

## Harris Township: History, and a Question

By *Kenneth E. (Ken) Lindsay, Trustee*

When you think of Harris Township, do images come to mind? There's a seal of sorts on the door of the trustee office, showing a farm field, trees and a train. That's fitting to a degree, but is it fully relevant today? Send an email to [HarrisTrusteeLindsay@gmail.com](mailto:HarrisTrusteeLindsay@gmail.com) to weigh in.

A lot has changed since 1970 when the Harris Township population was 2,860, and even more since 1900 when it was 481. Today, it is pushing 25,000. Rapid growth started when subdivisions replaced corn fields, and continues today as the City of Mishawaka annexes land where apartment complexes sit close to shopping areas.

People wanting to avoid city life and related taxes now live near people who expect city water and sewer and sidewalks. Within the past couple decades, the fire department was volunteer and no library served residents. Still today, wells and septic fields are prevalent, and a nonprofit has to lead the way on connecting neighborhoods with a concrete path.

Very long ago — in the late 1820s and early 1830s — Jacob Harris was an early settler of marshy land including "Harris Prairie." A township government was formed.

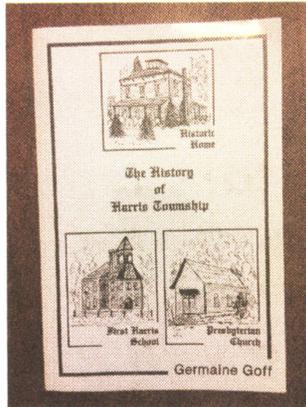
In the mid-1800s, Father Sorin and Father Granger held mass in a (still standing) brick home on Adams Road, across from what is now Covington Shores. Earlier that century, that same address was a stagecoach stop on the Old Chicago Trail.

In 1867 Father Sorin acquired 1,300 acres to establish St. Joseph's Farm, where Holy Cross Brothers and Sisters raised livestock and crops to supply the University of Notre Dame. It still stands today. Next time you're driving down Cleveland Road between Bittersweet and the tracks, take a look and you may see older farm buildings near the under-construction St. Joseph Solar Farm.

Railroads played a big role in the township for decades starting about 1870. Tracks converged, there was a transfer depot and a station, passengers could ride to nearby towns, and jobs were created. If you're interested in details, take a look at Germaine Goff's 1980 book *The History of Harris Township*, which is the source for many of the insights above. Or pick up a copy the next time your interest is piqued because you heard the term "Granger Station" or saw the train mural near the Martin's Supermarket in Granger.

There once was an airport in Harris Township, and there still is a nudist get-away.

Think of a sign with no words, or one of those tree trunk carvings. What images would represent where you live? For all of Indiana, it might be a corn cob or basketball. For Notre Dame, perhaps the Golden Dome. For the township, tractors and trains have a place, but maybe there are others. Let us know! The township is contemplating some improvements, so your idea may show up IRL, as they say (in real life, for the rest of us).



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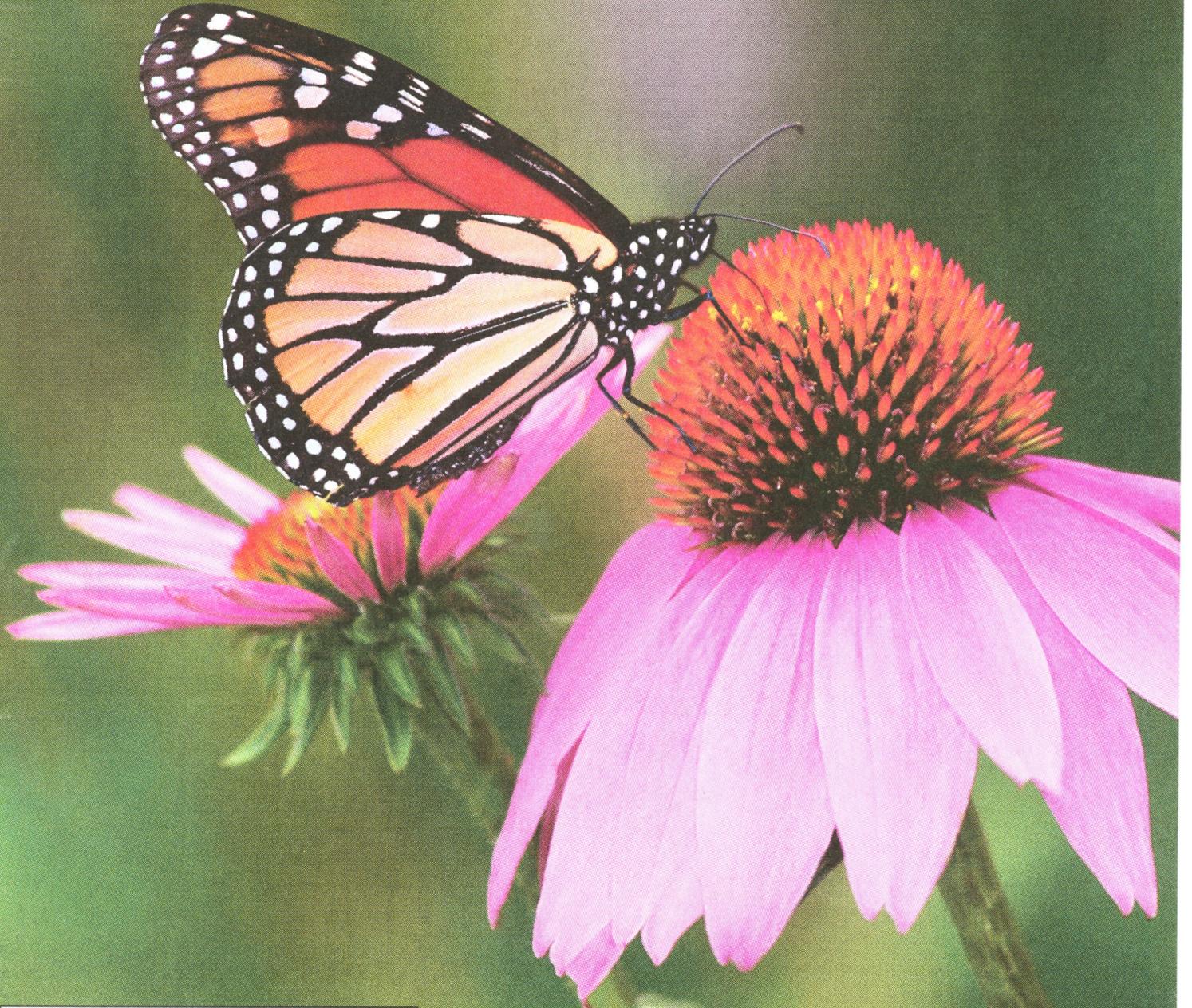
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