

# GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY, INC.



SPRING 2007

P.O. BOX 639 • ROME CITY, IN 46784

## From the President

..... John Kessen

This is our first newsletter of the new year. With this newsletter we see the end of an era and the start of a new era. Since the early 1970's we have had Margie Sweeney or Martha Swartzlander at the helm of the site. This month Martha will be starting her retirement. With Martha leaving, you might say it is the end of the old guard. I was informed today that there is a posting of a position on the State website to replace Martha. When our new replacement is hired, it will take some time for the staff and the Society to become acquainted with the new person in charge. We most likely will see some change in direction. It is important that we all stay calm and help make the transition as easy as possible for everyone.

We have been informed by the State that we will now be closed on Tuesdays and will not open on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday until 10:00 am. In addition, the State has cut our intermittent staff. With the cut in hours and staff it will be very difficult to continue the high quality of operation that we are known to achieve.

We have been promoting the site by having a booth at the Kendallville Home and Garden Show. This year we had a new booth location and more traffic. It is really great to talk to the

visitors and find out how many of them know about Gene and her works.

It was very heartening to hear many of the people who visited our booth at the Kendallville Home and Garden Show tell us that they had visited the site during the past two seasons and really enjoyed the site and our activities. We are actively trying to spread the word that our historic site is a must see activity. Don't forget to tell your friends that we look forward to hosting groups at the site.

In the last newsletter I mentioned that we are expecting to offer a tour of sites important in the life of Gene Stratton-Porter if we have enough interest. We will visit our own site, the Limberlost State Historic Site at Geneva, Lagro (Gene's childhood stomping ground and family plot in the church cemetery), Decatur (site of Charles's final resting place), and the Limberlost Swamp. The cost will be \$45 per person. The trip is scheduled for Saturday, September 8th, if you would like to join us, please fill out the form that is part of this newsletter and return it to us as soon as possible.

I look forward to meeting you personally at one of the events.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE STAFF

We want to take the time to thank Martha Schwartzlander for sharing twenty-two years of her life with our State Historic Site. She started working at the site in May of 1984 as a tour guide on a part time basis. By the time October 1984 rolled around, she had become a full time employee. Martha assumed responsibility for the gift shop, became one of the Swamp Angels and Assistant Curator. The Swamp Angels really got around. In 1988 they even put on several presentations in Grandville, Texas. They went to every school before the students arrived at the site and they did a lot of mother-daughter programs. In about 1990 the Swamp Angels really started to limit their public appearances. At that time the site was really becoming busy preparing to undertake the Carriage House rebuilding. Martha was involved in all the big events of the last twenty-two years. One of the most significant was the return of the bodies of Gene and her daughter to Wildflower Woods. She greatly enjoyed her time at the site and it really did become part of her. Since 2001 she has been

the State person in charge. Her titles have changed over the years, but the job has been the same. She has always wanted to maintain

high standards and the site has had the reputation with the State. Martha is going to miss all the visitors and friends that the site has brought to her, but it is time for her to do more traveling and enjoy the activities of her large family. Everybody knows how important the grandchildren are to her. We say thank you and enjoy your well deserved retirement.



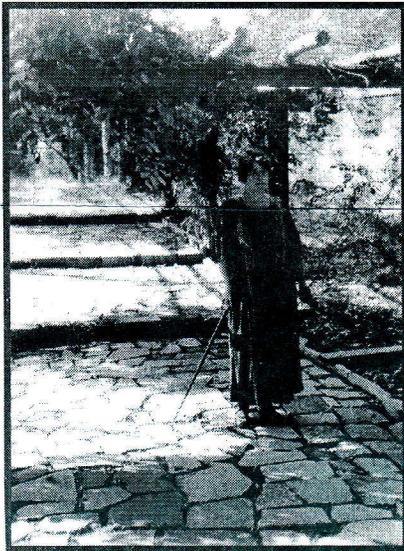
Martha and Jack

# TREES AND TRAILS

Gene Stratton-Porter's "Wildflower Woods" ...Remember the last time you spent a few moments in this diverse woodland? "Wildflower Woods" is just a few steps away from my desk and it's mountain of paperwork, never ending e-mails, phone calls and reports, yet it is a challenge to take time to visit the woods. Recently I made the time to step away to the woods to spend a short time in a less demanding environment. It had been a hard day in the office and I considered banging my head against a tree. I did not. Wok, Wok, Wok! But someone else was banging their head! I heard this slow, rhythmic beat in other woods but this is the first time in "Wildflower Woods". I knew what it must be! My excitement allowed me to forget the hassles of the day and carefully search the tall trees. There, in the tall oak was the large basal burl, a crow sized bird with a red crest. Wok, Wok, came from the hillside close to the lake, there must be two! I walked as slowly as my adrenalin would allow, well... I almost ran to get my binoculars from the office. Good, my movement did not spook these wary woodpeckers, larger than a crow and the inspiration for the cartoon Woody Woodpecker. I moved slowly down the drive toward Gene's Cabin scanning

the trees, just as I passed the Garden Shed there was movement and I had a clear view of the white under wings of this great noisemaker. I froze, it was cold and snowy, but I tried not to move as I saw this woodpecker fly to the same "tree with the big foot" that I hoped still held the first bird. Binoculars up, yes one has more red on his head than the other! A male and a female Pileated Woodpecker. I have not viewed the pair since, but I have heard their call once more. Wanda Bair told me that she saw them in Sowder's Woods and a visitor said he heard someone chopping with an ax, yet the sound came from the tree tops. Pileated Woodpeckers are not rare but uncommon. They prefer mature woods, and are often people shy. Their diggings in trees for insects can be larger than a golf ball and often oval or oblong in shape. If they dig a hole for nesting, the size increases to that of a tennis ball. This woodpecker can peck wood! How much wood would a woodpecker peck if a woodpecker could peck wood... oops wrong critter! Come to Wildflower Woods and find a quiet spot, hear, see and feel for a while. —Research assistance request—did Gene Stratton-Porter write of the Pileated Woodpecker here or elsewhere? —260-854-3790— gsporter@mchsi.com.

—Ed Cable



## Under the Arbor

By Martha Bishop Ferguson, Advanced Master Gardener and Indiana Master Naturalist

Isn't this a delightful picture of Gene *Under the Arbor*? It is part of the historic garden photos included in the garden presentation developed last fall. Make sure you attend the 2007 Wildflower and Garden Brunch and Walk to see the other pictures.

As you can tell from the photo, the arbor was always a rustic wooden structure. The flagstone path under the arbor is original as are the wisteria vines draping the arbor and the Tara vine, *Actinidia arguta*, on the north entrance of the arbor.

Other original structures associated with the garden are the stones surrounding each of the 35 beds and the garden shed. Watch for restoration of the garden shed this summer as the state has determined to shingle it with cedar shakes as it was originally.

The Cornelian Cherry, *Cornus mas*, another original plant, bloomed in March during the early spring we had this year. The Cornelian Cherry is actually a dogwood, not a cherry tree, and its very tart fruit was used to make jelly. With the April freeze, we will have to wait to see if it fruits this year.

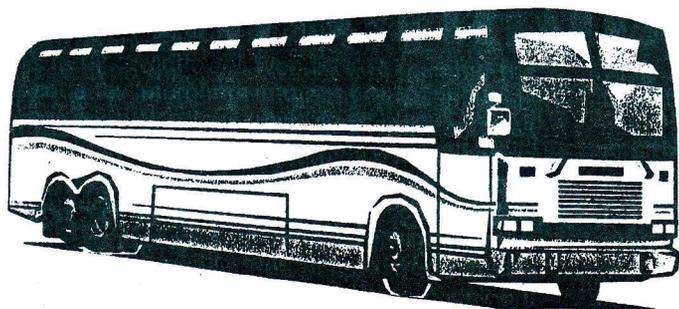
Another original plant is the white fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*, which should bloom in late April or early May, but who really knows this year with the strange weather we have had. It is on the eastern edge of the garden, next to the sitting arbor.

The final tree in the garden that we know is original is the Japanese lilac, on the southern edge of the East Garden, which will bloom mid-summer.

Because these are small trees, we know they were planted by Gene. We have many species of Gene's original herbaceous perennials in the garden, but we cannot tell the age of these plants, although peonies can live well over a hundred years. We continue the work of cataloging and cross-referencing the plants in the garden to Gene's original plant list. Come take a walk in Gene's Tame Garden this spring.

*Note: If your organization is interested in hearing about the restoration of the gardens at Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site, we have a 30 to 45 minute Powerpoint presentation about this topic. Presentations have been made to garden clubs, spring banquets and the Fort Wayne Home and Garden Show.*

*Please contact me at [garden-gsporter@mchsi.com](mailto:garden-gsporter@mchsi.com) or 260-854-3790.*



# BUS TRIP

## SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

### GENE STRATTON-PORTER BUS TRIP

SPONSORED BY THE GENE-STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

Have you ever wanted to know more about the history of Gene Stratton-Porter? Now is the time to find out. We will be hosting a bus trip to take you to the significant Indiana sites that relate to Gene's history. We will start our tour with a visit to Gene Stratton-Porter Wildflower Woods State site in Rome City, IN. While at the site we will have a continental breakfast available. From Rome City we will proceed to Lagro, where we will visit the cemetery and church linked to Gene's early family history. Gene's parents, Laddie and other family members are buried there. Our next stop will be lunch in Decatur. The cost of the lunch is included in your registration fee. After lunch we will visit the cemetery in Decatur where Charles Porter and his family are buried. The next stop will be at the Geneva Limberlost State Historic Site. In Geneva we will have a chance to view Mr. Porter's bank and pharmacy. The last visit of the day will be to the Limberlost Swamp. We

will return to Rome City. The cost for the trip including continental breakfast, lunch and admission fees will be \$45.

#### SCHEDULE

- 8:00 am Meet at the Gene-Stratton-Porter State Historic Site in Rome City
- 9:30 am Leave for Lagro
- 11:00 am Arrive at Lagro
- 11:30 am Leave for Decatur
- 12:30 pm Lunch
- 1:30 pm Decatur Cemetery
- 2:00 pm Leave for Geneva
- 2:30 pm Visit Limberlost State Historic Site
- 3:00 pm Visit Limberlost Swamp
- 4:15 pm Leave for return to Rome City
- 6:00 pm Arrive in Rome City

#### REGISTRATION FOR GENE STRATTON-PORTER BUS TRIP

Please make your check for \$45 out to The Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society and mail to the Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society. P.O. Box 639, Rome City, IN 46784. We need your reservations before August 15, 2007. (*Reservation fee is non-refundable*)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

(260) 854-3790

P.O. BOX 639 • ROME CITY, IN 46784

**GENE STRATTON-PORTER MEMORIAL SOCIETY**

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
PRSRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit No. 34  
Rome City, Indiana  
46784

Gene Stratton-Porter  
STATE HISTORIC SITE  
Lumberlost North, Rome City, Indiana

## EVENTS 2007

### *Wildflower & Garden Brunch and Walk*

May 5, 2007 at 10:30 am  
Enjoy brunch and then learn about Gene's Woodland Wild-  
flowers and Formal Garden. Reservations required.

### *Rome City Fireworks*

July 7, 2007

### *Gene Stratton-Porter Society*

#### *Next to New, House and Yard Sale*

August 3 & 4, 2007, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Community Wide Yard Sale

### *Tea at the Carriage House*

August 13, 2007

A traditional tea with refreshments and entertainment.  
12 Noon - 1:30 p.m. Tours of the Cabin and Garden  
2:00 pm Tea at the Carriage House/Reservations required.  
Tickets on sale June 6, 2007 (Normally sell out quickly!)

### *Holiday Open House*

November 10, 2007, 9:00 am - 9:00 pm  
Candlelight Walk 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
November 11, 12 Noon - 5:00 pm  
Site decked out for the holidays  
Entertainment, Holiday Goodies

**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>**