

New group to promote Wildcat Valley

A history walk in Ball Hill Cemetery in southeastern Carroll County on July 18 was the start of several new civic endeavors for nearby communities. Mark Smith conducted the walk with descriptions of the genealogies of a half dozen families with burials in the cemetery. Several people also gave their reminiscences of the old Ball Hill Methodist Church that stood at the site until 1965.

The walk was the first event sponsored by a new organization called Promoting Wildcat Valley. The group's stated purpose is to promote and develop the historic and natural resources of the Wildcat Creek region in southern Carroll County.

The event at Ball Hill was also the inauguration of the oral history project of Democrat Township. Phyllis Porter, president of the Carroll County Historical Society and a member of Promoting Wildcat Valley, spoke at Ball Hill of the need to preserve the history of Carroll County through the stories of its elder residents. Recordings were made that evening of Smith's talk and of the several speakers telling about the old church.

In the course of the evening another potential project emerged. The old church bell can be brought back to the site at the cemetery. Promoting Wildcat Valley will form a committee to make plans for an appropriate and secure structure in which to display the bell.

Phyllis Smith and Eileen Smith started the telling of stories about the old Methodist church. They were joined by Roberta Clem Anderson and Phyllis Gangwer Mummert, who brought a long list of past church members. Many in the crowd had been baptized at the church.

Ruth Lindley Harshbarger, whose father gave land for the third section of the cemetery, brought several historic documents. She read one aloud and passed around an old drawing of the church.

Phyllis Porter emphasized that the audio recordings made that evening would be available in the Carroll County His-



Church gone; bell to return

The old Ball Hill Methodist Church stood in Democrat Township until 1965. Ruth Lindley Harshbarger brought this drawing of the church to the recent history walk sponsored by Promoting Wildcat Valley. The old church bell remains intact. This drawing will aid in the design of a new structure to house and display the bell at the site of the demolished church, next to Ball Hill Cemetery.

torical Museum. She stated, "This is our heritage told and recorded for future generations." Mark Smith's wife, Kay, also made a video recording.

Promoting Wildcat Valley is the outgrowth of community interest that started with a Purdue University study of the Cutler and Adams Mill area last spring. Purdue landscape architecture students identified three locations which could highlight the historic and natural resources of the area. The students created designs for potential structures for (1) the Oxbow Nature Park next to Adams Mill, (2) a railroad historic park in Cutler and (3) a wayside rest stop off State Road 75 west of Cutler.

The Oxbow Nature Park is currently being developed by the Wildcat Creek Foundation, a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving the natural character of Wildcat Creek. The park will be located in the floodplain between Adams Mill and the Adams Mill Cov-

ered Bridge.

The feasibility of constructing the other two sites identified by the Purdue class has been discussed by Promoting Wildcat Valley. Interest was high for these two sites, but as the discussions progressed many other possible developments emerged.

"There are so many wonderful things in this area," said Al Auffart, who lives near Ball Hill. "We need to preserve the resources all along Wildcat Creek."

Jerry and Mary Blue have been instrumental in organizing Promoting Wildcat Valley. They are the owners of Cutler's Wildcat Creek Bed & Breakfast where all of the meetings have been held.

Jim and Persis Newman of West Lafayette have also participated in the new group's meetings. Last year the Newmans purchased the land for the future Oxbow Nature Park to keep in holding until the Wildcat Creek Foundation could raise enough money for

its own purchase. Jim is a retired Purdue agronomy professor.

"Adams Mill is at the center of an area that includes a half million people, and in a few decades more people will be coming the short distance here and appreciating the great natural and historic resources," he said.

Adams Mill is at the center of a greater area that includes Lafayette, Kokomo, Frankfort, Logansport, and Monticello.

The Purdue students who studied the local area last spring spoke of the need for low-keyed, "quiet" developments that promote the resources for the benefit of local residents. Their recommendation was that all future developments should fit with the historic character of the community.

The next meeting of Promoting Wildcat Valley will be at the Wildcat Creek Bed & Breakfast on Aug. 14 at 7 p.m. Call Mary Blue at (765) 268-2189 for more information.

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