

Obama has ties to former Flora teacher

By Jennifer Archibald
Staff writer

What does presidential candidate Barack Obama have in common with a former teacher at Flora Elementary School?

Turns out, they're related. Sen. Obama and the late Parker Dunham, who taught at Flora in the 1960s, are descended from the same early settler in Tipton County.

Obama is connected with his Indiana roots earlier this year while campaigning for the primary election. He visited a house on his ancestors' homestead property in Kempton. His great-great-great-great-grandfather, Jacob Dunham came to the area in the 1840s. The newly restored house he visited was built by his great-great-uncle, William Riley Dunham, who happens to be Parker Dunham's grandfather.

George Brown, who now lives near Denver, Colo., was one of Parker Dunham's students in sixth grade. He said he wondered about a possible connection when he saw a photo in the *Comet* of Obama and a Delphi couple at "the old Dunham house" in Kempton. He remembered that Parker Dunham had commuted to the Flora school from his home in Kempton.

His hunch was right. Obama's great-great-great-grandfather and Parker's Dunham's great-grandfather were brothers. Dunham's grandfather, William Riley Dunham (the one who built

the house in Kempton), also was in politics. Like Obama, he was a Democrat, and served in the Indiana General Assembly. Parker dabbled in politics and was Tipton County clerk in the 1930s.

He was clerk for four years and a teacher for 29 years, according to his widow, Dorothy Dunham, who still lives in the Kempton area. She said she and Parker were married 57 years before he died at age 99 in 2003.

His wife said he started out teaching in a one-room schoolhouse. He had 18 students and seven grades. He taught in Tipton, Howard, and Carroll counties. The schools included Burlington and Flora.

Roger Daugherty of Flora taught at the Flora building from 1962 to 1966. When he moved from sixth grade to junior high for the 1963-1964 school year, Parker Dunham took his place in sixth grade.

That's the year that George Brown was a sixth grader. He said Dunham and Galen Shope were team teachers. Dunham mainly taught English and social studies, and Shope taught math and science.

"We all loved the classes Mr. Dunham taught because we thought we were pretty smart at getting him to just talk about stuff and not do any class work," Brown said. "We thought we were good at derailing the business of school, but he outsmarted us by engaging everyone in the class in discussions that ranged from Mandarin oranges to India and Pakistan, and how to introduce a featured speaker to a group of people. He showed us the proper way

to write a check, how to look up funny or unusual words in a dictionary, and was always talking about current events. He taught by talking about the world and people and places in it."

"I remember he was always trying to teach us about civil rights, and how he had high regard for black leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr."

"On Nov. 22, 1963, we were stunned at recess by the rumor that President Kennedy had been assassinated. No teacher was there to confirm or deny the rumor. It was just a rumor that some kid said he heard when he went home for lunch, so a lot of us dismissed it. When we got back to the classroom, Mr. Dunham was as white as a sheet, and he looked stricken. He couldn't look up at us as we filed back in. One of us asked him if it was true, that the President had been assassinated? He nodded his head, and fought back tears as he said, yes, it was true. Several kids, both girls and boys, started to cry and hid their heads..."

"Mr. Dunham pulled out a book of Walt Whitman poems, and started to read a poem Whitman wrote about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, 'O Captain! My Captain.' Somehow he held it together while he read. After about an hour, the school decided to dismiss everyone early...After that day, we were all closer to Mr. Dunham than ever. A shared trauma provided a bond between the teacher and the students that made his class unique."

Dick T. Bishop of Flora also was in sixth grade in '63-'64, and he remembers other de-

tails about Dunham.

"He drove a Karmann Ghia convertible and wore an Irish-style flat cap," Bishop said. "His hobbies were photography and playing the ukulele. I learned to develop film from him, and Tom Boller learned to play the ukulele."

Brown said Dunham had a vacation cabin in Ontario, Canada, and told the class about his fishing trips there.

"Toward the end of his period of teaching at Flora, he even took some kids from his class on a trip to Ontario," he said.

School yearbooks show that Dunham taught at Flora three years, from 1963 through 1966.

The *Tipton Tribune* ran a profile of Dunham when he was 79. The story related that Dunham knew Hoagy Carmichael (songwriter) and Ernie Pyle (World War II journalist) from his college years at Indiana University, Bloomington. Pyle was a senior when Dunham was a sophomore.

Dunham enjoyed fishing, serving as a guide on fishing trips, and writing about his own fishing experiences. He also was a hunter.

For many years he wrote an outdoor sports column for central Indiana newspapers. He also wrote outdoor columns for other publications such as *Sports Afield*.

The *Tribune* profile also described Dunham as a World War II veteran, former manager of a camera shop in Fort Wayne, and banjo player in a Dixieland band.

For many in Carroll County, Parker Dunham will be best remembered as a caring teacher.

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Final draft of Comprehensive Plan presented to APC

By Theresa Replogle
Contributing writer

Comprehensive planning steering committee representative Miriam Robeson recently presented the final draft of the Carroll County Comprehensive Development Plan to the area plan commission. Robeson called the plan "a guide or foundation for zoning, a good tool."

Commission member Paul Marcellino noted the presentation of the plan was quite timely.

"People are already knocking on our doors," he said.

The plan, Robeson explained, is built around five pillars (basic ideas): land use management environment economic development transportation public infrastructure and services.

She briefly noted goals for each area as follows:

Land use management

Since Carroll County has the highest number of lakes, streams and rivers in the state, Robeson said the plan recommends managing them in an environmentally responsible

manner with unique requirements for development.

The plan encourages the development of agricultural and residential areas to be in harmony.

Robeson said the plan encourages developers to drive appropriate growth toward compatible infrastructure.

Economic Development

One plan goal was to facilitate the expansion of old businesses, encourage new business, attract and retain jobs, attract the renewable energy industry, foster entrepreneurship and support agriculture.

Transportation

Development of roads, alternative means of transportation and bicycle paths to ensure quality, safe and efficient transportation systems was addressed. Meeting the goal would enhance Carroll County as a destination for tourism and recreation.

"No matter where you live in Carroll County, you should be no less than two miles from an improved road," Robeson said.

Environmental

The goal of this part of the plan was to do no harm to the existing environment, and pro-

tect areas of historical significance.

The possibility of Carroll County creating its own landfill, Robeson said, could have a huge economic impact, but must not be environmentally dangerous.

Infrastructure.

Safe water, safe waste disposal and emergency services are part of this area of the plan. In order for emergency services to reach people in a timely manner, it would be important to place new development close to current development.

This part of the plan also encourages that zoning ordinances, building inspection and building codes be properly enforced.

There is a section of the plan for each incorporated or outlying portion of Carroll County except for the town of Flora which has its own plan.

The comprehensive development plan is available online at www.carrollcountyzoning.worpress.com. The public may also read a copy of the plan at local libraries or attend the next meeting of the area plan commission on October 21 when the public will be able to comment.

Moratorium on billboards

APC voted to recommend to commissioners no new outdoor advertising signs be permitted within 2,000 feet of the right-of-way of the proposed Hoosier Heartland Highway route. The moratorium would remain in effect until the passage of the Carroll County Hoosier Heartland Overlay District or April 1, 2009, whichever comes first.

Other business

Richard Fite was granted approval to re-zone 485 E. Cumberland Street, Camden, from residential to light industrial. This is the original site of Fite's Mobility. There were no objections to the request.

Board of Zoning Appeals

Michael and Renee Sanders of Pirates Roost Rd. were granted a six-foot variance with a one-foot set back for an addition to a house. A 13-foot variance was also granted for the backyard with a set back of seven feet. The variance for the backyard was granted as the couple already owns the adjoining lot. There were no objections.

The next meeting will be Oct. 21 at 7 p.m.

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