

From the Mayor...

October 7, 2016

I've got to admit I am not much of a history buff. Memorizing dates and places while a student never gave me goose bumps. Memorizing the presidents of the United States in US history class, however, does come in handy every once in awhile. I suppose I'll have to add one next month.

But when I became Mayor five years ago, local history almost immediately became a part of my job. Now the fact that my administrative assistant at the time, Mrs. Michelle Bormet, authored the book "A History of the City of Warsaw, Indiana" probably had something to do with that. Given the fact that I moved to Warsaw in 1972, her book has filled in a lot of the pieces and provided a fuller perspective of many aspects of our community. I now find myself referring to that book to understand more fully the "backstory" when new issues and events occur.

Last week, Indiana history came to the forefront as we celebrated the Bicentennial of our state. As I prepared remarks for both the statewide Torch Relay and the Community Celebration of Indiana Music, I wanted to put the local history of Kosciusko County into perspective with our admittance as the 19th state in the union, which occurred 200 years ago in 1816 (December 11, 1816 to be exact). The Bormet book and "Kosciusko County: An Oral and Pictorial History", by local historian Daniel Coplen, were both perfect references for that research.

Settlers moved into Kosciusko County within 14 years of statehood. Mr. Coplen writes, "...they encountered an untamed land filled with tall trees, prairies, lakes, and swamps. They also found scattered bands of Indians and an abundance of wild animals and fish." Mrs. Bormet describes the beginning of Warsaw, "In 1834 the original settlement was called 'Red Brush.' The first house/tavern was made of tamarack poles...and located on what is currently the southeast corner of Center and Hickory Streets".

I was moved to try and imagine an undeveloped vision of our beautiful city before buildings, houses, roads, or trains. From a historical perspective, it doesn't really seem that long ago. The city recently unearthed an engineering document from the late 1800's that details a large network of sewer pipes that continue to serve us today!

As you continue through both of these books, and I am sure there are others, you will find fascinating stories of the foundations of our community and the people and events that have shaped our community into what it is today.

Not too long ago, when two of our large orthopedic companies merged, it quite naturally created some concerns in the community. Using Mrs. Bormet's book, I was able to trace a rather comprehensive local history of the origins of the orthopedic industry and the growth of its companies. That history involved literally dozens of mergers, acquisitions, name changes, and new startups that have occurred in the

last one hundred years. It is another example of how local historical knowledge helped us understand a current event that shaped our lives.

The Kosciusko County Historical Society also puts out a monthly publication that features interesting historical research on topics that, as locals, we are familiar with.

I guess I am starting to appreciate the past events that have shaped our community as we watch our community shape its future. I suppose I better get started memorizing all of the past Mayors of Warsaw, in order. Biggs, Cosgrove, Green, Royse, Brubaker...