

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



Quasquicentennial

THE CITY
OF

VALPARAISO

1866-1991

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

-Valparaiso City Officers-

	1865	1966	1991
MAYOR	Thomas J. Merrifield	Donald E. Will	David Butterfield
CLERK	J.B. Marshal	Hallie B. Edge	Sharon Swihart
TREASURER	J.B. Hawkins	Hallie B. Edge	Sharon Swihart
CITY			
ATTORNEY	H.A. Gillette	Roger K. Claudon	David DeBoer
MARSHAL	A.H. Goodwin	-	-
CITY			
ENGINEER	J.M. Felton	William E. Morthland	Michael Foster
CITY JUDGE	-	John W. Ruge	-
ASSESSOR	I.W. Bowman	-	-
COUNCILMEN			
	T.A. Hogan	Charles Beach	Jan Dick
	George Porter	King Telle	Robert Klett
	J.C. Pierce	James E. Smith	Fred Krueger
	O. Dunham	Bryce E. Billings	Don Larr
	A.H. Somers	Arnold E. Smith	Patricia Miller
	A.W.Kellogg	Robert L. Miller	Don Ragsdale
		Everette Lembke	Kenneth H. Woodruff

-Population Changes-

1850 -	520	1930 -	8,097
1860 -	1,690	1940 -	8,736
1870 -	2,760	1950 -	12,028
1880 -	4,460	1960 -	15,337
1890 -	5,090	1970 -	20,020
1900 -	6,280	1980 -	22,247
1910 -	6,987	1990 -	24,414
1920 -	6,518	1991 -	25,000 (Est.)

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

Valparaiso-Merrifield to Butterfield 1866-1991

The celebration of Valparaiso's 125th Anniversary would not be complete without some documentation of its past. This treatise will deal primarily from the date Valparaiso was incorporated as a city. Pre-history and recorded history predate the founding of Portersville now Valparaiso but space does not permit us to explore it in this brief history.

Historians like to start Valparaiso's history when Chiqua's town a small group of Indian bark houses occupied this site. Chiqua an old outcast Potawatomi chief presided over a small village near the Old Sac (or Sauk) Trail.

The trail came across the hills near the present intersection of the new 49 by-pass and State Road 2. Scattered along the trail that crossed near what is now Valparaiso University's East Campus was this simulation of a town. An appropriate marker for the Sac Trail stands beside the old Carnegie Library building on the Michigan Street side.

It seems fitting that the Chapel of the Resurrection the largest chapel on any college campus should stand as beacon for modern travelers, by land or air, so near this old trail. The Sac Trail was traveled by Indians, explorers and according to records by Spanish soldiers under Don Pierre in 1781.

Unrecorded intrepid explorers might have settled briefly and earlier near Indiana's north coast. However, the first recorded white settler was Joseph Bailly in 1822. For nearly eleven years Bailly had the distinction of being the total non-Indian population in what is now Porter County.

The land that is now the site of Valparaiso and most of the present Porter County was purchased by the Federal government following the Treaty of Tippecanoe in October 1832.

In 1834 J. P. Ballard erected the first building in what is now Valparaiso. This first house was built in the valley of the stream which flowed across what is now south Morgan Street.

By an Act of the General Assembly in 1836 Porter County was officially formed. The name honoring Commodore Porter, hero of the U. S. Navy in the War of 1812.

The village of Portersville was laid out in July 1836. In that same year on October 31st the plat of Portersville Land Company, was officially recorded.

The Portersville Land Company gave the county our present public square and ninety-six lots plus a donation of \$1200 for erection of public buildings. In 1837 Portersville's name was changed to Valparaiso recognizing Commodore Porter's famous naval escapades near the city of Valparaiso, Chile, South America.

That same year a fund of \$1250 was raised by public subscription for a courthouse and jail. The frame courthouse was finished before the end of 1837 west of the public square.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

Valparaiso was incorporated as a town by a special act of the legislature in 1850 and was starting to show real signs of progress. A new brick courthouse was erected on the public square in 1853 at a cost of \$13,000. Five years later the first railroad came through Valparaiso, The Pittsburgh, Ft. Wayne and Chicago Railway (later The Pennsylvania and more recently Amtrak).

Brick business buildings were springing up all around the public square. The three story 44 foot front Empire Block (15-17 Lincolnway) stood proudly across from the new brick courthouse. It was flanked to the east by a two story 44 foot front also brick. Old frame structures all along Main Street were giving way to bricks and mortar.

By 1864 one of the city's most elegant buildings of that period graced the southwest corner of Washington and Main. Dedicated as Valparaiso Hall in 1864 it was later to be known affectionately as The Academy of Music Building.

Then on December 2, 1865 the official papers were signed incorporating the City of Valparaiso. In that same year Thomas J. Merrifield, an attorney and a Democrat became Valparaiso's first mayor.

The organization of the first Fire Department began in 1866. In 1867 the city secured control of the old cemetery and began to establish a new one known as Maplewood.

The first Commencement at the public high school was held in 1874. The Valparaiso High School building was on Franklin Street in the building formally occupied by the Presbyterian Collegiate Institute.

What might be called early industry was primarily artisans plying their crafts. Wagonmakers, coopers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, cabinetmakers and bricklayers. By 1866 there was a sizable foundry, a woolen mill and a paper factory. Short lived but perhaps our first claim to national fame was a pin factory. In 1873 Valparaiso had the only pin factory west of New York and one of four in the United States.

Of more noteworthy importance was the founding of the Northern Indiana Normal School in 1873 by youthful Henry Baker Brown. After a brief teaching career in Ohio he took over the building of Valparaiso Male and Female College, founded in 1859 by the Methodist. He continued to head the institution, that gained international recognition and is now Valparaiso University, until his death in 1917.

The Dodge School of Telegraphy was founded in 1874 in conjunction with N.I.N.S. later becoming a separate institution. For more that one half century it was a prime source for trained telegraph operators for railroad and telegraph companies. Dodge School later became Valparaiso Technical Institute training modern electronic students.

As census tables elsewhere in the publication show the growth of Valparaiso from 1910 to 1940 was just 1800. During that same period major fires destroyed or partially destroyed four proud landmarks.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

In February 1923 just six years after Henry Baker Brown's death the Old College Building was leveled by fire. February 1926 flames again lashed destruction, this time the crown jewel of our business/professional buildings the Academy of Music building. Eleven months later, January 1927, demon fire returned to destroy the Excelsior Block on the south/east corner of the square.

Earlier the Excelsior Building had housed the Merchants Hotel, site of many stellar affairs in those earlier years. Among the famous guests were President Benjamin Harrison, U. S. Senators and dignitaries.

On a frigid December 27, 1934 early evening sirens brought fear to our citizens. Flames whipped by sub-zero winds lashed at the 1883 Courthouse. After an all night battle valiant firefighters secured the ice laden limestone structure. Near destruction, totally gutted, but not crushed the courthouse would rise again from the ashes. In the true pioneer spirit, in the depth of the Great Depression, Porter County rallied to rebuild and rededicate the Courthouse in 1937.

Earlier, after the 1923 fire at the Old College Building, City Fathers labored hard to preserve Valparaiso University. In 1925 they acted as marriage brokers between the University and the Missouri Synod Lutheran's.

The great University regrouped, survived another World War, established a new campus and has risen to new height since our 1966 centennial year.

The growth of the city and Porter County has rendered the 1883-1937 Courthouse too small for county business. Soon a new county complex will be built and the old courthouse will be just that, a house for the courts.

The years that have passed since the centennial year 1965-66 have changed our county seat community into a truly urban area.

Industries in our city have become international with the British, French, Japanese and others having financial and personnel involvements in our community.

The new Porter County Municipal Airport was dedicated in 1966. The 6,000 foot east/west runway and 1,800 foot north/south runway provide one of Northwest Indiana finest business and general aviation facilities. To keep pace with growth additional expansion is being planned for 1991-92.

Valparaiso has gained additional national recognition through space shuttle Columbia astronaut, Air Force Colonel Mark Brown. City native Colonel Brown returned from his first mission in August 1989.

The original downtown continues to thrive as a center for shopping, government and professional services. New shopping centers have been constructed on our north, southeast and southwest perimeter offering additional selection to our merchandise mix.

Since 1979, each September, a week long Popcorn Festival brings thousands of visitors to Valparaiso. Dedicated to Orville Redenbacher, the Popcorn King, the festival in its 13th year enhances our national recognition.

In 1989 the 49 by-pass became a reality. This highway improvement for which

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

several lobbied for many years was dedicated as Van Ness Highway, honoring the late State Senator John Van Ness.

A new high school was built on North Campbell and dedicated in 1972. Presently this structure that replaced the former (1927) building as a high school is undergoing expansion plans. The former high school building is now Benjamin Franklin Middle School.

Heritage has been mixed tastefully with progress. Our downtown is now an historic district. The 1917 Post Office building has become our new City Hall with major renovation and historic landmark status. A new U.S. Post Office was built and dedicated on North Valparaiso Street to replace the 1917 structure. The former City Hall on Indiana Avenue is now the Valparaiso Police Department building.

To some citizens of Valparaiso the entire transition from horsedrawn carts to jets and space mission have passed before their eyes. To others they are opening their eyes this our 125th year. The developments since Centennial Year 1966 have been spectacular. Our ardent hope is that Sesquicentennial Year 2016 will find Valparaiso still the Vale of Paradise.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It was my pleasure to be invited to help develop a souvenir brochure for the Centennial Celebration 1966 and again for the 125th in 1991. I shall always be grateful for Mayors Donald E. Will and David A. Butterfield for this honor and privilege.

George E. Neeley

Photographs

All of the photographs are from the Neeley Collection with considerable accent on the period 1966-1991. This collection has been made possible by the generosity of numerous Valparaiso area residents.

Front cover: City Hall 1991 (former Post Office). Photo c. 1933.

Back Cover: Valparaiso University Chapel

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



125th Anniversary Mayors - Past & Present.

Left to right David Butterfield 1984-present, Bryce Billings 1968-1972, John E. Wiggins 1952-1960 and Elden Kuehl 1948-1952, 1972-1984.

Valparaiso Mayors 1865-1991

Thomas J. Merrifield	D	1865-1868	Edgerton W. Agar	R	1922-1926
Thomas G. Lytle	R	1868-1872	William F. Spooner	D	1926-1928
John N. Skinner	D	1872-1882	Louis F. Leetz	R	1928-1930
Thomas G. Lytle	R	1882-1886	Harold J. Schenck	R	1930-1935
Alvin D. Bartholomew	D	1886-1888	Charles L. Bartholomew	R	1935-1944
Thomas G. Lytle	R	1888-1892	Garrett Conover	R	1944-1948
Frank P. Jones	D	1892-1894	Elden Kuehl	D	1948-1952
Col. I.C.B. Suman	R	1894-1898	John E. Wiggins	R	1952-1960
Addison E. E. Woodhull	D	1898-1902	Donald E. Will	R	1960-1968
William F. Spooner	D	1902-1906	Byrce Billings	R	1968-1972
William H. Williams	R	1906-1910	Elden Kuehl	D	1972-1984
William F. Spooner	D	1910-1914	David Butterfield	D	1984-Present
Perry L. Sisson	*	1914-1922	*Citizen's Ticket		

125

ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION



At top: Porter County's second Courthouse, first to occupy Public Square - Built 1853.



At right: Courthouse built 1883-84. Burned Dec. 27, 1934. Restored and rededicated 1937.

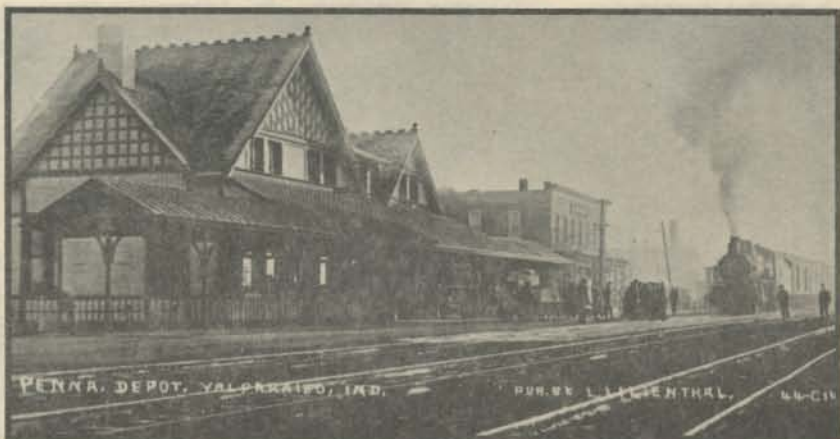


At left: Restored Courthouse in recent years.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



Iron Horse arrives at Pennsy Depot from east c. 1914. Photo by L.L. Lilienthal local merchant, father of David Lilienthal, who became first T.V.A. Director for F.D.R.

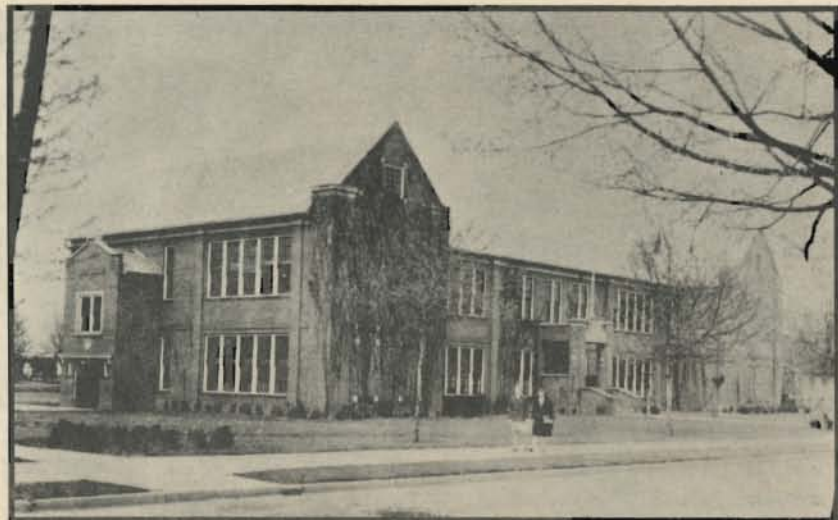


Early days on "New" U.S. 30, gas pumps and cabins at Strongbow Inn.

125

ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATION



Banta School completed 1924. Today some of her former students frequent this building as Banta Senior Center.



Gardner School on West Jefferson built in 1899 for \$12,000. Renovated and today's home for Boys & Girls Club.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



Columbia School southeast corner Indiana & Locust. Dedicated Jan, 13, 1893. Today's site for Columbia Apartments.



Central School at Franklin & Institute c. 1930. This was second building on this site occupied as Valparaiso High School until 1927. Building burned. 1938.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



1960's looking west from southwest corner Washington & Lincolnway.



Corner Franklin & Lincolnway c. 1961.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



West side of Courthouse on South Washington Street c. 1961.

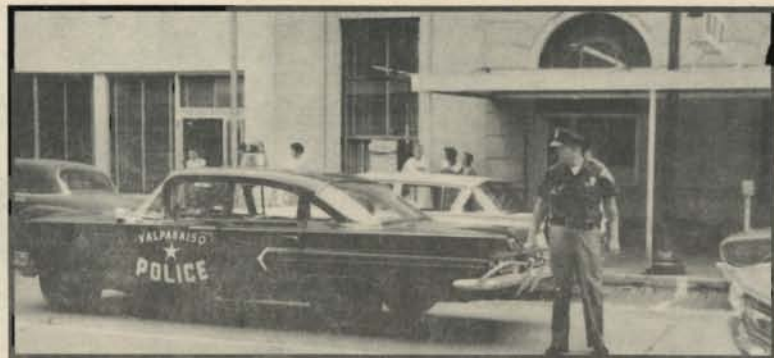


West end of Central business district looking east on Lincolnway.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



1961 Valparaiso City Policeman Harlan Gott, directs traffic on N. Franklin Street.



1961 City Firefighters answer call near Farmer's State Bank, Franklin & Lincolnway.



1961 view of First National Bank and City Hall looking south from public square.

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION

Anniversary Celebration Events

**October 1, 1991
Center**

Porter County Expo

10:00-7:00 Exhibitor Booths

Lunch Program

12:00 Guest Speaker - Vincent J. Serritella, Vice President for the
National Alliance of Business in Chicago

125th Anniversary Banquet

6:15-7:00 Social Gathering - Cash Bar

7:00-7:15 Welcome and Introduction of Dignitaries

7:15-8:30 Dinner
Musical entertainment by
Valparaiso High School Varsity Singers

8:30-8:50 Guest Speaker

8:50-9:10 Recognition of Living Mayors
John E. Wiggins, Elden Kuehl, Bryce Billings, David Butterfield

9:10-9:15 Special Dedication to The City of Valparaiso

The Honorable David Butterfield will serve as the
Master of Ceremonies for this evenings program.

Business Showcase '91

General Chairman - Richard B. Esposito

GVCC Board Chairman - Richard Blastick

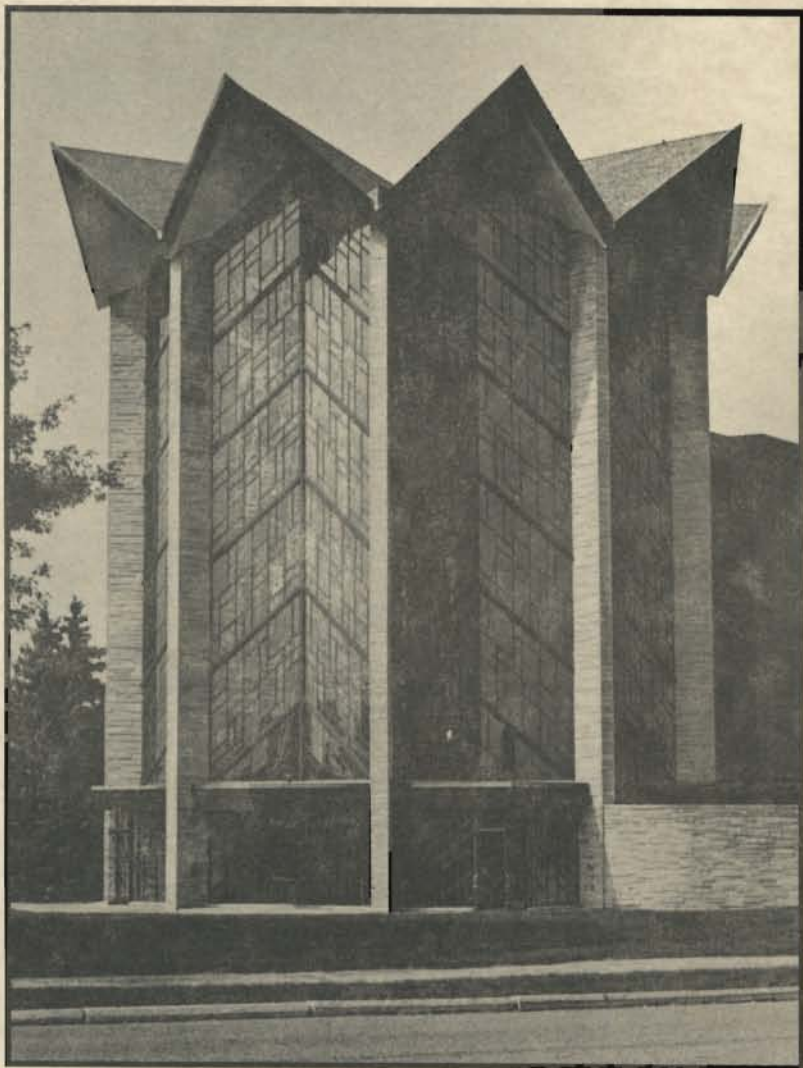
COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS - Marketing - Nancy Pekarek, Finance -
Robert Burrus, Logistics - Larry Raber, Luncheon - Martha Watkin,
125th Anniversary - Charles McGill, Banquet - Mayor David A.
Butterfield

STAFF - John Schnurlein, Debbie Butterfield, Debbie Choate, Karen
Reshkin, Matt Harrington

ANNIVERSARY

125

CELEBRATION



Printing by Star Printing, a subsidiary of The Vidette Messenger