

Fall 85

# Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society, Inc.

## Film, TV star guest

# at Chautauqua Days celebration

The News-Sun. OFFICE: 112 N. MAIN ST. KENDALLVILLE, INDIANA  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 1985

By DAVID WALTER

ROME CITY — After a recent rocky past, Rome City's Chautauqua Days are back, and it appears the event will be better than ever.

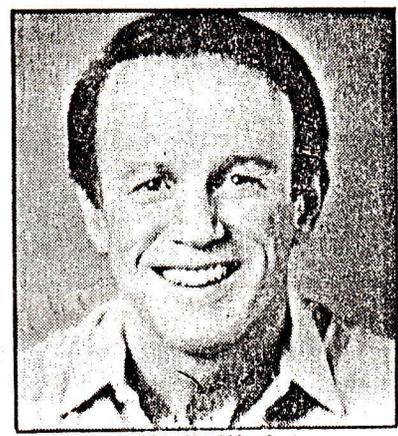
This year the festival is being tied in with the celebration of Gene Stratton Porter's birthday, which is Saturday. Many special events are being planned around the Hoosier author's birthday celebration.

Martin West, television and movie actor and star of the 1960 movie "Freckles," which was based on Porter's book of the same name, will be the featured guest. West is best remembered for his role as Dr. Phil Brewer on "General Hospital" from 1968 to '75. He has also starred in recent episodes of "Dallas," "Scarecrow and Mrs. King," "Hardcastle and McCormick,"

Street Blues," "Mike Hammer," "Moonlighting," and the television movie "A Death in California."

Besides starring in "Freckles," West has starred in other theatrical films such as "Family Plot," "Assault on the 13th Precinct," "The Price of Survival," "Soldier Blue," "The Man from Galveston," "Sweet November," "Lord Love a Duck," and "The Sergeant was a Lady."

According to Marge Sweeney, curator of the Gene Stratton Porter Memorial Historical Site, the festival is already generating excitement, and people from as far away as New York and New Jersey have already arrived in Rome City. The Chautauqua Days committee, made up of Bill Driver, Jerry Schuster and Max Miller, working with the Porter Memorial Society,



Martin West

have come up with three days of events with Pat Kelly serving as master of ceremonies and state Rep. Brad Fox, R-Rome City, as grand marshal.

The festival will start at noon Friday with a midway featuring kiddie rides, concessions and entertainment.

The first big event of the festival, Miller said, will be a boat flotilla parade on Sylvan Lake starting at 7 p.m. that night. The parade will feature an ultralight plane fly-in over the lake as well as skydivers and a small fireworks display.

Saturday, the festival gets into full swing, starting with a traditional pancake and sausage breakfast at the Rome City Fire Station from 7 a.m. to noon. At 10 a.m. Martin West will be at the Rome City School to meet people and autograph novels. The movie "Freckles" will be shown at 10:30 a.m. and noon at the school, and at 1 p.m. the next day.

The next big event, at the Porter

Historic Site, will be the "Freckles" contest for boys with red hair and freckles, and the "Little Scout" contest for tomboyish girls with red hair

and freckles. The contest is open to males and females up to 20 years old. Registration will be at noon, with the actual contest to begin at 12:45 p.m.

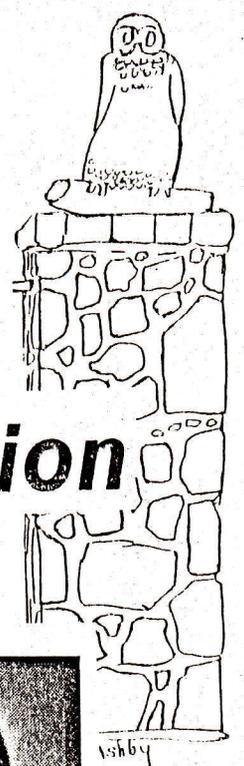
The highlight of the day's activities will be a parade through Rome City, starting at Kelly Street Park and featuring another ultralight fly-in with West, the East Noble Marching Knights, historic automobile clubs, Keystone Cops and the Rome City Fire Department. Lineup for the parade will be at 1:15 p.m. at Kelly Street Park, with the parade scheduled to begin at 2 p.m.

Gaslight Playhouse will put on a children's theater presentation at

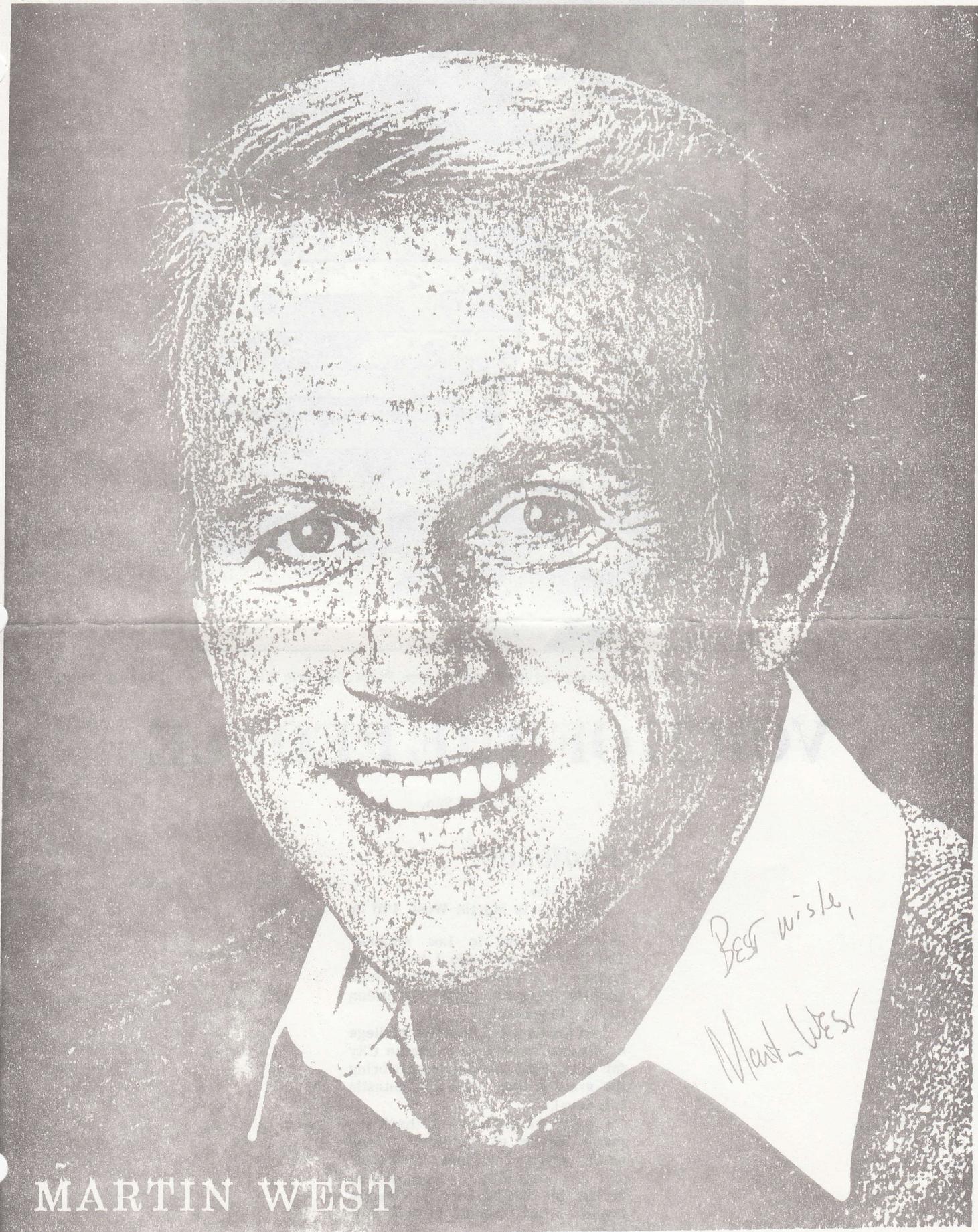
3:30 p.m. at the historic site, and the day will wind up with a teen dance at 8 p.m. at the Dari Point parking lot.

Activities Sunday will kick off with antique cars from the Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum at the Limberlost Country Club at 8:30 a.m., and a social hour at 9 a.m. at the historic site. The Brush Cottage Gospel Quartet will perform at 10 a.m. at the site.

Noon will be tee-off time for the Freckles Golf Tournament at the country club, with West participating. A series of canoe and paddle boat races will start at 1 p.m. at the Main Basin of Sylvan Lake. An exhibition softball game at Kelly Street Park is scheduled for 2 p.m. and go-cart races at the school are on tap for 2:30 p.m.



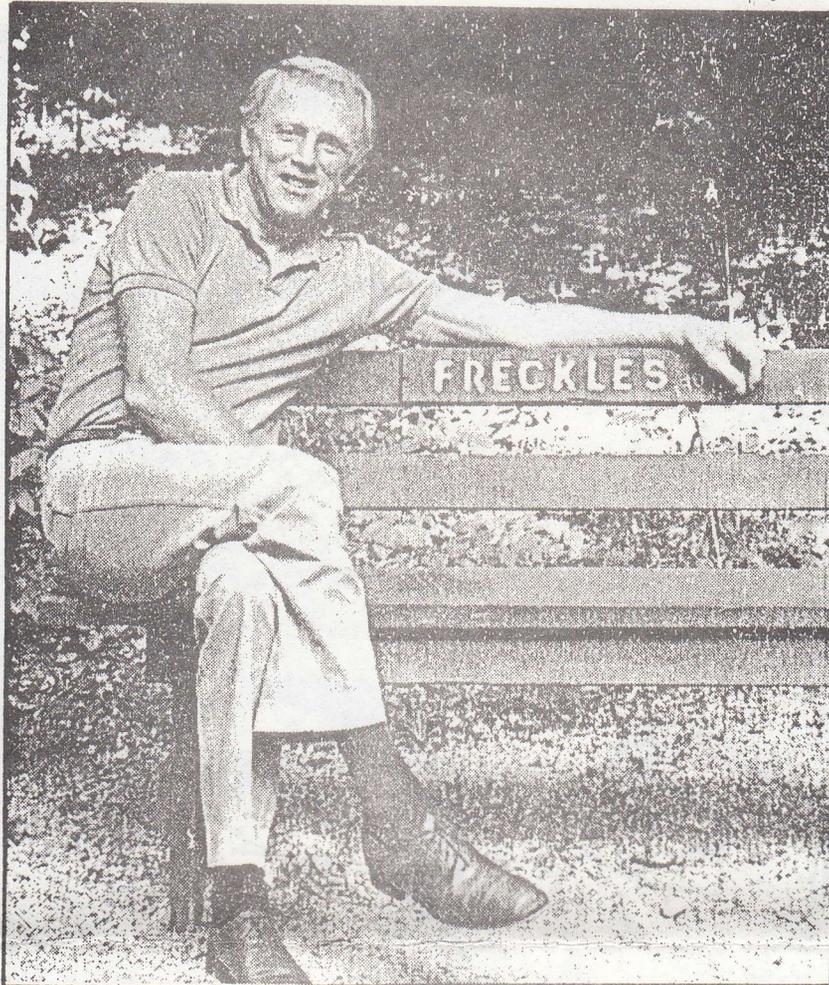
Original Freckles



Best wishes,  
Mart West

MARTIN WEST

# Original 'Freckles,'



Martin West relaxes at the Gene Stratton Porter Historic Site.

## VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

The News-Sun,

### *Fantastic!*

To the editor:

My name is Martin West. I'm an actor and live in Los Angeles. Twenty-five years ago I began my career in a movie based on Gene Stratton Porter's classic American novel, "Freckles."

Two weeks ago I had the privilege of coming from L.A. to Rome City for a birthday celebration honoring the great author. It was a fantastic two days!

I would publicly like to thank the many people of Rome City and nearby parts of Indiana for all their love and hospitality. I was especially moved by the support and volunteerism which seemed to be everywhere.

My hat is off to Marge Sweeney who put it all together.

I love you all and hope to see you again.

Martin West

\* \* ACROSS THE MILES \* \*

How good it is to be back home again in Indiana! North-western Ontario was cool and rainy. When you heard the local people complain about their lack of summer weather, then you knew we were not the only ones unhappy. However, the rains which kept us indoors so much, let us get a lot of needlework done.

A late June freeze hurt the blueberry crop, so I didn't have to can many. We enjoyed mushrooms, especially Lactarius Piperatus, and the Chantarelles. Here, on Sylvan Lake in September, we found many, many varieties in our lawn. Most were new to me. The large and small puffballs have been good eating.

Everywhere we look we see apple trees just bowed with fruit. Even the wild varieties are producing nice apples. Again, we harvested wild grapes. I made two batches of jelly for the Society to sell.

If you have a flower guide with colored plates try to find Queen-of-the-Prairie. It is a tall plant, three to four feet tall, with the most exquisite pink blooms. I would dislike getting fined for smuggling a root of it across the border, so will be content to look for it on our way to Dryden.

The gardens at the historic site are looking so well taken care of, it is a pleasure to walk there. The Lotus Lilies are spreading; there are hundreds of the seed pods above the water.

Until next time -

Betty Felton Wilson

\* \* \* \* \*

Just a reminder - if you have not paid your 1985 dues, please do so. This enables us to keep our membership list up to date.

It was also a part of the large and palatial design to connect Lake Michigan with the Wabash and Erie at or near Fort Wayne. This latter version lead to the creation of Sylvan Lake, which is man made. A dam was built across a stream that flowed into the Elkhart River drainage system, thus creating the reservoir. Older maps give the body of the water this designation rather than calling it a lake. When there would be insufficient water in the main channel, a supply was to be fed into the channel from the reservoir to keep the boats floating between Fort Wayne and Lake Michigan.

This branch from Fort Wayne to Lake Michigan was never completed, in fact, scarcely started, but two large reservoirs were completed. A beautiful body of water remains to this day, approximately one hundred and fifty years later. The name of "Sylvan Lake" is said to have been suggested by Patrick S. O'Rurke, a superintendent for the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad. The railroad reached Rome Station in 1870 and the lake soon became a family resort area. A series of improvements were started and Rome City became famous for Sunday excursions, club picnics and summer bible schools.

In a few years the Chautaugua was born. We will tell something about that in our next letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is an opportunity to offer our thanks to the membership that has supported the Society throughout the year. We are especially grateful to our life members. Their names have been remembered on brass plate fixed to a plaque that hangs in the historic site.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  
 GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY, INC.  
 R. R. 1, Rome City, Indiana 46784

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check Membership Desired

Student.....	\$1.00	Sustaining.....	\$15.00
Regular.....	5.00	Non-Profit Organization.....	20.00
Family.....	7.50	Life - Single.....	50.00
		Life - Husband & Wife.....	65.00

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31

# Gene Stratton Porter Memorial Society, Inc.

Sylvan Lake • Rural Route 1 • Rome City, Indiana 46784

Phone 219/854-3790

Fall 1985



The tribal call of the cardinal, Good Cheer! Good Cheer! Good Cheer! has given way to a short, thin Chip, Chip, Chip. The lazy summer afternoons on the shores of Sylvan Lake have passed for another season. This summer has been, perhaps, the most active season experienced at the "Cabin in Wildflower Woods" since it was opened by the State as a memorial in 1947.

In the accompanying articles, the newspaper reporters tell the story of an exciting week at the Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial. There seems no need to re-tell them here, except to say that plans to bring Martin West, the actor who represented the historical character of Freckles in the filming of the play based on the fictitious part played in the film with the same name, has been realized.

Those of us who had the opportunity to be present at all or some of the events found there were numerous moments of enjoyment.

The celebration on the historic site, which was dreamed up by Margie Sweeney and Martha McKibben more than a year ago, was staged in collaboration with the Rome City Chautauqua Days.

The writer is aware this letter will reach a number of readers who have never set foot on Indiana soil, much less to have visited the historic site. This suggests a bit of historical background that gave cause to the designation of the celebration as Chautauqua Days.

Whether it is a phenomenon of the area or the times, needs no explanation, but it seems that nearly every crossroads in Indiana is destined to oblivion if a celebration of some sort is not staged for a day or week sometime between Memorial Day and Labor Day of each year.

In the small community of Rome City, (by the 1980 census) the promoters appropriately hit upon the name of Chautauqua Days.

It all started pretty much in this order. In the early days of Indiana (the state was admitted to the Union in 1816 and the county, Noble, was formed in 1836) the General Assembly hit upon the grand scheme to build a network of canals throughout the state. This was authorized by the passing by the General Assembly in the 1836-37 session of the Mammoth Internal Improvement Bill. The heart of the system was the Wabash and Erie Canal made to connect the waters of Lake Erie with the Ohio in the vicinity of Evansville. In 1843 freight and passengers were moved via canal from Lake Erie as far as Lafayette. Formal dedication was in Fort Wayne, July 4, 1843.

\* \* FALL MEETING \* \*

The fall meeting will be held Wednesday, November 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site. The video that was made by Vanita's Studio and Arthur W. Grawcock during the Freckles Week-End, August 18 and 19 will be viewed. Refreshments will be served. This should be a very interesting evening, so please plan to attend. Three copies of Laddie will be offered for sale at the meeting for \$5.00 cash or \$6.00 post paid.

\* \* REMARKS FROM THE PRESIDENT \* \*

Thanks to all who attended the Freckles Festivities and a very special thanks to Margie Sweeney and Martha McKibben for all the hard work and time spent to make the week-end a huge success! The events were great and thoroughly enjoyed by myself and all who attended. For another treat, come to the Gene Stratton-Porter Home and see the fall foliage.

*Imogene*

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* "GREETINGS FROM WILDFLOWER WOODS" \* \*

We wish to thank all who assisted and participated in making our Gene Stratton-Porter, Freckles' Day so successful. Special thanks to Society members, Imogene Miller, Linda Shultz, Russell Frehse and Martha McKibben.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our second annual holiday open house on November 15, 16, and 17. The cabin will be decorated as Mrs. Porter had it in 1917. There will be refreshments and music.

Nov. 15 - 9 to 11:30 a.m., 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Nov. 16 - 9 to 11:30 a.m., 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Nov. 17 - 1 to 4:30 p.m.

A question frequently asked by visitors who call at the Memorial on Sylvan Lake pertains to what movies have been made that were based on Mrs. Porter's novels. A complete list is given below. Freckles, The Keeper of the Bees and Laddie are available for showing at the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site.

The Society would dearly love to own a complete collection. Our sights have been particularly directed to "The Harvester", about which dozens of letters have been written, plus numerous phone calls. At this point, no film of The Harvester has been located. Any reader knowing of one, please call or write to the address below.

### # MOVIES BASED ON PORTER NOVELS

Novel: *Freckles* — Movies of the same title — 1917, Paramount; 1928 FBO\*; 1960, 20th Century Fox.

Novel: *Michael O'Halloran* — Movies of the same title — 1923, GSP Productions\*\*; 1937, Republic; 1949, Windsor. *Any Man's Wife*, produced in 1937 by Republic was based on this book.

Novel: *A Girl of the Limberlost* — Movies of the same title — 1924, GSP Productions & FBO; 1935, Monogram. *Romance of the Limberlost* produced in 1938 by Monogram was also based on this book.

Novel: *The Keeper of the Bees* — Movies of the same title — 1925, FBO; 1934, Monogram; 1937, Columbia, 1947, Columbia.

Novel: *Laddie* — Movies of the same title — 1926, FBO; 1935, RKO\*\*\*; 1940 RKO.

Novel: *The Harvester* — Movies of the same title — 1927, FBO; 1936, Republic.

Novel: *The Magic Garden* — Movie of the same title — 1927, FBO.

Novel: *Her Father's Daughter* — *Her First Romance* produced in 1940 by Monogram was based on this book.

\*FBO — Film Booking Offices

\*\*GSP — Gene Stratton Porter Productions

\*\*\*RKO — Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation

# credit is given to Jan Dearmin Finney

Again, as in our previous newsletters, we include the complete address of our Society, including the telephone number. Calls and communications are always gladly received.

### "Wander Through Wildflower Woods"

Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site  
R #1, Box 364, Rome City, IN 46784



Margie Sweeney, Curator

Martha McKibben, Ass't. Curator

**ism**  
INDIANA STATE MUSEUM  
AND MEMORIALS

Business: (219) 854-3790  
Residence: (219) 854-3791

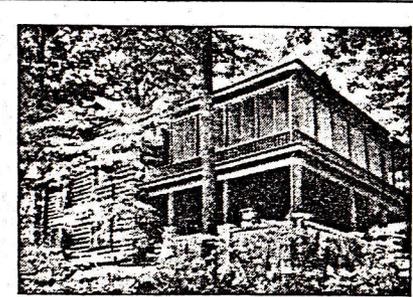
# G.S. PORTER

This memorial preserves the second home of one of Indiana's most widely-known authors. Mrs. Porter is estimated to have had 50 million readers; her works were translated into seven foreign languages and braille; and they were adapted for several motion pictures.

This second home, built amid virgin forests and an endless variety of wildflowers and wildlife, provided an ideal setting for the author's nature studies and writing. Completed in 1914, "The Cabin in Wildflower Woods" is a two-story structure of Wisconsin white cedar logs and native stone. Designed to blend with the natural surroundings, the home is, nevertheless, elegant.

Furnishings and personal memorabilia are arranged and maintained to reflect the Porter lifestyle. The 13 acres of grounds abound in rare trees, shrubs, vines and wildflowers. Many of Mrs. Porter's scenic paths, formal gardens, arbor and orchard are still intact for the enjoyment of visitors.

The memorial is located on Sylvan Lake near Rome City. It is one mile north of U.S. 6 and one mile east of Indiana 9. Phone: (219) 854-3790.



FROM

## Gene Stratton Porter Memorial Society, Inc.

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Phone 219/854-3790