



## MILESTONES

### Once-bustling Hortonville hit its peak in the 1890s

Historical society brings residents together to share memories of the village's livelier days.

**By Phil Dunlap**  
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More than 50 people gathered in the Hortonville United Methodist Church building to share remembrances from their past and of the little village they love.

No one seems to know how many people actually live in Hortonville, a community on 206th Street and Hortonville Road, about two miles west of U.S. 31.

But many remember a once-thriving community tucked away in the far reaches of their history.

Sponsored by the Westfield Washington Township Historical Society, the group met recently in the church building that was originally established in 1886 as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Hortonville.

Historical Society President Jim Peyton said that while the village was never incorporated, it did have a post office.

Washington Township resident Stuart Neal said the Hortonville post office ceased delivering mail about 1917.

"They might have had a post office after that (delivering) right in Hortonville, but in 1917 the surrounding areas started to be served by the Sheridan post office," said Neal.

Lifelong Washington Township resident Jim Carey said the original post office building is still standing and is being used for oil storage.

In 1882, the railroad came through town, eventually to become known as the Monon, which offered daily service between Chicago and Indianapolis.

All that is left as a reminder of that railway are several grain silos and a concrete pad where the original water tank stood; the Monon abandoned passenger service in the 1960s.

"In 1946, I rode back from Chicago on that Monon, and I'll tell you it stopped at every little community," genealogist Gene Cordell said. "They were putting water in and shoveling coal (at every stop) on that whole trip."

Peyton handed out a sheaf of papers that included the collected memories of Clova Haworth, who spent her entire life -- from 1905 to 1997 -- as a resident of Hamilton County and the Hortonville area.

In her writings, Haworth said: "Hortonville was an enterprising village and enjoyed its peak of prosperity in the (1890s). At that time, there was a brick and tile factory, drug store, livery barn, two grocery stores, two doctors, cheese factory, barber shop, blacksmith shop, (and a) school with

two years of high school."

Neal said electricity arrived in Hortonville around 1910 because of the school.

Don Horton, a descendant of one of the settlers for whom the town was most likely named, said the area was settled when a "huge wagon train came out of North Carolina on its way to the Dakotas, but there were some deaths and they were getting tired."