

GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY, INC.



SPRING 2009

P.O. BOX 24—ALBION, IN 46701-0024

From the President

..... John Kessen

We had a chance to think about Spring, when members of the board manned the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site both at the Kendallville Home and Garden Show on March 14 and 15. It was a chance for us to tell everyone what is new at the site and let everyone know what a great asset we have in our new Property Manager, Dave Fox. It is amazing the number of people who tell us about their experiences at the site. Many distinctly remember visiting as a student. We always remind them that they need to come back and bring their family. All of those interested received a buy one get one free certificate that can be used with our first event of the season, Go Green with Gene. This is, also, a new event.

Our annual meeting is just around the corner. It will be held May 12 in the Carriage House at the site. We will start with a meet and greet at 5:30 PM. The meal will follow at 6:00 PM. Our speaker for the event will be Lynda Heavrin, Manager of Landscape and Horticulture for the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department. Her topic will be Using Vegetables and Herbs in Perennial Gardens. You will find the registration form for the annual meeting in this newsletter.

As you are aware, Gene's flowers are extremely important to the site. Each year the society does fund some of the plantings. We are very fortunate to have Martha Ferguson as the person responsible for the gardens along with many volunteers. At the meeting Martha will give us an update on where we are at with bringing the gardens back to the way they were when Gene was living here.

I need to remind you that the site can use some additional volunteers. The number of intermittent (part time) employees of the State have been cut as have their hours. Our site is not being singled out.

All of the historic sites have had to make due with less. Why not allow yourself some time to enjoy the site as a volunteer. Gene would approve if she were here.

Now, I have some news that I wish I did not have to report. After our election of board members at the Annual Meeting, our board will definitely have a new feeling. It is with sadness and a myriad of thank yous that we will be saying goodbye to Judy Richter as the Treasurer of the Society. Judy has served as the treasurer of the Society for years. She has done a tremendous job of serving the Society. Whenever she was needed, Judy made sure the task was handled properly. We wish her well and anticipate her continued involvement in the Society as a member.

It would be a real pleasure to meet you at some of the events at the site.

Garden Work Day

Saturday, April 18th
9-12 am



Come help us get the garden ready for the season. Our needs are great and our staff is few (one). Every year the garden gets better, but there is a lot to do to make it truly a showcase, which was Gene's vision of the garden.

Early spring is the best time to remove the invasive Star of Bethlehem bulbs. Perennials need to be divided and planted. Compost needs to be spread. Seeds need to be planted. Beds need to be cleared of fall debris. Paths need to be raked. Stones need to be reset.

Even if you are not able to do the manual labor, we still need you. There are seeds that need to be packaged and plant starts to pot for sale.

Bring your hand tools and gloves and we will provide the rest. Be a part of restoring the garden to Gene's vision.

Restoration and Beautification Projects at GSP. . . . *Dave W. Fox*

Spring is a time for renewal and the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site is no different. We have several projects slated for 2009 that will renew, refresh and, in some cases repair, the overall look of the Site.

The most extensive project of the year will be the complete renovation of the Porter Spring and Surround. After years of weathering and wave action, the spring and surround are starting to show their age. Just like Gene did nearly 100 years ago, we'll scour Noble County for puddin' stone to bring Gene's beloved spring back to her original design.

The Porter Spring and Surround renovation is just one of several projects that will involve not only GSP Site Staff but Historic Restoration staff as well. The Historic Restoration team will also be involved in the monumental task of replacing the arbor timbers, replacing the guttering for both the cabin and the garden shed; installing rain barrels for the garden shed and other projects. The rain barrels will help with water collection for the garden and make GSP a greener place.

The GSP Site staff will also be busy with projects this spring included lining the paths with field stone, replacing the decayed timbers along the many paths. We've started to search the neighboring fields to find an attractive assortment of large field stone for this project. This is no small task with just a little over one

mile of path edge! Lining the paths will not only be more pleasing to the eye, but also help with erosion control, and lend a more consistent look to the entire site. If anyone has access to a 4 wheel drive truck that can haul stones or if they have field stones they would like to donate to the site, please let us know!

If you've visited the site recently, you might have noticed that the area near the burn pit is a little more organized. This important work area is very close to the main path, so we're spending time cleaning and organizing the materials there. Shortly, the angle of the drive to the burn area will be changed and additional trees will be planted so that visitors will no longer be able to see the work area from the main trail and the site will be beautified in the process.

We've been working very hard to make the site as beautiful and safe as possible this spring. Future projects include additional landscaping, a new roof for the work shed and a new gate at the entrance. Hopefully you'll see some of the revitalization at the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site at the *Go Green with Gene* event on April 24 & 25. Other improvements will take place in the seasons to come. If any of these projects interest you and you would like to help, just let us know. We'd be very happy for the assistance!

GENE STRATTON-PORTER ~ HER LEGACY

3RD IN A SERIES OF 3 ARTICLES

BY CAROLYN LINSENMAYER

"I might be able to bring to others beauty that I had learned for myself; I might teach to others what I had been taught of persistence, patience, and sane, economical marching straight ahead, with my head high, as my father's always had been, toward any goal I sought. I would reach my goal through the satisfaction of a something in my soul that would make things possible to me through my own effort." Part of an essay written by high school student Geneva Stratton—taken from Judith Reich Longs' Biography "Gene Stratton-Porter—Novelist and Naturalist."

Gene accomplished many things—read about them in biographies, in her daughters' memoir "Life and Letters of Gene Stratton-Porter" or Google thousands of related web sites. Gene brought beauty to millions of people.

One Monday while dropping off items at the garden shed in Wildflower Woods I met a couple from Michigan on their way to Kansas City. His favorite book is "Keeper of

the Bees". They were disappointed to find the Cabin closed, "Don't worry", I said "there is plenty to see here." Unexpectedly the site was busy with staff, trail workers, and other visitors. The squirrels were not enjoying the intrusions but the birds, frogs, insects, and other natural inhabitants were not annoyed. Flowers bloomed, trees sheltered as they also do at Limberlost Cabin in Geneva.

Weeks later a family in Ohio directed memorial contributions to the Sylvan Lake Historical Site. Their mother had passed away and this had been her wish. The lady had enjoyed Gene's work and appreciated it with this wonderful gesture.

Gene Stratton-Porter's Legacy?

The ability to touch lives 145 years after her birth, 84 years after her death.

THANK YOU GENE-STRATTON PORTER

Celebrating 100 Years of *A Girl of the Limberlost*



Perhaps the most famous and widely read of Gene Stratton-Porter's novels is *A Girl of the Limberlost* written in 1909. This story of Elnora Comstock, finding her place in life, is as relevant today as it was when Gene wrote it 100 years ago. Elnora and her widowed mother are helped by neighbors and friends, similar to how many people are banding together today during tough economic times.

The story is set in Gene's beloved Limberlost Swamp, where Elnora gathers moths and other artifacts to sell to the "Bird Lady" who lives in town. Elnora uses the money she earns and the lessons she learns from the Bird Lady to pursue her education and win over friends who eventually see past her unfashionable clothing and come to accept her for the person she is.

Along the way, readers come to know the Limberlost Swamp and its creatures as Gene did through her many explorations. She shares her love of nature through Elnora's search for various moths and butterflies. Elnora and her mother struggle with the decision to keep their land in tact or sell the timber, just as many of Gene Stratton-Porter's neighbors would have done at the time of this novel's writing.

Both the Gene Stratton-Porter and Limberlost State Historic Sites will celebrate the 100th anniversary of *A Girl of the Limberlost* with "Go Green with Gene". GSP will host the event on April 24-25 and Limberlost the following week. The events, designed to continue Gene Stratton-Porter's environmentalist legacy, will share ways to make your home and school more environmentally friendly.

For more information, visit www.indianamuseum.org and click on State Historic Sites.

GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 12, 2009 AT 5:30 PM
CARRIAGE HOUSE AT THE GSP SITE

Program: Using Vegetables and Herbs in Perennial Gardens
Presented by Lynda Heavrin, Manager of Landscape and Horticulture for the
Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department.

GUESTS ARE WELCOME RESERVATION DEADLINE IS MAY 7th , 2009

Please make _____ Dinner reservations @ \$11.00 per person for roast beef.

Please make _____ Dinner reservations @ \$11.00 per person for creamed chicken.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Mail Check and this form to: Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society, P.O. Box 24, Albion, IN 46701



Gene Stratton-Porter
requests the pleasure of your company
for Afternoon Spring Tea
for Mothers & Daughters
Sunday, June 7, 2009
between two and four o'clock.
Please call for reservations at 260-854-3790



Somehow, taking tea together encourages an atmosphere of intimacy when you slip off the timepiece in your mind and cast your fate to a delight of tasty tea, tiny food, and step back in time with Nancy Blough & Lois Loucks and take on the persona of Laura Haviland, Maim Van Patten and Sadie Brown. They are the "Gospel & Folk" Weather Girls. They will be entertaining us with music from the Victorian Era plus music of older days as well as sharing their many many stories.

Nancy Blough, Shipshewana, IN - is an accomplished musician and teacher. Plays many instruments including the Mt. Dulcimer, Folk Harp, Penny Whistle, Upright Bass Fiddle. Nancy is founder of the Northeast Indiana Folk Music and Instrument Gathering, Inc., that is held monthly in Shipshewana, Indiana. She also serves on NEIFMIG's Board of Directors. Nancy is the founder of the Shipshewana Dulcimer Society.

Lois Loucks, Goshen, Indiana - plays Mt. Dulcimer, Autoharp, Mt. Banjo and Mandolin. Plays with other groups of musicians.....includes but is not limited to the Northeast Folk Music and Instrument Gathering, Shipshewana, IN, Wakarusa Bluegrass jamboree, Hillside Missionary Church Bluegrass Jam, Promissory Notes, Elkhart, IN, Shipshewana Dulcimer Society.

The music of the "Gospel & Folk" Weather Girls is original, captivating and uplifting. They have been performing as a duo at Churches, Festivals and Special Events for approximately five years.

The cost of the tea is \$20.00 per person. This includes a tour of the "Cabin", Garden, and you can roam the woods and enjoy the glory of the spring flowers. Tickets are on sale now. Reservations close May 31st. Our Fall Tea is always sold out on the first day. Don't delay. Visit the Gift Shop, you will find everything from toys too jewelry and of course, Gene's Books and Movies.

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

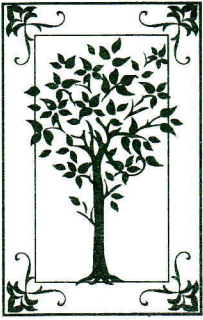
Finding the right speaker for your event or program is no easy task, but we can help. As part of a community outreach effort, the Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic site now has speakers available to talk about a variety of topics related to Gene and her work.

We will tailor our talks to meet your objective and target the talk to your audience. Call us if you need someone to lead an informal discussion or if you need a formal presentation complete with slides. We can give inspirational talks based on Gene's life or we can give how-to talks on topics such as using native plants for landscaping.

Whether your audience consists of adults or children, whether their interest is literary, native plants, moths and butterflies or gardening, we are ready to respond to your request.

Consider having your program or event at the site to make it even more special. The Carriage House is available to rent and group tours of the Cabin, woods or garden can be arranged.

For many talks, there is no fee but donations to support the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic site are encouraged.



TREES and TRAILS By Ed Cable

INVASION OF WILDFLOWER WOODS

Spring has finally sprung and "invaded" Wildflower Woods. Frogs, toads, and birds are providing their annual versions of *Music of the Wild* for all to enjoy. Wildflower Woods has also been invaded over time by some unwelcome aliens! There is no *War of Wildflower Woods* as H.G. Wells early science fiction novel describing an alien invasion of the earth, but there is a need to battle some invasive plants that threaten the native plants that Gene Stratton-Porter wanted to preserve in her Wildflower Woods.

Some of the invasive plants that have a strong foothold here include: Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*) which has invaded the formal garden. Vinca or Myrtle or Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) and English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) have invaded area in Wildflower Woods along with Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) and Bush Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*). These plants are able to dominate the area and will not allow the plants that belong here naturally to continue to exist. The site has

areas of light infestation as well as areas that are heavily affected.

A plan is in place to eradicate the unwanted aliens from the site. This season we will begin work to address areas in need of attention. As you visit this season you might notice areas that are more open than in years past. You may see a crew cutting buckthorn trees or pulling ivy. Help is always needed and very much appreciated! If you would care to battle the aliens give us a call. Special workdays will be scheduled and announced later this season. Eradication of alien species is a battle that can be enjoyed, spending time in Wildflower Woods with friends and continuing Gene Stratton-Porter's plan of preservation.

Music of the Wild - 1910 Nature book by Gene Stratton-Porter. Divided into three areas, the forest, the fields and the marsh, Gene Stratton-Porter describes in words and photographs the sounds of nature. Available in the Gift Shop.

Under the Arbor

By Martha Bishop Ferguson

Advanced Master Gardener and Indiana Master Naturalist
Gardener at Gene Stratton-Porter SHS

New life . . . The warmer days of early spring are teasing me as I wander about Gene's Tame Garden, as she called the formal garden in her Wildflower Woods. I'm looking for signs of life, hiding under the mulch and dead leaves, looking for those green shoots and fat buds that are the promise of another year of beauty in the garden.

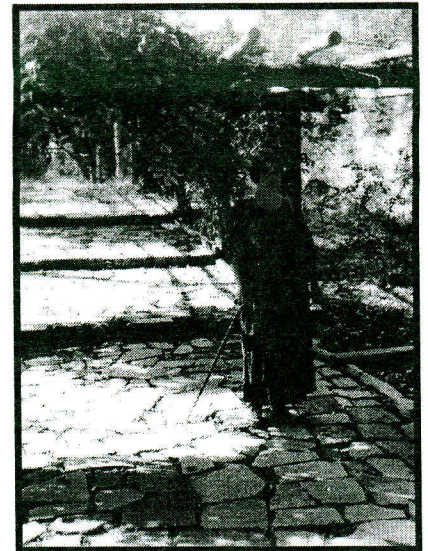
A new season . . . Preparations for another season have begun in earnest. The Garden Shed has been cleaned, ready for the coming and going of the gardeners. Tools have been cleaned and sharpened. Seeds have been started under a grow light. The seeds sown last fall in mini-greenhouses made of plastic jugs are swelling with life. Shrubs have been pruned and pruning the arbor's vines is underway. The tall grasses, left in the fall for winter interest, need to be shorn to make way for new growth. The compost pile needs to be turned. And ideas for tweaking the 35 garden beds with new plants and design are tumbling through our heads.

New feature . . . In 1917, Gene planted 171 shrubs and in 1921 added 208 more shrubs to her property, many of which were planted as an ornamental shrub hedge around the garden. Today there are remnants of these plantings. Come see the cornelian cherry bloom in late March, the fringe tree in May and the Japanese lilac in June.

Thanks to the generosity of the Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society and the labor of Dennis Noak, we have started to restore the ornamental hedge. The shrubs help define the formal garden, providing a transition between the wild woods and tame garden. As the shrubs mature, there will be blooms from early spring to late summer with an explosion of fall leaf colors. Many of the ornamental shrubs are fragrant, so you will be welcomed into the garden with an intoxicating scent. Finally, many of these shrubs attract butterflies and moths.

Last summer and through the winter, the edges of the garden were prepared for the hedge. Our first planting is on the north edge (Cabin side) of the garden. Sweetspire, summersweet, viburnum, holly, and oakleaf hydrangea and oakleaf hydrangea have been added to the existing witch hazel, hydrangea, Rose of Sharon, red bud and mock orange.

Come enjoy the garden this spring. Come back often as the garden changes often. Most perennials and bulbs bloom from 10 to 14 days, so there is always something new in the garden.



Gene Stratton-Porter STATE HISTORIC SITE

Located at Limberlost North, Rome City, Indiana

EVENTS 2009

Go Green with Gene

Friday, April 24; 9 a.m.—3 p.m.

Wildflower Walk & Brunch

Saturday, May 2; 10:30 a.m.

GoFishIN

Saturday, May 23; 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

Indiana Gene Explorer Club

June 22—24; 9 a.m.—1 p.m.

Mother-Daughter Spring Tea

Sunday, June 7; noon

Chautauqua Days

August 15-16; noon—4 p.m. each day

GSP Natural World of Writing

Friday, September 18; 8:45—11:15 & 10:30 a.m.—1 p.m.

GSP Natural World of Writing

Saturday, September 19; 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

Owl-oween

October 16-17; 6:30—8:30 p.m.

Autumn Tea at GSP State Historic Site

Monday, October 19; noon

A Dream of Beauty Holiday Walk

Saturday, November 21; 11 a.m.—9 p.m.

Information: 260-854-3790

Sponsored by: Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site
Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society, Inc.

BE SURE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE [Http://www.genestratton-porter.com](http://www.genestratton-porter.com)

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