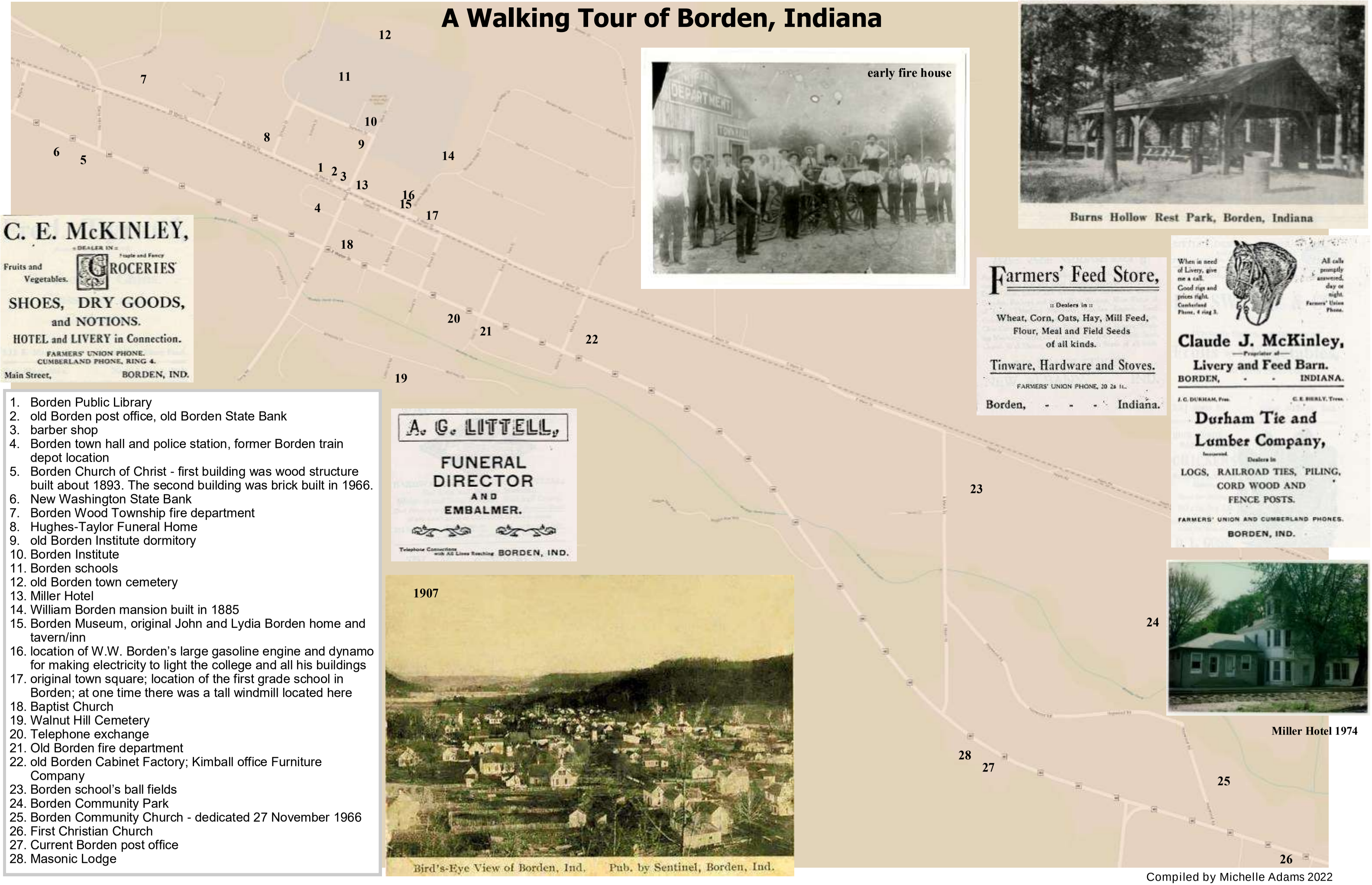
A Walking Tour of Borden, Indiana



1. Borden Public Library
2. old Borden post office, old Borden State Bank
3. barber shop
4. Borden town hall and police station, former Borden train depot location
5. Borden Church of Christ - first building was wood structure built about 1893. The second building was brick built in 1966.
6. New Washington State Bank
7. Borden Wood Township fire department
8. Hughes-Taylor Funeral Home
9. old Borden Institute dormitory
10. Borden Institute
11. Borden schools
12. old Borden town cemetery
13. Miller Hotel
14. William Borden mansion built in 1885
15. Borden Museum, original John and Lydia Borden home and tavern/inn
16. location of W.W. Borden's large gasoline engine and dynamo for making electricity to light the college and all his buildings
17. original town square; location of the first grade school in Borden; at one time there was a tall windmill located here
18. Baptist Church
19. Walnut Hill Cemetery
20. Telephone exchange
21. Old Borden fire department
22. old Borden Cabinet Factory; Kimball office Furniture Company
23. Borden school's ball fields
24. Borden Community Park
25. Borden Community Church - dedicated 27 November 1966
26. First Christian Church
27. Current Borden post office
28. Masonic Lodge

early fire house

Burns Hollow Rest Park, Borden, Indiana

1907
Bird's-Eye View of Borden, Ind. Pub. by Sentinel, Borden, Ind.

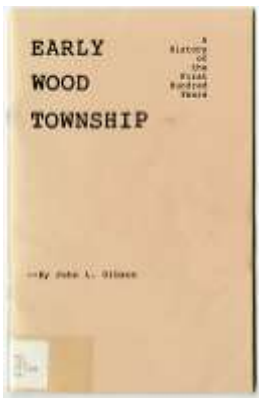
Miller Hotel 1974

Compiled by Michelle Adams 2022

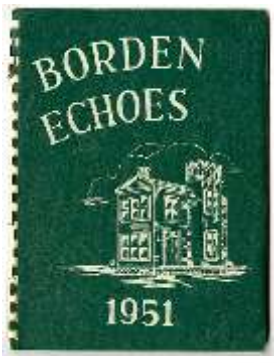
Indiana Memory Project

Charlestown-Clark County Public Library has 2 digital collections on Indiana Memory, a statewide digital collection of Indiana history.

The Jesse G. Dorsey World War II Correspondence collection contains over 1600 WWII letters, post cards and two scrapbooks.



The Clark County Collection contains thousands of digital images of Clark County history including 1937 Great Flood post cards, Civil War letters, Korean War letters, yearbooks, Rose Island brochure, store ledgers from the 1800s, World War II letters, Louisville Cement Company items, Indiana Army Ammunition Plant items, photographs, Speed Community Fair brochures, newsletters, hotel ledgers, judge docket ledgers from 1890-1920s, church items, family papers, and much more.



Visit our 2 collections on Indiana Memory at https://indianamemory.org

CHARLESTOWN CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Borden Library
117 W Main St, Borden, IN 47106
812-258-9041

Mon: 11 am - 6 pm
Tue: 11 am - 7 pm
Wed: Closed
Thu: 11 am - 7 pm
Fri: 9 am - 5 pm
Sat: 10 am - 2 pm

Charlestown Library
51 Clark Rd, Charlestown, IN 47111
812-256-3337
Mon-Thu: 9 am - 8 pm
Fri-Sat: 9 am - 5 pm

Sellersburg Library
430 N Indiana Ave, Sellersburg, IN 47172
812-246-4493
Mon-Thu: 9 am - 8 pm
Fri-Sat: 9 am - 5 pm

Henryville Library
214 E Main St, Henryville, IN 47126
812-294-4246
Mon: 9 am - 6 pm
Wed: 12 pm - 6 pm
Fri: 9 am - 5 pm
Tue: 10 am - 8 pm
Thu: 10 am - 8 pm
Sat: 10 am - 2 pm

New Washington Library
210 S Poplar Street
New Washington, IN 47162
812-293-4577
Mon & Fri: 9 am - 5 pm
Wed: Closed
Tue & Thu: 12 pm - 8 pm
Sat: 9 am - 1 pm

Borden, Indiana (officially New Providence)
A Brief History & Walking Tour

Clark County, Indiana Territory was formed 3 February 1801.
Wood Township formed in Spring 1807.
Indiana became a State on 11 December 1816.
New Providence laid out in 1817.

The Beginning of New Providence

George Wood moved to the area of Muddy Fork of Silver Creek a mile and a half south of Borden about 1807. He was the first permanent settler in Wood Township and it was named for him. The original area of Wood Township included all of Carr Township until 1854.

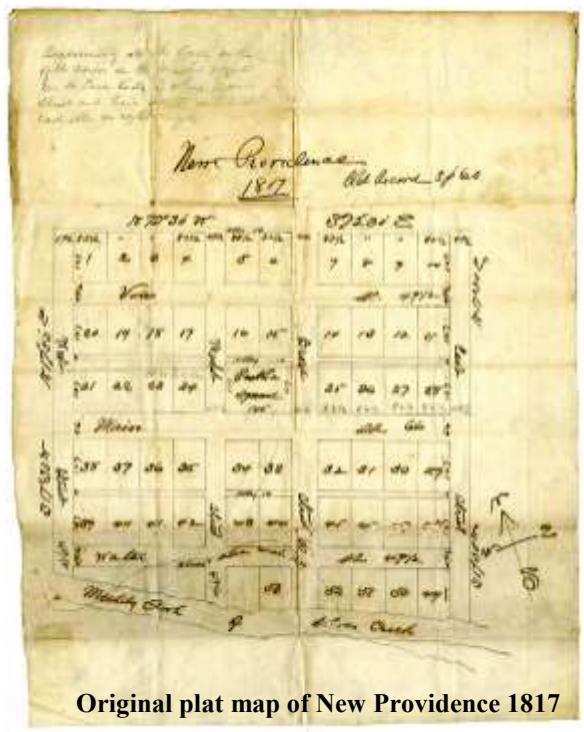
John Borden (1785-1824), his brother Asa and nephew Stephen came to Indiana in spring of 1816. John bought property in Wood Township. In 1817, he laid out the town of New Providence, naming it after Providence, Rhode Island. The town square was in the NE corner of Main & Market Streets. There were 53 lots.

John brought his wife, Comfort (1794-1820), to Indiana in 1818. He married Lydia Bellows (1797-1851) in 1822. John was a sheep farmer, blacksmith, tanner, storekeeper and ran a tavern/inn. They had 2 sons William and John. After John's death in 1824, Lydia, having a toddler and another on the way, took charge of the estate. She ran the tavern built by her husband until her death.

The first post office came in 1826 and telegraph in 1847. In 1882 there were 300 residents, 2 dry good stores, a first class provision store, a drug store, 2 millinery shops, a tavern, a tan yard, a shoe shop, 3 blacksmith shops, a cooper shop, a saw mill, a grist mill, 2 churches, a school house, 2 physicians and a dentist. The Town of New Providence was incorporated in 1904. The first fire house was built around 1909.

New Providence or Borden?

Indiana had two towns named New Providence. The mail was getting confused so on 7 January 1891, postal officials asked the Clark County town to change its name. Professor William Borden and his family had done so much for the town that it was decided to change the name to Borden in their honor. The railroad company followed suit by adopting the name for the station including the telegraph and express offices. When the town was incorporated in 1904 it was listed as Town of New Providence. Officially the name has not been changed.



Original plat map of New Providence 1817

Schools

The first school in New Providence was built in 1818 on the public square. It was triangle in shape with a fireplace in the middle. It was replaced 9 years later on the same site. In the early days, there were 8 one room school houses around the township.

William W. Borden (1823-1906) was a geologist and worked for the state when Marshall Field of Chicago hired him and his brother John (1825-1918) to do work in some Colorado silver mines. After becoming quite wealthy they returned to New Providence. William wanted to help the community and decided to build a school for higher education.

The Borden Institute was founded in the spring of 1884 by William. It was located on the property of the current schools. It was a normal school for school teachers and a business college. There was a focus on scientific study which many in the community did not like. Both young men and women could attend. The school had a greenhouse and its own electrical plant. It closed in 1906 when Prof. Borden died.

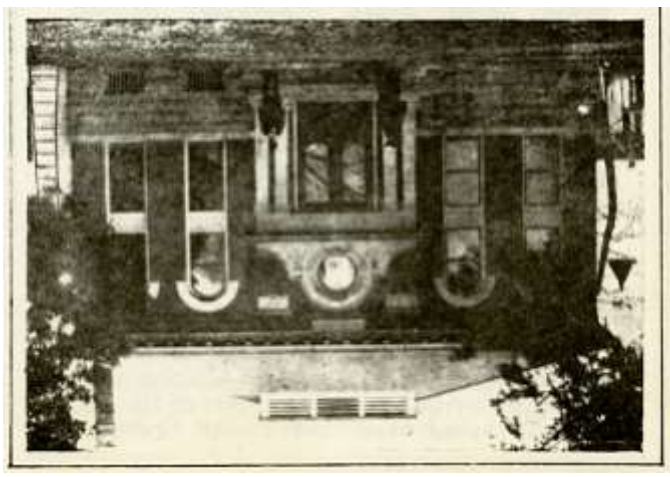
After that a 3-year high school had been located in various building until 1911 when the old Borden Institute building became the high school. In 1929 the building and ten acres of land were given to Wood Township by William's widow Emma Borden Robb. It was then named William W. Borden High School. The high school was in this building until 1957 when a new high school was opened. The Borden Institute building was razed in November 1983.

Borden High School basketball team was originally called Borden Berries in honor of being the nation's strawberry capital in the early 1900s. The name was changed to Braves in 1967.

Borden Museum

John Borden, Sr. built his original farm house in 1819 in the NW corner of Main & Market Streets. In 1822 he opened a tavern/inn in this building. Its location made it a popular stopping point for travelers. Lydia Borden kept the inn open for 30 years after her husband's death. Their son William traveled the world and began collecting items related to geology. He wanted a place to display his vast collection of fossils, rocks, minerals, books and other curiosities. He built the Borden Museum on the site of his childhood home in front of the inn which became part of the museum.

Upon William Borden's death in 1906 the museum and contents were gifted to "my fellow citizens, forever." But what happened to collection was quite different. His widow Emma Borden Robb donated and sold most of the contents of the museum. She gave the building to Wood Township in 1929. The building became a place for community groups to meet. It was renovated in 1990.



Transportation

In the early days, a dirt road passed through New Providence which connected New Albany and Salem.

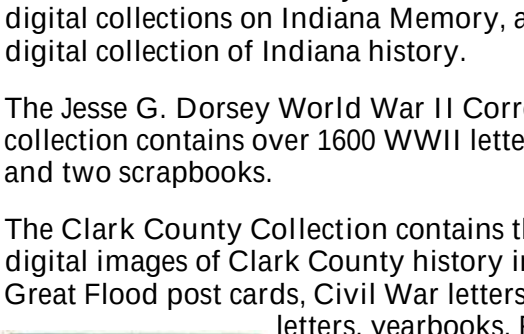
The Jeffersonville, New Albany and Crawfordsville Turnpike was organized in 1832. This is the current Highway 60. A stage coach line was formed to travel between New Albany and Orleans on the turnpike. New Providence became a good half way stopping point for travelers but the road was too rough. In 1835 the Salem and Ohio Turnpike Company was organized and built a new road.

In 1847 the New Albany & Salem Railroad was organized and the tracks were laid down over the turnpike. The railroad became the primary way of transporting crops and merchandise in and out of the area. Later if became the Louisville, New Albany & Chicago Railroad and also the Monon Railroad. The train depot was taken down in 1962.

Early Industries In and Around Borden

George Wood had the first grist mill built in 1808.
Henry Dow built the first saw mill in the township in 1820.

An ancient salt well is located 4 miles west of Borden in a narrow valley near the Fordyce Branch Creek. It is not known if white man followed animal trails to the salt lick or if they were told by Indians. When word spread of the salt spring, people traveled from as far as Vincennes to extract the salt. People would camp by the spring and boil the water to get at the salt.


Borden Cabinet Company 1952

The glass sand industry put New Providence on the map. The sea sand in located on the hills west of town. It was mined and washed. It was brought to the train by wagon where it was taken to the glass factory in New Albany which opened in 1865.

Timber was a major industry around 1900. Most of the timber on both sides of the valley was cleared.

Strawberries took over as a major industry after the timber ran out. Benjamin Hanka started the strawberries near St. John's Church. The strawberry fields quickly spread all over the hillsides. Many other fruits were grown in the area. The large fruit industry supported a fruit crate manufacturing facility started by G. W. Martin about 1879.

Borden Cabinet Company opened in 1919. It was bought by Kimball in 1952. The plant burned to the ground in 1962 and rebuilt in the same location along Highway 60. Office furniture was the main items manufactured there.