

July 30, 2014

## Morrisson-Reeves Library Turns 150

by Sue King, Morrisson-Reeves Library Archivist

Morrisson-Reeves Library is celebrating its sesquicentennial this year; so it's a good time to look back on the physical space the library has occupied over the years. It's a story that reflects changes in library practice, as well as architectural trends.



The building that Robert Morrisson built as part of his gift to the township was a small, square structure. It has been referred to as Greek Revival, possibly because of this shape, and because the front door was flanked by two Ionic columns. The *library* occupied only a single room within this building. It was a two story room with a balcony lining the south and east walls. The north wall contained windows, and the west one was where the life-size painting of the benefactor was placed. The ceiling was arched and supported by two more Ionic columns. An ornate iron circular staircase provided access to the balcony.

The south side of the building was fitted up as a residence to either house the librarian or to rent for income. Probably the first occupant of this residence was Lewis Stubbs. Stubbs was a lawyer and future judge and mayor. Stubbs and his family who moved in temporarily while looking for a permanent home in the city. One of Stubbs' daughters, Ada, would one day become the

Librarian. The lower floor included offices for the township trustee and library board.

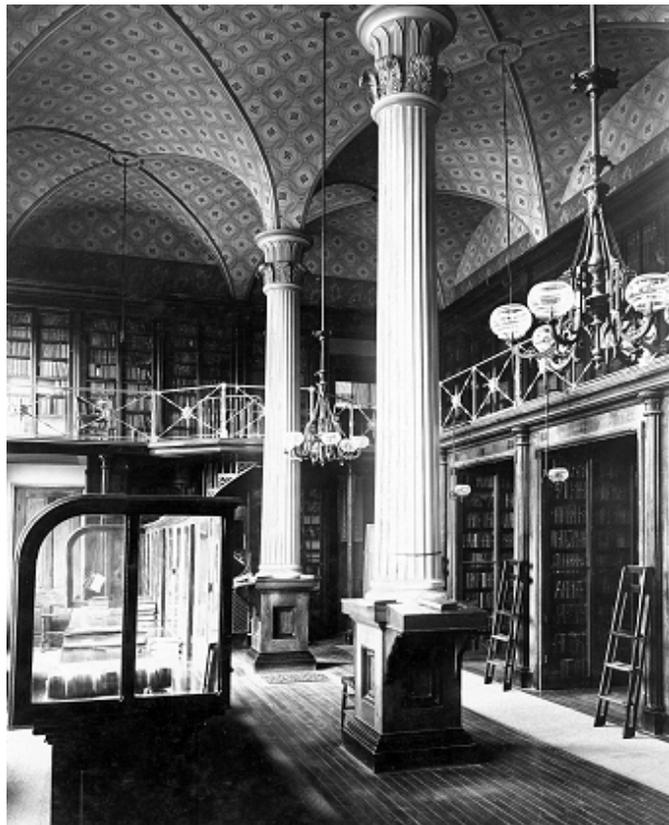
The Morrisson Library held about 6,000 volumes when it first opened, and could be handled by one person fairly easily. In the days before the card catalog, patrons had to peruse a printed catalog in book form in order to make a selection. In fact, printing the first catalog took longer than expected and delayed the opening by several weeks.

Robert Morrisson's will did not leave an endowment for the upkeep of the library; so the only income was the rent from the residence and any fines for overdue books. Consequently, the number of books on the shelves didn't increase much in the early years. With the help of some local legislators, the state legislature passed laws in 1879 and 1884 which allowed for the collection of a small library tax. The number of books increased, making it necessary to add a small addition to the rear of the building in 1885.



In 1892, Mrs. Caroline Reeves donated \$30,000 to the library mostly for expansion of the building. Richardsonian Romanesque was the popular architectural style at that moment, and John Hasecoster drew up plans that reflected the vogue. The finished library looked quite similar to the Wayne County Courthouse, which was being built at the same time. The 1864 building was not razed but was covered and enlarged.

The exterior steps were enclosed so that the front door was on the street level. Visitors entered and could go down a half flight of steps to a lecture room (in 1948 it became the Children's Department) or up stairs to the main level. The single room of the original library was converted to a Reading Room. Its structure varied little; the columns, balcony, spiral staircase, and painting of Robert Morrisson remained in place. The residence was eliminated and the south wall extended into the next lot, creating space for the stacks, new circulation desk, and ultimately the card catalog that would replace the printed catalog. Reference rooms were still located behind the Reading Room. The renovation added an entire third floor which initially served as an art gallery, but was later used as the Children's Department and storage area.



Except for a single story addition added in 1925, the library remained largely unchanged until 1975. Morrisson-Reeves had continued its steady growth in books and programs, and the 1893 building was becoming inadequate. As early as 1962, the library board wrestled with whether to further expand the existing structure or to start with a completely new building. After the 1968 explosion, there had been some talk of making the new library an anchor on one end of Main Street, but since the board had been slowly buying the rest of the lots on the block, it made more sense to build on the same site. Even still, some advocated leaving the old structure and building a new annex to it.

Mrs. Bard, the librarian at the time, argued against this plan for several reasons. One of the big problems with

the old building was the fact that it was a large building composed of many smaller rooms on three floors that had been added at different times. It was difficult to navigate and required too many staff members to man it. Adding a modern addition to it would only increase those problems.

The 1968 explosion did no structural damage to the building, but it did bring some other problems to light. A file cabinet from one of the downtown stores had crashed through the roof, and beams and woodwork that it exposed were dangerously dry. Mrs. Bard also noted that the inner walls, some of which were the outer walls of the 1864 building, crumpled very easily during the demolition. She felt grateful to be in the new building before anything had happened to the old one.

The current building alleviates these problems and others. One of the things Mrs. Bard hated was the fact that the entrance was not welcoming. The original entrance had been at the top of some external steps, but in 1893, the entrance moved to street level, where patrons entered a vestibule, and then had to walk up or down stairs to get to any service areas. This also made it completely inaccessible to patrons in wheelchairs. Now visitors walk (or wheel) up a ramp and enter directly into the adult service area, with the Children's Department just to the right. Until the Audio Visual Department was created in 1989, all of the service areas were contained on one floor.

The much-loved old library was not forgotten in the planning, and visitors can still see parts of it decorating today's Morrisson-Reeves Library.



## Wayne County History Listserv

Sponsored by [Waynet, Inc.](#)

Moderated by [Preserve Richmond, Inc.](#)



The Wayne County History Listserv (WCHL) has over fifty members and includes librarians, university professors, state officials, and lay researchers. WCHL was created using software owned by Waynet. Preserve Richmond wants to thank Jane Holman of Waynet for her expertise and willingness to help. We also want to thank the Board of Waynet Members for their generosity and vision. Waynet is a countywide treasure fostering open information exchange and community spirit.

### The Wayne County History Listserv's purpose and rules follow:

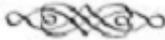
## PURPOSE

To connect individuals and organizations involved in historical and genealogical research and preservation;  
To share expertise;  
To ask for assistance;  
To share what we are doing;  
To avoid duplication of efforts;  
To promote non-commercial activities and events.

## RULES

Participation is free;  
Participants are expected to be polite and nonpartisan.

Open initially by invitation.  
But others may ask to join.  
Submissions will be posted daily.



## Message from Our President



*Lynn Johnstone*

I and the Board of Directors of Preserve Richmond, Inc, would like to thank two former members for their support in planning, programs, and education in preservation, as expressed in the Boards' mission.

Former Board President Penn Ansorg on leaving the Board in 2013 was voted Best Parliamentarian in leading the Board.

Ron Hughes went off the Board in 2014. He was voted Best Host for providing meeting space at his restaurant, The Tin Lizzie Café and for catering our annual meetings.

Thank you Penn and Ron for your talent and gifts to Preserve Richmond's Board.

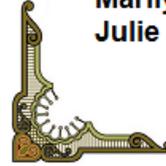
Please stand by for an exciting community project. Preserve Richmond is partnering with the Historic Depot District. The Project and its details will be announced in January 2015.



**Lynn Johnstone, President**  
**Terry Harkleroad, Vice President**  
**Doris Ashbrook, Secretary**  
**Ardene Schoeffler, Treasurer**



**Larry Habschmidt, Board Member**  
**Marilyn Nobbe, Board Member**  
**Julie Owen, Board Member**



Election of these officers will be held in the business portion of the annual meeting. To be eligible to vote, one must be a current member of Preserve Richmond, Inc. whose dues were received on or before the last regularly scheduled Board Meeting (Tuesday, July 15, 2014).



## Preserve Richmond, Inc.

### Mission Statement:

To encourage sustainable development through preservation of historic resources and the heritage of Richmond and Wayne County, Indiana: to help foster an understanding of our ancestors and their role in the historic and cultural development of the community; to demonstrate the economic viability of the reuse of historic structures through advocacy, acquisition, protection, and research about sites, structures, and artifacts of importance to the cultural and historic development for educational programs; to publish literature about local and American architecture, interior design, antiques, technology and other related matters.

### Contact Us

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**Richmond, Indiana 47375-1873**

### Website:

[www.waynet.org/nonprofit/preserverichmond](http://www.waynet.org/nonprofit/preserverichmond)

### Email:

[preserverichmond@yahoo.com](mailto:preserverichmond@yahoo.com)

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

# PRESERVE RICHMOND'S 2014 ANNUAL MEETING

*Celebrating 150 Wonderful Years of Morrisson-Reeves Library*

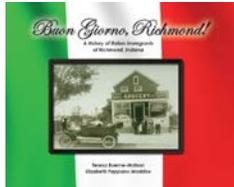


## SPEAKERS – 4 TALENTED LOCAL AUTHORS



**Sue King**

*Richmond Postcard History Series. (2005)*



**Teresa Bueme-Matson & Elizabeth Maddox**

*Buon Giorno, Richmond! A History of Italian Immigrants to Richmond, Indiana. (2013)*



**Steve Martin**

*Wayne County Women & Whisky. (2013)*

*Light Refreshments will be served.*

**5:30-7:00 P.M., Thursday, August 21, 2014**

**Bard Room, Morrisson-Reeves Library, 80 North 6th Street, Richmond, Indiana**

**Please R.S.V.P. by Tuesday, August 19, 2014**

Email us at: [preserverichmond@yahoo.com](mailto:preserverichmond@yahoo.com) or  
Telephone: Lynn at 765-962-0384 or Doris at 765-238-1891

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To Join or Renew Your Membership, Send Your Check or Money Order to:

**Preserve Richmond, Inc., P.O. Box 1873, Richmond, Indiana 47375-1873**

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:** Individual \$15.00 ; Family \$20.00; Sustaining \$25.00 and up; and Corporate \$35.00 and up

Preserve Richmond, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit. Memberships are tax deductible. Covers 2014 & 2015.

Please find the enclosed check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
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