



Silver Hills
Historical Society, Inc.

THE
CLARION

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Trail Grand
Opening

Tribute to Kathleen
Gohmann and
James E. Breece, Jr.

Correction:
The name, Bulleit,
was incorrectly
spelled in the
December
newsletter.

Looking Ahead
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Samuel J. Elsy



**Silver Hills
Historical Nature Trail**
Grand Opening
Saturday, June 18, 2016

The Silver Hills Nature Trail and Wildlife Sanctuary was officially opened to the community on Saturday, June 18, 2016 at 11:00 A.M. The ceremony began with a short presentation about the history of the trail, followed by congratulatory speeches from New Albany Mayor Jeff Gahan and Jerry Finn, Executive Director of the Horseshoe Foundation. Helen “Bunny” Hammer had the honor of cutting the ribbon. She was born in 1920 and remembers walking the old Market Street Hill Road and riding the Silver Hills trolley car. The opening was capped off with a short round of fireworks. An estimated 100 turned out for the ceremony and to be the first to walk the trail. For several hours after, and throughout the day, many others came to walk the trail.



Hours of hard labor were required for clearing and construction work. It was a labor of love provided by eight dedicated volunteers: Bob and Scott

Caesar, Kelly Carnighan, Ken Brooks, Ric Manning, Alex Minnich, and Jim and Nancy Stein. The result of their backbreaking work is a beautifully laid out trail system, accented with historic illustrations.

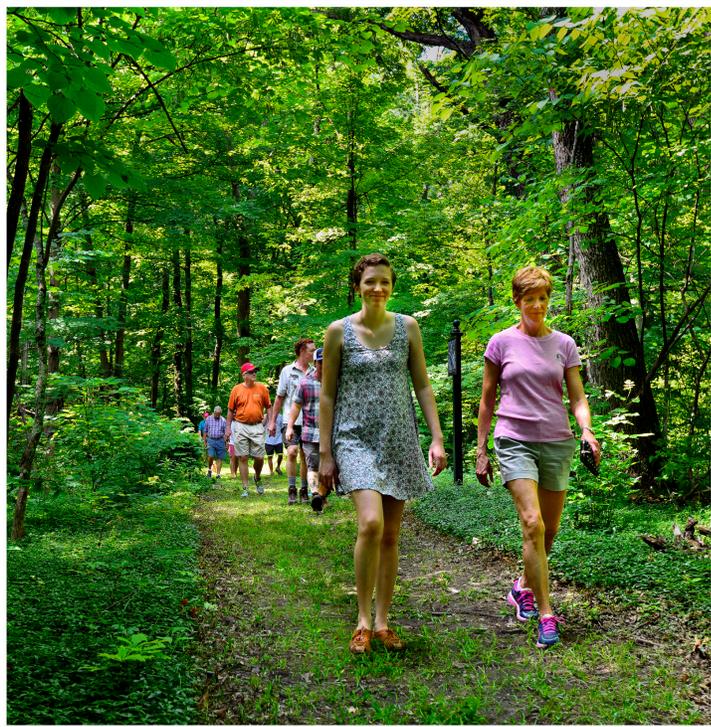
The Grand Opening ceremony was followed by a lovely evening reception held at the home of Becky and Bob Irvine on Riddle Road. Their house was built by Frank deVilla in 1937. Guests were treated to a tour of the historic home, music, hor d’oeuvres, and a breath-taking view of the Ohio River Valley below. The yard was bathed in a cool breeze while guests mingled, enjoying the sights and sounds. Nancy and George Everbach outdid themselves by providing the refreshments from Lilly’s in Louisville. We thank the Irvines and Everbachs for making the event an evening to remember.



Helen "Bunny" Hammer, 96, left, performed the ribbon cutting ceremony.



New Albany Mayor Jeff Gahan.



Kathleen M. Gohmann (1914 – 2016)

James E. Breece, Jr. (1927 – 2016)

Kathleen M. Gohmann

passed away Jan. 28, 2016. She was 92. Kathleen was married to David E. Gohmann, who passed away on May 2, 2009. David was born on September 7, 1914. In June 1913, David's father, Frederick John Gohmann, purchased a three-story house on Riddle Road from the original owner, Robert Hugh Courtney. Robert purchased the property from Col. William W. Tuley in 1905 and built the lovely home. The Gohmann family named their estate, Hawthorn Place. The house and front porch faced the Ohio River Valley below. The steps off the porch led to the front yard, which sloped down to the edge of the woods. From there, another series of steps descended the hillside to the trolley car tracks and Hawthorn Station. It was at Hawthorn Place where Fred and his wife, Emma, raised seven



children: Elizabeth, Conrad, Martha, David, Joseph, Henry and Eva. Eva was the last to be born. Martha, Eva, Conrad and David lived their entire lives on Silver Hills. An attorney, Fred worked for the Kentucky Title Company later to become the Louisville Title Insurance Company.

David married Kathleen M. Coomer of Jeffersonville, Indiana on

April 10, 1950. David and Kathleen lived on Alice Avenue, where they raised four children: Victoria, Michael, Stephen and Paul. Eight of Fred and Emma's grandchildren continue to live on the Hill today: Kathleen's son, Steve Gohmann, and Linda, Nancy, Jenifer, Kristina, Nick, Jim and John Stein. Their mother was Eva Gohmann Stein.



James E. Breece, Jr. passed away on May 19, 2016 at the age of 88. Keeper of the gate, Jim and his wife, Jane, lived in the lovely home on Sunset Drive, nestled behind the narrow woods at the top of Cherry Street Hill Road. Smoke from the living room fireplace was always visible during the winter months.

Jim was born October 27, 1927 in Portsmouth, Ohio. He met his wife, Jane Tewalt Breece at Ohio Wesleyan. They were married on July 23, 1949. Jim came to New Albany to work in the family business, Breece Plywood, founded in 1937. Jim and Jane moved to Silver Hills in 1954. They bought property from Bob Bulliet, part of

the Bulliet plat ca. 1932, formerly, John O. Greene's Greenland Farm. There they built a lovely home and raised two boys, James E. Breece, III and Anthony T. Breece.

The first tennis courts to be built on Silver Hills were laid out at the Highland Country Club in 1906. Over the years, many more courts were built and then disappeared. Wiley Ellis built the most popular court on Silver Hills on the corner of Highland Avenue and Riddle Road. The Ellis court served Silver Hills for nearly three decades. Those who played on the weekends and in the evenings during the summer months were: Wiley Ellis, Jeff Conner, Beeb Stein, Dick Pruitt, Mark

Gohmann, Dave Gohmann, Dick O'Conner, Jim Thornton, Harry Carnighan and Jim Breece. There were other players but this made up the core group. After Wiley died and the tennis court property was sold off, Minna Benjamin extended an invitation to the group to come play at the Benjamin court on Sunset Drive. For another three decades, tennis on the Hill continued at the Benjamin court. Jim was a devoted player who promoted camaraderie of the game by sponsoring the first tennis Christmas luncheon, a tradition that continues today, and the annual Silver Hills tennis tournament, which Jim won in 1998 with Harry Carnighan. Jim's passing leaves only Harry Carnighan as the sole survivor from the core Ellis group. Sadly, the tradition of tennis on Silver Hills has come to a close.

Looking Ahead

Lifetime Achievements of Samuel J. Elsby

Mark Your Calendar

Sunday Evening, October 23, 2016

Parnell Center Silver Heights Camp Grounds

On Sunday evening, October 23, 2016, the Silver Hills Historical Society will host a catered dinner at the Silver Heights, Parnell Center, beginning at 6:00 PM. Following the dinner, a historical presentation will be made about the lifetime achievements of Samuel J. Elsby. Samuel moved to Silver Hills in 1918 from English, Indiana, where he lived until his death in 1937. Samuel built The Elsby building on West Spring and Pearl Streets in 1916.

Samuel J. Elsby, was likened to the well known Washington C. DePauw of New Albany. He was described by his peers as "clever, sympathetic for human need and a great citizen." Everyone knew him as "kind, lovable, sincere, honest, true and patriotic." In business, he was respected as an "outstanding executive, ideal of service," who provided financial working capital to institutions, built and operated factories, and provided funds to build homes, clubhouses, and office



buildings. He was known for his tireless effort to improve life for his fellow citizens and community. The tragic loss of his first wife inspired the man to seek opportunities he may not have otherwise pursued. He transformed himself from an ordinary farm boy into a politician, pharmacist, banker and entrepreneur. He never lost sight of his love for family and friends. The outpouring of help from

his friends at the on set of the Great Depression is a testament to the respect and admiration bestowed on him throughout his lifetime. His business achievements began with the opening of a general store. By the time of his death, he had been elected circuit court clerk, became a certified pharmacist, bought a pharmacy, bought a canning company, a furniture company, dairy company and held stocks in numerous other ventures. He founded five banks, reorganized a sixth and chaired a stockholders meeting for the organization of a seventh. In 1915 he founded the German-American Bank & Trust Company of New Albany. His crowning achievement was the construction of New Albany's iconic Elsby building.

Come join us for a Sunday evening dinner followed by the story about this remarkable man. His personal pocket watch *ca. 1886* and a ring given him by his first wife will be on display.