four-room brick building that burned down on April 14, 1877. The school term was carried out in the Methodist Church, or Gillum Chapel, and at the home of Mark Thomson. The fire did not destroy the walls of the original school, and they were used again for the new school until 1893, when the school was condemned and torn down. A third building was constructed, but it too burned in 1901. The students finished the year in the Universalist church and at the home of Thomas R. Antecost.

A new building was constructed in 1902 which was a two-story school constructed with a basement and attic across from the I.O.O.F. McCordsville Cemetery (where the park is now). A manual training (or shop class) was installed in the fall of 1913. A kitchen for the domestic science class (home economics) was created in the fall of 1914.



No matter the improvements and beauty of the building, this school was also doomed. On February 7, 1926, a fire broke out at 2:30 AM in the newer edition of the school. Students, parents, and the rest of the community could only stand and look on in shock as the building was consumed by the flames. By 11:00 AM, the fire had died down enough for the students to walk around the rubble to dig for mementos or to sit and stare at the carnage.



Rumor has it that the McCordsville Pirates and Fortville Demons had a basketball game at the McCordsville School the evening prior to the fire where McCordsville won the game. It is said that Fortville students set fire to the school. Whether true or not, McCordsville alumni and Fortville High School alumni have had an unspoken, grudge against one another ever since.

The McCordsville High School that most remember was built on the foundation of the 1902 school building site. This school survived until it was demolished in June of 1983.

Today, the archway of the school, which caught fire in 1926, is now located in the park. The park is run by the Vernon Township Trustee.



## 1920s Prohibition

When prohibition came to the United States in 1920, hardly any towns were left unaffected; Fortville and McCordsville were no exception. Most, if not all, of the saloons on Main Street in Fortville had card games and gambling. Many came all the way from Chicago to bet on the boxing matches. The high rollers would come in black cars to private residences in the area to gamble. One of these underground casinos was where the Ivy House is now and took place in the basement of the house and the carriage house, or garage, and was even visited by Al Capone. Mr. and Mrs. Nolte, owners of the Ivy House, still have one of the old slot machines and gambling punch boards.

As for a place to have a good time with booze, gambling, and ability to make a hasty exit, the Tall Timbers, later and best known as the Plantation Club, was the best speakeasy in the area. The Plantation Club was located in McCordsville where the Meijer Store is now which is at the corner of Carroll Road and Highway 67. A lounge and bar were housed on the eastside and gambling with slot machines and card games was on the west side of the Plantation Club. Tunnels had been dug under the club for gamblers to make a getaway before the police caught them in a raid. The "man in the cage," or the operator in the iron-clad cashier's booth where the chips were cashed, had his own tunnel. John Dillinger was supposedly chased from the Tall Timbers by the FBI, and he made his getaway through the tunnels. Even into the 1950s, older teens bused tables in the lounge. When asked, they were told to say that they were eighteen. The teens were also told that, in case of a raid, to get in the dumb waiter, take it down into the tunnels, run as fast as possible into the woods, and walk the railroad tracks back home.

Eventually, police and the local McCordsville attorney, Glen T. Williams, were called in to break up the Plantation Club.

In the 1960s, Chuck Nickerson bought the property and the 50 acre plot behind it to set up rides and family entertainment where buildings could be rented for gatherings. The Catering Park had 12 horseshoe pits, 5 softball diamonds, 2 basketball courts, 2 volley ball courts, and midway rides including a Ferris wheel. An outdoor pavilion could host up to 35,000 people. The pavilion had famous country and western performers like Barbara Mandrell, Johnny Cash, and the cast of *Hee Haw*.

In January of 1988, the old casino from the Plantation Club was reopened as Casio's Restaurant by Michael and Doni Nickerson. Casio's offered dinner and dancing on their wooden dance floor. On certain evenings, a theatrical re-enactment of a gangster shoot-out would commence. Sadly, Casio's closed in the early 2000s.

So, how did those speakeasies retrieve their illegal liquor?  
Besides smuggling on wheels, some used water transportation.

Tea 1.50  
Soft Drinks 1.40  
**FREE REFILLS ON ABOVE DRINKS**  
Relax... Smell the aroma, savor the flavor of a "Casio" Cappuccino!  
May we suggest...  
Cappuccino 2.95 Summed coffee mixed with frothed milk and dusted with cinnamon.  
Espresso 2.95 Full cream brewed with natural and full-bodied flavors.  
Café Laté 2.95 Summed coffee with frothed milk, dusted with cinnamon.  
Café Mocha 3.25 "Smiley" chocolate!™  
Cappuccino with Your Favorite Liquor! 4.95  
May we suggest... Godiva Chocolate Liqueur, Irish Cream, Chambord, Framboise.  
Iced Mocha Cappuccino 3.25 Cool & creamy with a hint of vanilla and chocolate!  
Black Forest Cappuccino 3.25 Enjoy the taste of cream and chocolate!  
"Flavored" Cappuccino 3.25 Try our French Vanilla or Hazelnut flavors!  
Nirecap Try any of our recipes made with decaf espresso!  
**CASIO'S STORY**  
The facility in which you are now seated has been in operation for many years however, not as a restaurant.  
During the 1920s and 1930s the facility functioned as a madhouse, sanitarium, casino and, if you will, a "safe house" for gangster characters.  
A number of unfortunate figures frequented the establishment including John Dillinger, who was once chased out our office door with the FBI.  
After being closed by the authorities for many years, Chuck Nickerson bought the entire 19 1/2 acre plot and its buildings during the early 1980s. Chuck used the grounds to run a well-known "topping good" capable of holding 30,000 people.  
In January, 1988 Michael and Doni Nickerson took it upon themselves to renovate, restore and reopen the old casino as the dining establishment that we know and love today.  
It is rumored that a great still hangs the old position behind the building and has been seen by a number of people. One is called "The Blue Lady" by all that have seen her on the blue and housed in a blue veil. She is seen only on clear nights when the fog is very cold. Rumor has it that she was murdered in one of the old cellars that used to be reached out for the old position.

Bootleggers would use Fall Creek from Anderson to Indianapolis as a secret passageway to bypass the law.

One bootlegger, who lived near Florida Road next to Fall Creek, had his own still. He would make the liquor, bottle it up, and place it in the creek to wash down to the dam. The bottles would become lodged at the dam where, under the cover of darkness, people would back their cars up the dam to load their trunks with the illegal booze.

Another rumored drop-off location might have been a place called Owl's Nest. Located on property that once belonged to the Helms' Family, the log cabin was built initially as a place for recreation for those in the Helms' immediate and extended family as a shelter for picnics, fishing, swimming, and hunting. However, rumors have swirled about Owl's Nest being a secret site for bootleggers in the 1920s. Even the term Owl's Nest brings to mind nighttime rendezvous. Yet, nothing has been documented or proven.

## **Raceland**

Once upon a time, McCordsville had a midget racecar track called Raceland. What is the difference between midget car racing and regular racing cars? Midget cars are high powered, small-sized race cars that are driven on  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile dirt or poured racing tracks. Even some of the greats like Tony Stewart, Sarah Fisher, Jeff Gordon, Mario Andretti, Ryan Newman, and others started their racing careers by racing midget cars first or used it as a stepping stone to get to high profile racing.

Why and how did midget car racing get started?

Midget car racing began in the United States when a group of innovative racers wanted a less expensive avenue of racing like those in the Indianapolis 500. Stories differ as to when the first midget racecar appeared. The overall consensus is that the first midget cars were unveiled in 1914 in Venice, California. A small race was run with Al Franklin as the winner. In 1915, another race ran in Culver City, California. After this point, the small band of racers organized a racing association and held regular races amongst themselves. In the early days into the 1920s, the sport was called cycle racing.

Midget cars did not take off (no pun intended) until 1933. The sport was revived in Sacramento, California, with a small handful of drivers at the Junior College quarter-mile track.

In the fall of 1933, Dominic Ditarce signed up eight cars and drivers to form the Midget Auto-Racing Association (MARA) with their first race on the Loyola High School Stadium track in Los Angeles. These early races were conducted on board tracks that had been used for bicycle racing. A speedway was built just for midget car racing at Gilmore Stadium. Once this track was built, the sport spread like wildfire across the US. Australia caught on to the sport in 1934, and called it speedcar racing instead of midget racing. New Zealand began their races in 1937.



The McCordsville midget racecar track was 1/5 of a mile around and originally called the Indianapolis Raceway, which was very confusing because another track on the west side of Indianapolis was called the same name. The McCordsville track was changed to Raceland. Toward the end of its existence, the track was called the Race Drome.

The track was located east from the corner of State Road 234 and Hwy. 67. Currently, the ground is used for soccer practices and is east of Stanley Chevrolet.

The cars were sometimes literally made from washers and dryers. The exterior body work was made from dryer pieces and welded together. The motors came from washing machines that were gasoline-powered.

Dave Ecoff and Lawrence "Pop" Weir were local body shop owners who built midget cars and competed in the races. Lawrence Weir's son, Dave Weir, was a driver for midget racecars. Dave Ecoff's driver was a man by the last name of Wilfong. Mr. Ecoff competed a little longer than Mr. Weir.

Not all cars were personally handcrafted. Kurtis Kraft (1930s-1950s) and Solar (1944-1946) were prominent midget car manufacturers.

Racing midget cars was far more dangerous because of the high speeds and lack of safety precautions in the car for the driver. A few men in the history of midget car racing were killed by decapitated in the wrecks! Today, with 300-400 horsepower, weight of 1,000 pounds, and four cylinder engines, the midget cars are now fitted with roll cages and other safety precautions.

## ***Famous Doctors***

Two brothers who became doctors settled in the Mt. Comfort and McCordsville area during the mid-1800s when the land was still only a wilderness.

James Walter Hervey was born near Brookville, Franklin County, Indiana, on April 5, 1819, to Thomas and Hannah (Waylan) Hervey. Thomas P. Hervey was born on February 26, 1821. Mr. Thomas Hervey, the father, died shortly after little Thomas was born. Hannah had five children at the time and tried to stay in her home, but she moved back to Hamilton, Butler County, Ohio, within 8 years. One biographical record about J.W. Hervey states that Hannah decided to move because she wanted the children to have a better education. However, one would assume that, for a single woman in 1829 with five children, Hannah moved for physical and financial survival with the children's education as a second priority. Hannah passed away on June 28, 1844.



Dr. J.W. Hervey

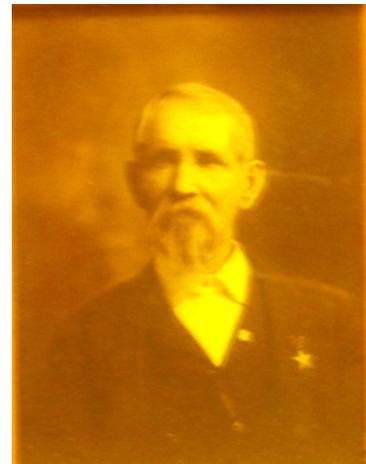
The children went to the Common Schools (Grades 1-8) of the area. J.W. went on to attend a two year school in Cincinnati taught by Professor Kemper. When J.W. was 19, he began studying medicine with Dr. John C. Fall in Preble County, Ohio, for four years. J.W. practically inhaled all the medical books that he could find in other doctors' libraries and spent most of his spare money on medical tomes. While in medical school, J.W. found that he would need more money to complete the medical course and earn his diploma. So, he decided to go to Chicago to find employment to finish his schooling. But, by the time he reached the Mt. Comfort area, J.W. had gone through the \$50 a friend had lent him. The people of Mt. Comfort

were very generous and offered him free board, horse feed, and a log cabin. J.W. opened a little practice that he assumed would last only a season or two, but he remained for seven years. In 1850, for reasons that will be explained later, he felt the urge to try Chicago again, but the abundant generosity of the people waylaid him once more. J.W. stayed for nine more years.

Thomas P. Hervey followed in his brother's footsteps and went to what was called the Central Medical College in Indianapolis. He also became a student under his brother's tutelage; the only one J.W. deigned to have. Thomas began his own practice around 1848 in McCordsville.

In the 1840s and 1850s, bleeding or blood-letting was a common practice among doctors as a way of "releasing bad blood or fluids". Patients, too, believed that this was the best remedy and came from miles around to be bled. Dr. J.W. Hervey, after his medical studies and viewing the results of bleeding, greatly opposed the practice.

In 1846, congestive fever, or malaria, hit the western side of Hancock County. Though many used blood-letting, a meeting of physicians was called together and agreed on larger doses of quinine to be used on the afflicted. However, quinine was frightfully expensive costing \$5 to \$6 an ounce. To put this in perspective, Dr. J.W. Hervey bought and drove a dozen fat cattle to market in Indianapolis for \$7.50 a head so that he could invest the money in quinine supplies.



Dr. Thomas P. Hervey 1

Buck Creek Township was hit again the next year with smallpox. Dr. J.W. Hervey treated 84 cases with only 5 that did not make it. Most of the other doctors lost their patients because of their bleeding practices. Because of Dr. Hervey's great success, rumors spread that he caused the epidemic himself to look good in people's eye. The doctor was sued for malpractice after he used nitrate of silver and tincture of iodine to prevent face pitting in those affected by smallpox. Damages were set at \$5,000. Some of the best physicians in Indiana were subpoenaed, and the doctor's defense was so airtight that the case was thrown out before it went to trial. Though Dr. J.W. Hervey's character and reputation were validated, it took three to four years of his life and much of his money was spent to procure the defense.

It is no wonder that Dr. J.W. Hervey wanted to leave the area after seven years. At this time, Dr. J.W. Hervey was persuaded to attend the medical department of Asbury University (now DePauw University) to finally attain his medical diploma. He then transferred his office to Oakland (Oaklandon). The doctor began writing papers and articles on the dangers of alcoholism, or temperance. In 1854, Dr. J.W. Hervey was elected as an Indiana State Representative and made several public speeches. He was very interested in public life and politics when the Civil War erupted.

J.W. was commissioned by Governor Morton as the First Assistant Surgeon of the 50th Indiana Volunteer Infantry until February of 1863 when he was disabled at the battle of Parker's Cross Roads. He was forced to return home, but J.W. was appointed Surgeon in Charge at the Burnside Barracks in Indianapolis and Acting Assistant Surgeon in the U.S. Army until the end of the Civil War. The location of Burnside Barracks appears to have been on the north side of E 16th Street between Pennsylvania Street and Central Avenue.

Thomas P. Hervey never seemed too far from his brother. Thomas P. was also commissioned by Gov. Morton as Assistant Surgeon of the 50th Indiana Volunteer Infantry on September 17, 1862. He resigned his commission in June of 1863 and was given a special contract to serve as Surgeon in Veteran Reserve Corps at Burnside Barracks in Indianapolis. Thomas P. had married Mary McCord (daughter of Aquilla and Mary "Polly" (Apple) McCord) and had a son named Frank before she passed. Thomas P. married Anna Cory on November 29, 1864, and they had four children. Frank later became a physician as well, but he passed at the young age of 38 in 1893. Frank's wife, Ella, passed three years later at the age of 30 in 1896.

After the war, Thomas P. stayed with his practice in McCordsville while J.W. moved into Indianapolis to continue his practice and write papers to various medical journals. These writings centered on public and mental hygiene, hygiene in the schools, and water contamination in the Indianapolis area. J.W. labored intensely for a State Board of Health in Indiana. He was made a member of the State Health Commission, which was created to perform the duties of a State Board of Health until Indiana Legislation could collect the resources and personnel to create a board. This occurred in 1878. Many would later comment that Dr. J.W. Hervey was the father of the State Board of Health.

Though hardly any of Dr. James W. Hervey's biographies or sketches mention his wife, J.W. was married in 1844 to Eliza J. Crump in 1845 at Cumberland. (One source says that Eliza was born in Munich,

Germany.) They had two children: Edwin V. (1851-1938) who became a doctor, and a daughter known as Mrs. Murray F. Hill.

J.W. became a member of several organizations including: the Marion Medical Society, Indiana State Medical Society, American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and the International Congress. He received two medals, one from a Washington meeting in 1887, and another from Berlin, Germany. While he was in Europe, J.W. went to many hospitals and medical centers to see the advances in medicine on the other side of the pond.

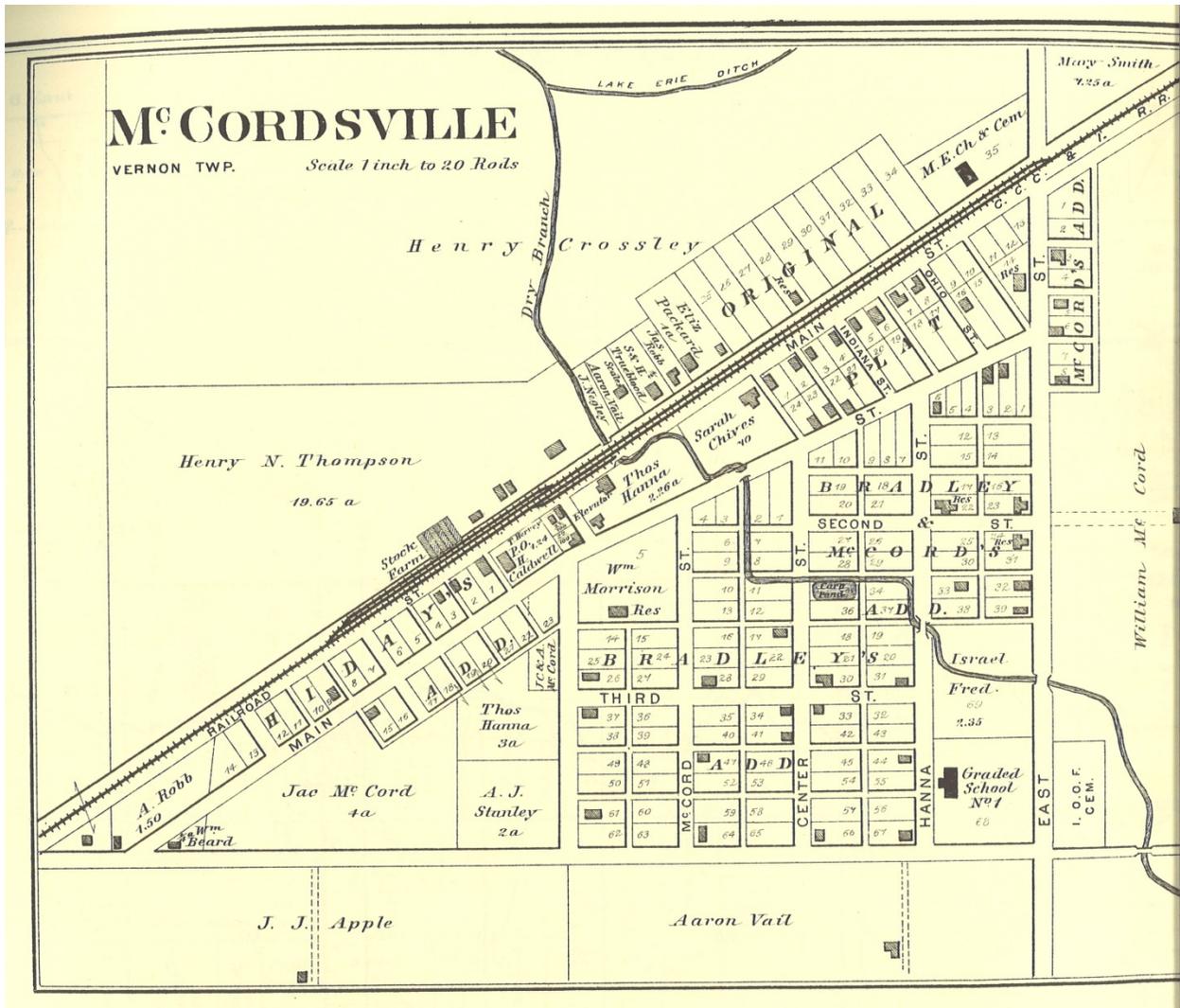
J.W. Hervey was a member of the George H. Thomas G.A.R. Post in Indianapolis, and Thomas P. Hervey was a member of the Sol Kempton G.A.R. Post in Fortville. J.W. Hervey died at the ripe old age of 85 in 1905. Thomas P. Hervey died in 1909 and is laid to rest with his wife in the McCordsville I.O.O.F. cemetery. His first wife is with her family in the McCord Cemetery in Oaklandon.

I have actually left out many colorful and fascinating stories and other achievements of Dr. J.W. Hervey. I highly recommend reading J.H. Binford's book History of Hancock County Indiana; you will find J.W. Hervey's article under the subtitle The Medical Profession. He is also in Memoirs of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana by Goodspeed Brothers (Publishers), Boys in Blue by Samuel Hardin, History of the Indiana Legislature by Hon. William H. English, and Eminent Physicians by R. French Stone, M.D.

One of the stories Dr. J.W. Hervey wrote down and published was "Maniac of the Mound" in 1858. The story actually happened to him when he had to subdue a "drunken maniac". Shortly after this was when J.W. took up his banner of temperance against overindulgent drinking.

## **Final Word**

This is by no means the complete history of McCordsville. Many family biographies remain untold. However, the histories that have been told should provide a better glimpse into the history surrounding the town of McCordsville. More images, original photos, and information can be found at the Fortville-Vernon Twp. Public Library.



McCordsville Map 1887

Note that *Main Street* was the railroad tracks.

