

Historic Pendleton Stoned
By Nancy Wynant

Well, not exactly stoned, but appearing on a stone. In 1966, the Pendleton Lions' Club commissioned and erected a stone marker at the Pendleton Avenue entrance to Falls Park. The marker contained a brief history of the Pendleton area. Some years later, the park entrance was revamped and the stone marker placed in storage. Time marched on and the Pendleton Historical PH Museum, established in 1981, added a third floor attic and remodeled the first two floors. This past summer, the Board of the PH Museum began working on planting and landscaping around the building. The Park Department assisted in this work and placed the 1966 stone marker at the west end of the PH Museum building, firmly secured and surrounded by what will become a beautiful flower garden.

The stone marker reads: "NEAR THIS SPOT, THE FIRST WHITE CHILD WAS BORN IN MADISON COUNTY IN 1820. THE FIRST MARRIAGE TOOK PLACE IN 1821. FIRST COURTHOUSE AND JAIL ERECTED IN 1823. THREE MEN TRIED AND HANGED HERE IN 1825 WERE FIRST WHITES EVER EXECUTED IN INDIANA FOR KILLING INDIANS. WOOLEN, FLOUR AND SAWMILLS ERECTED HERE IN 1825. FRED DOUGLAS WAS ASSAULTED BY MOB IN 1843 FOR SPEAKING IN FAVOR OF THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY. STONE WAS TAKEN FROM THESE QUARRIES FOR CULVERTS ON THE NATIONAL ROAD. LUMBER WAS SAWED HERE FOR THE FIRST COURT HOUSE IN INDIANAPOLIS. PENDLETON INCORPORATED IN 1854. FALLS PARK ACQUIRED BY THE TOWN OF PENDLETON IN 1920. (this stone) ERECTED IN 1966 BY THE PENDLETON LIONS CLUB."

This thumbnail sketch lists several important events in the Pendleton area, historical records give the details and artifacts housed in the PH Museum flesh out how settlers and later residents here lived, worked, loved and worshiped. Several of the events detailed on the marker are stories all by themselves, such as the *Massacre at Fall Creek* told in novel form by author Jessamyn West (perhaps better known for *Friendly Persuasion*) and thoroughly researched by PHS graduate Brian Doerr. From Doerr's account, we know it was actually a massacre on Deer Lick Creek near what is now Markleville, with the trail and execution taking place near the falls of Fall Creek. One of the "said to be's" at the PH Museum is a large iron key "said to be" the key to this first jail. Another great story is that of Fredrick Douglass, former slave who spoke here and was wounded by a pro-slavery group. Happily he was nursed back to health by local Quakers and went on to work toward emancipation of African Americans by Abraham Lincoln and became a well-known national figure himself.

Indiana was admitted to the Union in 1816, and Madison County was established by charter in 1821-1822. Circuit and other courts of Madison County were to meet at the log cabin of an early settler. Thus, Pendleton was the site of the first Madison County "seat," and remained so until a more central location was

established in Andersontown. Meanwhile, the resident Delaware Indians and U.S. Commissioners negotiated a treaty in 1818 giving the United States possession of these lands in three years. At that point pioneers began to move in rapidly. The first white settler in the area whose diary shows that he came from North Carolina and settled about 1½ miles east of the falls in 1818 was John Rogers. Blacksmith Adam Winsell came in 1819. Other settlers came quickly, including a party of eight men and one woman from Clarke County, Ohio, in 1820. They included Elias and Elizabeth Hollingsworth whose son E. J. Hollingsworth was the first white child born here and is mentioned on the marker. Interestingly, later on the same November 1820 night, a baby girl, Electa, was born to Mr. And Mrs. Jacob Shaul in the settlement.

Those who came from Ohio were able to travel over a public highway which had been cut through the forest as far as New Castle, but from there on they had to use compasses and blaze a trail, marking a route for future travel. They came by foot, on horseback, or with ox-driven covered wagon. The PH Museum houses a small cup and saucer “said to be” dated from 1824. Did some brave lady pack it along with other prized breakables cradled in sawdust in a barrel or box loaded on a covered wagon?

Every artifact in the PH Museum stretches the imagination as we consider both legends and recorded history. For example, was our extra long, unbleached woven linen cloth one that was spread over doors taken from a cabin for the wedding reception of Stephen Corwin and Hannah Ellsworth in 1821?

Settlers found here a dense forest, swampy wetlands in places, and most importantly the largest falls in central Indiana which meant power for the various mills erected over the next few years. And apparently, once trees were cut for cabins and area cleared for planting, they found fertile soil, because agriculture, livestock production, and lumbering provided the settlers’ livelihood.

The stone marker at the west end of the PH Museum hints at the Pendleton area’s history, and items preserved in the PH Museum surely pique the interest of anyone whose mind’s eye ponders the past.