

Avon Community Schools And Washington Township

Forward

This writing of the history of Washington Township was undertaken to teach students historical research and writing and to stimulate appreciation for those people who gave us our heritage. This is a large task for eight grade students, but I must commend them for the job they have done. They have worked many hours after school and on week-ends, taking their tape recorders with them to interview people, digging through old records, and finally writing the history itself.

I am most proud of your authors:

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Washington Township did not come into being until 1824 when Hendricks County was created. For centuries before this time, it was populated only by roving Indian tribes. The Delaware and Piankishaw Indians used this county as a hunting grounds. There is no record of any permanent Indiana villages, although temporary villages undoubtedly were made while the tribes hunted this land.

It was not until the 1600's that France claimed the vast area of land between Appalachian and Rocky Mountains. It is probable that during that time the first white men, being trappers and explorers, visited what was to be Hendricks County, of which Washington Township is but a small portion; this became English Territory following the French and Indian War of 1763. The area finally became a part of the United act of the United States Continental Congress, the area that now includes the states of Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana became the Northwest Territory. In 1800 the Indiana Territory was organized and settlement of the territory by Americans began.

The land in the southern part of the state was opened by treaty while Indiana was still a territory. However, it was not until after Indiana became a state in 1816 that the first Governor, Jonathon Jennings, negotiated the treaty of St. Marys in 1818 which opened up for settlement all the area south of the Wabash River. Hendricks County was part of this "New Purchase of 1818". According to the terms of the treaty, the Indiana living in the area had three years to remove themselves west of the Mississippi River. With the Indians gone, settlement took place rapidly.

Early History of Hendricks County

Hendricks County was created December 20, 1823 by Act of Indiana Legislature. The name Hendricks was chosen to honor the second and then Governor of Indiana, William Hendricks. It was not until April of 1825 that the county government was organized and elected officers began their duties. The population of the county was approximately 1,000 in 1825. Although the county government was of primitive form, judged by today's complex structures, the essential office necessary to a democratic government were established. Before the first court house was constructed, county business was transacted in private homes. The Historical Atlas of Hendricks County records the first circuit court was held at the house of William Ballard of Danville on October 25, 1824. The judge was Hon. W.W. Wick. There were no prisoners that first day and no jail to put them in if there had been. Most of the court records show petit offenses tried in the early years. One important criminal case was tried in August 1827, that of Samuel J. Barlow. He was convicted of manslaughter of George Mallock and sentenced to the penitentiary for one year. However, his sentence was disputed, and \$300 bond was posted by Thomas Lockhard, Samuel Jessup, John Ballard and Able Stanley. The right of trial by jury was never abused in the county.

While county government established, the population of the county continued to grow. The rapid growth can be attributed to the Cumberland or National Road (now highway 40) which passed through the newly organized land around 1830. This road was the only road that connected the pioneer wilderness of Indians with civilization east of the Appalachian Mountains. It is recorded in several sources that a steady stream of immigrants in wagons filled this road going west. Because this county was organized and money could be made by erecting hotels and inns along the road, many immigrants decided to settle in Hendricks County instead of pushing on west in Indian territory in Illinois. Most of the settlement was made in the central and southern townships of the county, because such townships as Union, Brown, Lincoln and Middle had poor drainage in which mosquitoes bred. There mosquitoes infected pioneers with the ague, a dreaded disease, causing chills, fever and violent shaking. (We know today that it was a form of malaria.) Although the first settlement in the county had been White Lick Creek, north of Mooresville, in the year 1820, Washington Township was one of the earliest townships to be settled.

Early History of Washington Township

The first settlement in Washington Township was near Shiloh Church in the northeast corner of the township. Robert Wilson, Gideon Wilson and Elish Kisi built log cabins and began to clear newly purchased land in 1822. The next year Daniel Tryer, Aaron Homan, the Grigges and Joseph Fousett settled in the same neighborhood. In the same year, 1823, the western part of the township was settled by James Dunn, John Givens and Abner Dunn, for whom Abner's Creek was named. Other pioneers who came into the township over the next ten years were William Hadley, David Cox, Glen McCammock, G.W. Merritt, Enoch Barlow, James Siggurson, Absalom Payne, O.J. Huron, John Smoot, the Rosses, Gossetts, Barkers, Thornberrys, Hurons, Heffords and Jenkins. Other pioneers settled in the township during this period 1822-32, but records are not available to determine who they were or where they settled. (A biography of some of the settlers is listed at the end of this writing.) The deeds to the land purchased by the pioneers were written on sheepskin and purchased directly from the U.S. Government.

These pioneers when making their homes faced many problems and hardships. Before they built their cabins, they had to make a "clearing". Trees had to be cut and stumps removed. All this was done with such crude tools as the adz, frow, and axe.

After the clearing was made, all the neighbors of the settler helped him make a suitable cabin. First they cut about twenty logs of about the same diameter. There were long logs for the sides and shorter ones for the ends. Each log was notched and laid one upon the other. Poles were laid across the top and clapboards covered them to make a roof. The sides were chinked and the cabin was completed.

There was always the danger of disease, the pioneers greatest enemy. Ague, milk sickness, and cholera were dreaded diseases. Most families lost at least one child while raising a family. The pioneers' strength was found in his religion.

Churches

In the winter of 1822-23 there was a Methodist preaching in the home of Robert Wilson in the northeast corner of Washington Township. It is near the present site of Shiloh Church.

Robert Wilson organized the first Methodist Church class in 1823. Members of the class were Robert Wilson, Gideon Wilson, David Tryer, Elisha Kise, their wives and a few others. The was the first class organized in Hendricks County. It was continued at the home of Robert Wilson until 1827. In that year they built the first Methodist Meeting House in the county.

During the winter the meeting house was used without floor or daubing. Sometimes it was so cold they had to retreat to Robert Wilson's house.

Shiloh's first ministers were circuit riders. The first circuit rider was Joseph Tarkington, the grandfather of Booth Tarkington, the famous Hooiser author. Joseph Tarkington walked twelve miles to his first job on the White Lick circuit because his horse died en route.

In Joseph's first day on the circuit he had these doubts, questions, and comments.

"I stopped at Col. Paxton's, northwest corner of Washington and Pennsylvania Streets, and was introduced to him as a Methodist preacher on foot and hunting his circuit in the wilds of White Lick. The colonel made me welcome."

"On Sunday morning Nehemiah Griffith was to deliver his Valedictory and start Monday for Ft. Wayne Mission, but Armstrong, who had been appointed Griffith's successor, came in, having ridden 15 miles that morning."

"Griffith would not preach and Armstrong had to and did. He seemed full of fire. This was very pleasing to the Indianapolis people for they had the chills (ague) very badly that fall."

"After his sermon Armstrong asked if there was anyone from White Lick there, and a large man, Elijah Kise, rose and said "I am from that part of the world, and hunting a preacher." Armstrong asked him to come forward and he introduced him to me. Brother Kise was taking me with him when Armstrong said "Stop ! Your preacher is without a horse." In those days a horse was necessary to a preacher an an engine to a train. Said Kise to Armstrong "He's not as old as we have been in the habit of having!" "Never mind that," said Armstrong, "he will naturally grow older."

"Mr. Kise had ridden with his son and he put me on his son's horse, and took his son on behind him, and so I went home with my member and preached that night on my new circuit at Robert Wilson's house. Mr. Kise lived in the neighborhood of what is now Shiloh Church in Hendricks County."

"That year they built a log meeting house and called it Shiloh. William Gladden, the Wilsons, David Faucett and his boys were of that church."

"This was a good year on the circuit. Some 250 joined the church."

Rev. Tarkington made mention that his salary for the year was \$ 65.

During and after Rev. Tarkington's pastorate the White Lick Circuit consisted of Clermont, Shiloh, Wesley and Bartlett Chapel. Later Clermont was dropped from the circuit and it became known as Avon Circuit.

Comments concerning the importance of churches during pioneer times were collected by Mrs. Mary McClain.

"Though the people could pay their preachers little in those days, the preacher and the people struggled together. Each knew the other's trials, and truly each in their way ministered to each other." (from Rev Tarkington's Autobiography).

The Shiloh Church is still in use today although the present church was built in 1902.

Other churches in the township that were established after Shiloh are White Lick Presbyterian located where the present church now stands; Abners Creek, located on road 150; Bartlett Chapel on highway 36, a little farther west of the present church.

Pioneer Attitudes

Politically, Washington Township was Whig until the party dissolved. The Republican Party came into being early in the 1850's. Only once, in 1832, did we vote Democratic (this was when we support Andrew Jackson), but this was before the Whig party came into being.

The first general election in Washington Township was held August 7, 1826, at the home of Daniel C. Hults, and the following people voted: Sidney Williams, Daniel C. Hults, James Merritt, Joseph Runyan, Isaac Williamson, Daniel B. Tryer, James Higgenbotham, Joseph Phillips, Williams S. Merrill, Robert Wilson and John Triggs.

The early pioneers believed in law and order. In order to insure that the law was kept, the small community elected not one, but two, constables each year. The names of these people who served as constable are listed at the end of this writing.

Roads

The first road was a wilderness road. It was chopped through forests from the Wabash River to Indianapolis.

The most important road in this area was built in 1830, and was called the "National Road." The National Road was located in the southeast corner of Washington Township. This road was very important because it brought many settlers from the eastern part of the United States. This brought trade and prosperity to this section of the territory. Since there were many settlers coming into the area, every farmhouse became a hotel. In the spring when there was much rain, the roads became impassable with mud. In some instances, the horses would sink to their stomach in this mud.

Many of the roads came about by paths of roads made by circuit riders and residents. Two instances of roads made by circuit riders and residents are the roads to Plainfield and Danville which are now State Road #267 and US Highway 36. These roads also became impassable in the spring. Travel by

wagon was never fast or comfortable, but it was the only available means of transportation.

Schools in Washington Township

It is not certain where the first school was located, but it is claimed that Gideon Hufford taught the first school in Washtinton Township located near Whitelick Presbyterian Church in 1829; but it is tolerably certain that there was a school three years before in the eastern part of the township at Shiloh Settlement.

The earliest schools were log schools houses. One such school was run by Michael McClain, and was located just east of Vestal Road in a wooded area.

The first schools were subscription schools. This meant that the parents wishing their children to be educated personally paid the teacher. Teachers often received their pay in the form of food and a place to live. This form of education was changed under the Constitution of 1851 to provide a public school system.

Occupation

The major occupation of this area was farming. Farming was extremely difficult because of primitive tools, and there was no available means to get their products to market other than the National Road.

Establishment of Avon

The first post office was established in 1833 and was headed by Absalom Payne. This was the Hampton Post office. This post office and the others following received weekly mail from the eastern part of the United States.

Following Absalom Payne was Dr. Malone acting as the second postmaster of Hampton Post office. After Dr. Malone's retirement W.T. Ross became the third postmaster, but when he retired from postmaster the post office died and so did the name Hampton.

In 1852 O.J. Huron was persuaded to accept a commission and he named the post office White Lick. This post office was located in his cabin 1/4 mile west of what is now Avon. It was in operation only 5 months and then Mr. Huron retired and it ceased being.

John Smoot was the pack-peddler of this area and made weekly visits here by horse and wagon. Mr. Smoot leased some ground in the corner of J.H. Ross' yard in 1858 and built a small one room store. This was the first store and was the beginning of the town of Avon. However, all did not progress smoothly because "Mr. Ross was a strong Republican and Mr. Smoot an ardent Democrat, and it was not long until Smoot moved his store to Democrat ground, which was across the road on the land of J. Dickerson;

and thus at the very first the town began to move."

Mt. Smoot was unable to purchase a lot from Mr. Dickerson, so in November 1862, he purchased a lot a mile west from R.J. Barker and moved his store on log sleds that winter. The "town" moved west. Mr. Smoot's store prospered and in 1867 he headed a petition to Washington for another post office and for Mr. R.M. Bartley to be made postmaster. No name was suggested for the town so the Post office Department named our town Smootsdell because Mr. Smoot's name headed the petition. Later the name of the town was changed by a surveyor made fun of the name Smootsdell and said "I'll name the town." He then penciled "New Philadelphia" on a stake and drove it down. However, when the railroad was completed the company drove another stake with "Avon" painted on it. The people liked the name and petitioned to have the post office name changed. This was the last changed of name for the town.

Before the Civil War businesses, excepting the store existed. Sugar maple camps existed near the present Carter Addition and Jessup Addition. A sorghum mill also operated near Six Points.

The Civil War marks the end of the pioneer period in Avon. With the start of the war the majority of the able bodied young men in the community join the Union Army. A list of those men and where they are buried is at the end of this writing.

Business in a Growing Community

After the Civil War the major occupation was agriculture. A family raised the majority of its own food.

By 1877 several new businesses had sprung up. Barker's sawmill was in operation on the west side. Shipman's wagon shop opened at about the same time on the east side. In the north Merritt's nursery opened and he began raising and selling trees and plants. The Danville Republican reported, "We have two stores, the one kept by R.M. Bartley and the other by the Barker brother. The former has the postoffice, the latter the telegraph office. At both stores they keep almost everything from a two-cent piece down to a sack of coffee." There was a doctor in the township, a Doctor Rahan who lived in the house that was recently razed at the corner of Highways 267 and 36. Another business was Tooley's blacksmith shop. A new office was leased to J.M. Carter for a buggy house in 1879. There were also three tile factories in this area.

The number of stores in the township varied from two to four in the late 1880's and 1890's.

With the coming of the Big Four Railroad, shortly after the Civil War, the location of the town was to be determined by the location of the depot. Therefore, there was extensive competition between the east and the west sides of town (the dividing line being highway 267) over the location. When

the Big Four people heard of these disputes they used them in securing bonuses by placing the depot on the side of town paying the highest amount of money. The depot was first placed 1/2 mile west of highway 267. Next it was moved on the road, then the east side used its influence to have it moved 3/4 of a mile east, "where trains stopped at an old boxcar in the middle of a farm for passengers, and patrons carried trunks down the track till they were tired, then changed hands and carried again." The west side again won the station until 1891 when private citizens bought a small yellow dwelling and moved it to the crossing a mile east, and the company slid its telegraph office into it. "The old sad look came again to the westsider's face; the company saw the look and smiled, then moved their station also to the yellow dwelling, using it for all purposes until 1894, when, with generous help of the east-sider citizens, the company erected a neat three-room building." The tug of war over the depot finally ceased when the railroad moved its depot three miles east to Spray Station.

In 1900, shortly after the demise of the depot, the post office also went out of being. Then the first rural free delivery was established.

Although two important businesses were lost, Avon held its own until one of the greatest booms in transportation (at that time) came on September 1, 1906. The Terre Haute, Indianapolis and Eastern traction line was opened through Avon. This was only a part of the state interurban system. Crowds of people used the interurban daily. The following is an example as quoted from the Danville Republican. "The daily crowds proved so overwhelming, it was necessary to provide additional coached, thereby decreasing the power supply." The brick building on the northwest corner of S.R. 267 and U.S. 36 was built as a power house in order to boost the power to the required strength.

The interurban ran approximately every hour, from early morning to midnight. The interurban was discontinued about 1930.

Thanks to the better school facilities and competent business men and their businesses Avon has steadily grown larger and better.

Post Civil War Schools

The following is a list of all schools in Washington Township in the year 1878. The numbers of schools varied from year to year.

School #1: Frazer- It was located halfway between Tenth Street and Wall Street Pike on Shiloh Road.

School #2: Red School- It was located on the old lane between Tenth Street and Wall Street Pike, one-quarter of a mile east of State Road #267.

School #3: Kraften- It was located one-quarter of a mile east of #475 on #150 north.

School #4: King- It was located at the top of the hill on U.S. 36, one-quarter of a mile east of Abners Creek.

School #5: Avon- It was located where the fire station now stands in Avon.

School #6: It was located one mile east of County Line Road on U.S. #36, north side. This building still stands.

School #7: Six Points- It was located on Bradford Road, one-quarter of a mile from Six Points Road.

School #8: It was located on Bradford Road, one quarter of a mile from Dan Jones Road.

School #9: It was located on State Road #267, one-quarter of a mile south of Jessup Road.

School #10: Hoadly School- It was located on Vestal Road.

All the above schools were only for grades one through eight, with the exception of Avon. Avon offered a three-year high school course in the late 1800's to 1917, when it was abandoned for a new consolidated school.

The present Avon Consolidated School was built in 1917. The following people were elected to the Advisory Board: Abram Hoadley, president; E.H. Ross, secretary; and Wm. T. Walton, treasurer. The trustee was G.M. Roark. Charles Overpeck was the principal, and the first graduating class consisted of Russell Blair and Mary Davis. Classes averaged from 10 to 20 per class from the 1920's until about 1955. Since that time the school enrollment has expanded rapidly. Our present school system is operated by a school board.

Attitudes of the Growing Town

The majority of the elections in Washington Township have gone to the Republican Party since the organization of that party. Very few people ever ran on the Democratic ticket.

Religion was a dominant factor in the daily life of the people. Their principles and morals were based on their religious beliefs. Methodist and Baptist churches were still the main denominations. The churches were regularly attended and Sunday Schools were organized.

The people of this township felt an honest day's work was the mark of a worthwhile citizen. Any person failing in his duties to his family and community was chastised by all residents of the community.

A good example of this scorn is found in the Danville Republican, February 8, 1883: "A field of corn east of here was left untended until picking." It is certain that everyone in this small community knew whose field it was, and it is probable that it was never again left untended. Life was becoming easier and leaving more time for leisure with all the advances of technology following the Civil War. Many of the people worked practically all of the time, but they also had parties, dances, and church clubs.

The church clubs had regular get-togethers. There were singing parties, birthday parties, programs by the children in schools and churches.

Social clubs other than church clubs planned parties and helpful deeds for their community. As given in an account from the Danville Republican

paper: "The Olds Maids Club decided to have a leap year party on May Day, and accordingly issued invitations, and as the "boys" were bashful and busy plowing, the Old Maids promised that if the boys would attend they would help one day in corn planting."

There were also chataquas. This was a musical program that lasted for about a week. Mrs. Vivian Smith, who is still a resident of Washington Township, has heard John Philip Sousa perform at a chataqua.

Many times before a soldier left for World War I, his church gave a program in honor of him.

The people of this era had finally begun to have time for social gatherings.

Biography Of Pioneers

Emily Almond- Born in Ohio, January 24, 1824. Settled here with her family as an infant in 1824.

Robert J. Barker- Born in North Carolina, July 18, 1810. He settled here in 1831 with his parents in Section 11.

John Edwards- Born in Guilford County, North Carolina, September 4, 1800, and settled here in 1834. He was a farmer and lived in Section 21.

Lotan E. Jenkins- Born March 28, 1798 and settled here on 1833. He enlisted in Company K of the 72nd Regiment on August 27, 1862. He was taken prisoner in the Battle of Checkamauga September 20, 1863, and was held until November 19, 1864 when he was exchanged and rejoined his unit.

Cornelius Loy- Born in Montgomery County, Ohio, August 22, 1809. Settled here in 1832.

Mrs. Bithiah Ross- Born in Warren County, Ohio, August 22, 1809. Settle here in 1832.

James Sanders- Born in Washington Township, December 17, 1832.

Seth Huron- Born in Warren County, Ohio, May 8, 1803, and died at his home near Avon, Indiana, July 8, 1877. He came to Washington Township in 1832. Soon after he came he was converted and joined the M.E. church at Old Shiloh camp ground, and he lived the life and death of a Christian. He was twice married and the father of 15 children.

Rev. C.E. Lewis- Assisted by Rev. J.N. Beard, preached his funeral from 99, 1, and 97,1 after which a large concourse of people followed hid remains to the grave. In his death the church lost a useful member, society a good citizen, and his family a kind and good husband and father.

William E. Hadley- Born in North Carolina, November 25, 1815. Came here

in the fall of 1825. He was a member of the Society of Friends.

Emily Burnet- Settled here in 1828. Born in Ohio on September 17, 1824, Section 20.

John D. Miller- Born March 10, 1805 in Kentucky. Settled here in 1831 on Section 6.

Henry Sanders- Farmer in Section 14. Settled here in 1832. Born in Ohio on July 25, 1826.

Civil War Soldiers From Washington Township

Regiment in which they served and burial place is given beside each name.

S.G. Burcham, C, 70th Scottsville, Kentucky

Smith Ross, A, 53rd, Gossett Cemetery

Marion Ross, 3rd battery, Gossett Cemetery

A.E. Ross, A, 53rd, Atlanta, Georgia

A Montgomery, B, 7th, unknown

John A. Boots, I, 7th, unknown

William Boots, I, 7th, unknown

John Hornaday, H, 7th, unknown

Henry Hoadley, I, 7th, unknown

E.F. Hunt, A, 7th, Shiloh

Joseph Miller, I, 7th, Shiloh

Peter Decker, I, 7th, Shiloh

Minus Miller, I, 7th, Shiloh

Benjamin Smith, 99th, Shiloh

Isaac Ogborn, On banks of Mississippi

Scott Miller, I, 7th, in Alabama

James Huron, 38th, Alexandria, Virginia

David Weer, I, 63rd, unknown

John Decker

Eli Townsend, Shiloh

Joseph Thornbrough, I, 7th, unknown

John Carrol, F, 63rd, unknown

George Carrol, F, 63rd, unknown

Walter Price, F, 63rd, unknown

Isaiah Ogborn, I, 63rd, unknown

Thomas Gilliland, Shiloh

Legrand Worrel, K, 79th, Chattanooga, Tennessee

D.P. Ray, K, 79th, unknown

Allen Kutch, K, 29th, unknown

John Morgan, K, 79th, Knoxville, Tennessee

John Moore, I, 9th Calvary, unknown

William Moore, K, 79th, unknown

William Sparks, unknown

James Gladden, 3rd Battery, unknown

Thomas McCalment, Washington Township

W.G. Pearson, F, 63rd, Shiloh
David Sanders, I, 7th, Andersonville, Georgia
Marsh Jenkins, I, 9th Calvary, unknown
Charles Johnson, I, 7th, in Illinois
John Reed, unknown

Constables Of Washington Township

Two constables served the township for one year terms.

1832

William McCalment
Samuel Shockley

1833

Payne Harding
Samuel Barker

1834

Eli Watson
Thomas McLane

1835

Eli Watson
Benjamin Mourning

1836

William McCane
Samuel Barker

1837

Willis Miller
Eli Watson

1838-39

William C. Kipe
Scott Miller

1844

Joseph Gilbert
Richard Triggs

1845

Comodore P. Williams
Eli Watson

1846

Comodore P. Williams
Shadrach Morris

1848

Comodore P. Williams
Gilbert Palmer

1849

Comodore P. Williams
Shadrach Morris

1851

Comodore P. Williams

1852

John Jordan

1853

James V. McLain
Henry Johnson

1854

Samuel Barker
Joseph Jourdain

1855

Samuel Barker

1856

Comodore P. Williams
Samuel Barker

1857

David Hufford
William Brittian

1858

Granville Tolbert
William J. Merritt

1859

W.R. Barker
E.J. Caywood

1860

William J. Merritt
William Barker

1861

Barkley Moore
William Gilliland

1862

J.S. Wamsler
William Gossett

1863

James T. Huron
P. Johnson

1864

W.R. Barker
James T. Huron

1865

W.R. Barker
J.H. King

1866

John C. Ferree
Hiram Hadley

1867

William Gilliland
John Ferree

1868

J.H. King
C.P. Williams

1869

M.B. Applegate
Berryman Hooten

1870

Henry Fitch
John W. McClain

1872

P. Newland
Michael Buliss

1874

Henry Spray
William Barker

1876

William Parsons
William Barker

1878

William Parsons
McKendree Smith

1880

S.T. Huron
George Gray

1882

John H. King
Henry Spary

1884

Daniel S. Barker
William Barker

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This history was based on interviews with citizens of the community, newspaper reports, diaries, previous written histories, deed records, and family records. We wish to thank those people who have taken their time to give interviews and family records in order that we could compile this history.

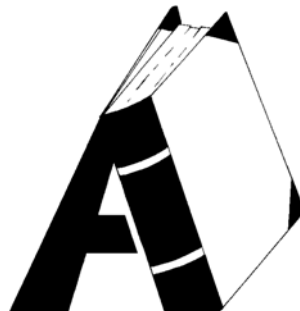
Interviews

Mrs. Chet Parsons
Mrs. Vivian Smith
Mrs. Mabel Buliss
Mr. Jesse Parsons
Mr. Raymond Barker
Mr. & Mrs. Nolan Smith

Resources

Atlas of Hendricks County, 1878
History of Hendricks County, 1885
History of Hendricks County, 1914
Danville Republican Newspaper, 1877-1900
S. Huron's Diary

	<p>Please e-mail or call for more information</p> <p>(317) 272-4818</p>
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