

# GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY, INC.



SUMMER 2001

P.O. BOX 639 • ROME CITY, IN 46784

## *Visual Delight*

The beautiful and nostalgic grounds of Gene Stratton-Porter are a potpourri of visual delight. From the underdeveloped forest, scenic paths, formal gardens, orchard, to the Wisconsin cedar log cabin which overlooks one of the most beautiful lakes in Indiana; a paradise of inspiration for artists. Starting in mid-May, artists gather together for a "paint-out". An annual event sponsored by the Noble County Art Association. In August the Indiana Plaine Air Painters Association, Inc. and the LaGrange County Art Club formally gather to demonstrate and exhibit beautiful works of art that capture the spirit and beauty of the home site and memorial of Gene Stratton-Porter. Artists can also be found painting and expressing their inspirations at any time. A local artist, Rose Blumer, enjoys living close to such artistic opportunities. Her painting of the Log Cabin captures the spirit and beauty of Gene Stratton-Porter's Memorial. It has won awards; Best of Show in 2001 at the Noble County's Open Art

Show, which is exhibited during the fair. Also winning Honorable Mention at Whitley County Art Guild's 32nd Annual Old Miller's Days Art Show and Sale. Any one is encouraged to take the opportunity to enjoy what Gene Stratton-Porter's Memorial has to offer in it's aesthetic beauty!

## Gene Stratton-Porter Chautauqua Days

Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site  
Rome City, Indiana

**Saturday, August 18, 2001 ~ 9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

- Artists from the Plain Air Painters Association and the LaGrange County Art Club
- Strolling Musicians, Nancy Blough & Friends
- 1:30 pm - Young Bengal Tigers from the Black Pine Animal Park
- Scenic Pontoon Rides
- Refreshments by Kuntree Folk



**Sunday, August 19, 2001 ~ 12:00 noon - 5:00 pm**

- Artists & Musicians
- Scenic Pontoon Rides
- Refreshments by Kuntree Folk
- 2:00 - 4:00 pm Free Outdoor Concert at the Sowers Farm by "Mountain Dewe Boys" (Please bring your own chairs and blankets)



For more information: 219-854-3790

Indiana State Museum & Historic Sites  
Department of Natural Resources

## From the President . . .

We are planning a fall activity. Please keep October 13th open for a fun time. We will get more details to you later. We are thinking hayride, food, and bonfire following a tour with "celebrities" and a little of G.S.P. to take home.

We want to encourage volunteers. Share your skills and talents with us, please. The board is very optimistic about you.

Thanks and praise go out to Karla and Neal Hart who have gifted us with a beautiful organ (also a guitar). Also, Dusty at Fancy's Flowers, Rome City, thank you for the flowers and plants.

Thank you,  
Fran Umbaugh  
President

## TREASURER'S REPORT

AS OF JULY 13, 2001

Operating Checking Account	\$ 2,028.67
Operating Savings Account	1,946.49
Program Savings Account	1,230.06
Land Acquisition	685.00
Operating CD #1	3,000.00
Operating CD #2	1,000.00
<b>Society Monies</b>	<b>\$9,890.22</b>
Gift Shop Checking	\$8,694.96
Gift Shop Money Market	Closed
Gift Shop CD #1	5,000.00
Gift Shop CD #2	2,500.00
Gift Shop CD #2	10,000.00
<b>Gift Shop Monies</b>	<b>\$26,194.96</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>\$36,085.18</b>

## Second of a series of pages from the book *History of Orange Township* by M.F. Owen

### GENE STRATTON PORTER

Up until 1919, she spent much of her time at her summer home at Rome City, Indiana. Here she maintained a delightful retreat away from the light of publicity and the eyes of the curious and prying. She named her summer place on Sylvan Lake, "Limberlost" after the region in and about Geneva, Ind., which was the locale for her more popular novels. Only a fortunate few were admitted to her circle of acquaintances, but Mrs. Porter herself was very democratic and easy to talk to once one was numbered as a friend.

In conversation her diction was exceedingly simple, although always correct. Her literary artistry, however, was not forcibly brought to the front for the purpose of effect. She was very modest in appearance. The most impressive thing about her personal appearance was her eyes of uncommon alertness and beauty, which missed nothing and were keenly observant of people she met. This was the only hint of her highly romantic nature, in a glance, it seemed, she had catalogued all that was worth while knowing about a person or thing.

Her early successes were written at Geneva and it was while living there that she became interested in birds and flowers and led to the publication of her first books. After moving to Rome City she did much of her writing in her beautiful cabin.

In 1919, she moved to California where she continued to write and reproduce some of her works in motion pictures.

She was killed in an automobile accident in Los Angeles on December 7, 1924, at the age of 56.

Before her death, Mrs. Porter, offered her Limberlost Cabin and lands to the state of Indiana as a State Park. The State, however, did not avail itself of this offer until after her death.

The following is from a letter written by Gene Stratton Porter to a friend here in Rome City:

"I went to Sylvan Lake, Rome City, Ind., from my original "Limberlost" at Geneva, Indiana, some ten years ago, where I bought 120 acres of land on the border of the lake, and built my Limberlost Cabin and started a wild-flower garden that ran to the

proportion of 20,000 specimens, most of which I located and connected in the wild.

Last fall I offered the place on the lake shore to the state of Indiana for a bird and wild flower preserve, offering to donate my work and a small fortune in timber that the place contains, if they would re-reimburse me for the expense of the buildings, and the cost of bringing in and setting the wild things that I had gathered there.

I have not yet an answer to my proposition, some of the prominent state officers are working on it; I hope it will go through. In the meantime, half up the side of the Sierra Madre Mountains on the south, six miles from the sea, and about twenty minutes ride out from where I now live in the city of Los Angeles, I have bought five or six acres of a baby mountain with a little canyon on either side and on top of this, with a fine view of the ocean and its surrounding suburbs, I am planning to build me another work-shop. I hope my shop will not drive away the birds which are thick in the shrubbery over the mountains and in the canyons. The little piece is untouched and I hope to fix me a work-shop here, in which to end my days close to the sea and more sunshine than I have ever found any place else in my experience with this lovely world.

I am using the plans of my cabin at Rome City, switched around a little differently, and a building projection room for lantern slides from my picture interests.

Concerning the work I have done, I think the books now run to the neighborhood of 17, for the last three years I have written regularly for McCall's. I have been interested in helping a youngster pull that publication from a loss of \$35,000, to the owners, the year he took the editorship, to an earning capacity over all expense, and paid a million profit to its owners, to a circulation exceeding that of the Home Journal, to forcing the Journal to lower its price to McCall's prices and to the clearing of a million profits the last year. It has been an interesting job. And I have had lots of fun with my share of it.

*To be continued in next newsletter*

## Gene Stratton Porter Memorial Society, Inc. Annual Meeting Rome City United Methodist Church - May 8, 2001

President Fran Umbaugh called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming.

Maggie Ewing introduced Jessica Warford, a junior at East Noble High School who sang songs and entertained us before dinner. Maggie played the piano while Jessica sang "People".

Fran introduced our guest speakers Representative Dale Sturtz and Senator Bob Meeks and their wives.

Jeanette Shull gave the invocation before being served a wonderful meal by the United Methodist Women.

Minutes from the last annual dinner meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer's report was read and approved - see attached report.

Tony Mulholland presented the slate of officers for the 2001-2002 year. They are:

Fran Umbaugh for President  
Jan Kessen for 1st Vice President  
Margaret Ewing for 2nd Vice President  
Kandi Schafer for Secretary  
Judy Richter for Treasurer and  
Guy Swartzlander for Member-at-Large.

Nominations were opened to the floor. None were made. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the slate of officers.

Senator Bob Meeks said that he thought Marge Sweeney was

the best site manager in Indiana. That we are lucky to have her and her staff and that he thinks GSP is a showcase of Noble County. Meeks did mention that our letters to him and Representative Sturtz made a big difference on Senate Bill #510 and House Bill #2146. They received letters from all over the state. Meeks said that if we are unhappy about our government for us to write letters, make phone calls or come to Indianapolis.

Representative Dale Sturtz also spoke highly of our letters that were sent and because of them the two bills were locked out and are dead.

Both Meeks and Sturtz answered questions from the floor.

Margie thanked Meek and Sturtz for their hard work and for the state being so good to the GSP Memorial Site. Margie then introduced her staff and talked about upcoming events at GSP.

Martha Swartzlander talked about what was new in the gift shop, about the Mother's Day Concert on May 13th with members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and the Wildflower Walks that same day.

Martha told us that Margie was voted Professional Employee of the Year for Division of State Museums and Historic Sites.

With no other business Fran adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kandi L. Schafer  
(219) 854-9585

### **QUESTION: What does one suddenly retired science teacher do the first year away from the classroom?**

### **ANSWER: Help out Pat and Ed with field trips.**

For all those years I was the teacher trying to set up educational yet fun-filled trips for my city students. I always went for the hands on, get messy nature adventure kind of trip. Now I was on the other end and couldn't wait, especially since I was working with Ed and Pat. How could any job get more interesting? "Nothing to it," they said "mostly we have fourth graders." My first shock came in realizing the spring woods change every week. What I would show one class would be gone before the next class arrived. No problem, I just would do a walk through the gardens and woods before each trip. Well, the fourth graders came and we had a ball. They were so eager, so excited and had loads of questions like - "Did GSP have a cat? Why couldn't her husband be buried with her? and why do dead people need breathing holes in the surrounding cement?" Then one day the seventh graders arrived. Not highly motivated or interested, they reluctantly followed me down the path to GSP's front porch. It was a beautiful spring day and I thought sitting on the porch would be a good place for me to talk to them as the parking lot had been too noisy. Well, there they sat, some on the benches and some on the rails & steps, but were they really alive? "In order for me to best help you today" I said, "I need to know why you are here. Is it because GSP was an author and poet and you studied her in English or Literature Class?" No response, I wondered if they knew what an English or Literature class was. "Is it because this lady was a great photographer and naturalist way beyond her times and you studied her in Science class?" No response, a few yawned. "Or is it because this is a great way to get out of school and goof off today?" Everyone responded, "yea, you got it, that's it." "OK", I said, "then get up and let's get started, we're just going to have some fun." As we entered

the house, I told them to "check out the picture of Gene sitting on the porch rail where they had just been," working with this, and I held up my spreading board which I always carry with me. "What is it," they asked? "No, I'll tell you later in the carriage house, right now look at the artifacts all around you. You are 7th graders, so I don't have to tell you what an artifact is - just check it out." In the dining room I challenged them to tell me what the light fixture originally was - some came close. Back outside and moving through the gardens, I heard, "I just got bit by a mosquito." "Who said that," I replied and immediately a hand went up. "No you didn't," I replied. "Yea, a mosquito just bit me." "You can only be bit by something that has teeth," I answered. "Mosquitoes don't have teeth. Perhaps you were stuck or pricked or pierced by the insets needle like mouth part, but not bit." When we came to the sundial, I asked who could tell me what time it was as the sun was shining. Then I heard, "Could you tell us first what part of the sundial moves?" The fourth graders could tell me the time, read the Roman numerals and explain the surrounding zodiac signs. Well, we finally ended up in the carriage house by the insect collection where my tour always ends and I told them about the spreading board. I also showed them the cockroach and said if the earth blew up, when the dust settled, the cockroaches would be there because they really are quite indstructible. Our tour was over, but walking back to the bus, I wouldn't let them pass me until they had indeed really hugged a tree. But now remember, this tour was not to learn anything just to have fun. Then there was the day Pat was gone and the school sent more students than they had said and Ed and I each had an entire bus of students instead of our usual smaller groups. He took the eighth graders and gave me the seventh. I still visit the gardens often since I only live two homes away, but it seems to quiet. I can't wait until school starts and the fall tours begin and once again they will need me to help. I have so much fun and that will be right about cicada skin season.

Cheri Kessen



# Gene Stratton-Porter Board

Members of the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site Board of Directors pose on the steps of the cabin at the historic site on Sylvan Lake near Rome City. Shown left to right, front row, are: Guy Swartzlander, board member, John Kessen, vice president, Margaret Tarney, second vice president, and Judy Richter, treasurer; back row, Fran Umbaugh, president, Margie Sweeney, property manager, and Martha Swartzlander, assistant property manager. Board member Candi Schaefer was absent.



Photo and article courtesy of Dennis Nartker, The News-Sun

The historic site is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m. Pontoon boat rides on Sylvan Lake from the site's dock are offered at noon and 2 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays and 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Call 854-3790 to arrange tours and boat rides. Gene Stratton-Porter Chautauqua Day Festival will be August 10-19 with events at the historic site and Rome City.



## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society, Inc.



P.O. Box 639  
Rome City, IN 46784  
1-219-854-3790

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single          | \$10.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family          | 15.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining      | 20.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Org. | 25.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business        | 25.00   |

Life (40 yrs. of age or older)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Single         | 100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband & Wife | 150.00 |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Business or Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# PETITION for GENE STRATTON-PORTER POSTAGE STAMP

## SPONSORED BY:

Limberlost  
State Historic Site  
P.O. Box 356  
Geneva, IN 46740

Friends of the  
Limberlost, Inc.  
P.O. Box 571  
Geneva, IN 46740

Gene Stratton-Porter  
State Historic Site  
P.O. Box 639  
Rome City, IN 46784

Gene Stratton-Porter  
Memorial Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 639  
Rome City, IN 46784

We, the undersigned, support the national effort to issue a POSTAL STAMP COMMEMORATING the legacy of GENE STRATTON-PORTER, one of America's first successful female naturalists, a noted photographer, famous author and movie producer.

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If issued in 2003 this stamp would commemorate Gene Stratton-Porter's 100th anniversary of her first book, *Song of the Cardinal*, published April, 1903.

# Gene Stratton~Porter STATE HISTORIC SITE

Limberlost North, Rome City, Indiana  
EVENTS 2001

## Tea Party at Carriage House

A traditional tea with refreshments and entertainment.  
Reservations required.  
August 13, time to be announced

## Gene Stratton~Porter Chatauqua Days

Artists from the Plaine Air Painters will be painting throughout the grounds. Music by strolling musicians. Pontoon rides. Refreshments available.  
August 18, 9 am - 5 pm  
August 19, 12 noon - 5pm

## Fall Foliage Walk

Observe the fall foliage with Naturalist Pat Bolman.  
Walks starts at the Carriage House Visitor Center.  
October 6, 1 pm

## Holiday Open House

Music and entertainment.  
Holiday refreshments served.  
Saturday, November 10, 9 am - 9 pm  
Candlelight Walk 6 pm - 9 pm  
Sunday, November 11, 12 noon - 5 pm

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY**  
**P.O. BOX 639 • ROME CITY, IN 46784**  
**(219) 854-3790**