

History of the Town of Schererville, Indiana

The "crossroads" of Schererville, Indiana, lie at the junction of U.S. Routes 30 and 41. U.S. 30, the old Lincoln Highway, where it runs through the center of the old business district is now Joliet Street. This land located at the southern tip of Lake Michigan has been called the "crossroads" from the earliest recorded history of the area. At least five (5) Indian tribes, including the Pottawattomie and Fox Indians, had trails in the area. In 1816, Indiana became an office State of the Union, and in 1832, much of the northwestern part of the state was purchased from the Indians.

The "Old Sauk Trail" criss-crossed the area and was known by the early pioneers as the "Main Road". St. John Township, then known as "Prairie West", was "matted with thick, green spongy grass and almost surrounded by boggy marshes, where the fallen rotted trees and matted leaves had dammed the swamps into bodies of water resembling lakes ..."

In 1837, John Hack, the first German Catholic in the area, brought his wife and eleven children to settle in the area. In 1846, Nicholas Scherer brought his family to the area and also brought his brother, Jacob. The Scherer brothers provided the land on which the first churches were built.

Many families struggled for survival in the area of Schererville, named after Nicholas Scherer. "The tales of men who had frozen along the road back East when they were attempting to secure food for their families in the winters were numerous ... epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever nearly wiped out whole families ... " Nicholas Scherer, a determined planner, is reported to have been a "determined and industrious man who sometimes gambled on an idea that his neighbors thought was sheer folly".

Mr. A.N. Hart, a "wizard in land speculation", contemplated the possibility of draining the land known as Cady Marsh. Mr. Hart designed a "fantastic drainage system" later named the Hart Ditch, which carried water to Plum Creek near Dyer, Indiana, and then into the Little Calumet River. He also built wagon roads along each side of the ditch. By 1865, Mr. Hart had reclaimed the swamp. He set up hay presses and shipped hay from Schererville after the arrival of the Chicago Great Eastern Ohio Panhandle Railroad, which later became known as the Pennsylvania Railroad and then Conrail. The first rail lines were laid across the main road (now Joliet Street) at the point where the Town of Schererville celebrated its centennial, commemorating the town that Nicholas Scherer envisioned at the point of this early "crossroads" in 1866.

Twenty-five families had settled in Schererville by 1866. Most of the families were German Catholics. The District Number One School, a frame building, was erected in 1866 from funds received from the Township Trustee. Adreon Cook was its first director. That same year the post office was approved, and Matthias Meyer became the first postmaster.

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John Thiel opened a blacksmith shop in 1870, with Michael Grimmer's dairy being established across the street. Mr. Grimmer also established a general store known as "Gard's General Store", with Schubert's Saloon being built next door. John Austgen built a saloon on Joliet street and his brother built a grocery store across the street. Henry Lustig operated a cigar factory, and an ice house was built along the railroad tracks by the Police Station. Bernard Schulte ran a meat market on the southeast corner of Joliet and Mary Streets, and he was also the Township Trustee. Jacob Scholl founded a carpentry shop, and his son became the nationally known "Dr. Scholl" known for his foot care items.

In 1873, St. Michael's Catholic Church was erected, and its first priest was the Rev. King, followed by Rev. Berg. The cemetery was consecrated in 1895 on the land donated to the Church by Nicholas Scherer. In 1894 the Township built a new brick school and donated the former structure to St. Michael's. It later became the first parochial school.

The civil town of Schererville was incorporated on September 5, 1911. The incorporating committee consisted of: John A. Mager, Jacob Scholl, Sarinis P. Swets, Peter A. Grimmer, and Frank Berwanger. Mr. Mager, Mr. Scholl and Mr. Swets were approved by the voters as the first Town Board; and Mr. Grimmer was the first Clerk, and Mr. Berwanger was the first Treasurer. On January 1, 1912, the following individuals were sworn in as public officials, Town Board Members: John Mager, Sarinis P. Swets, and Joe Risch; with Peter A. Grimmer being re-elected as Clerk and Frank Berwanger re-elected as Treasurer. On November 5, 1913, Mr. William J. Govert was elected to the office of Town Clerk.

Under the direction of Michael Grimmer, Township Trustee, the first stone road was built, which was then paved in 1911. In 1913, the first Lincoln Highway Association was formed to promote a highway across the United States from coast-to-coast. By 1916, the Federal Road Aid Act assisted in developing this project. Lincoln Highway began in New York City at Times Square and went through New Jersey and joined what is now known as U.S. 30, and continued through the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and California. The intersection of U.S. Routes 30 and 41 was not paved until 1934. In 1935, U.S. 41 was widened to help relieve the traffic problems at the junction of U.S. 30 and U.S. 41. Along this intersection, the Teibel family built their restaurant and Sauzer's Waffle Shop was across the street.

The Schererville Water Works became operative in 1920 when the town had 483 residents. In 1962, the Business Men's Association was formed, which later developed into the Schererville Chamber of Commerce. In 1966, the Centennial Year of the Town of Schererville, the Town Board was composed of Robert Teegarden, Michael Kuhn, John Dressen, Jr., and Ralph McColly; and Joe Zimmer was the Clerk-Treasurer.

By the time of the 1990 census, the Town of Schererville had grown to 19,926 residents. The population of the town constitutes 48% of the St. John Township, and 27% of the town is under the age of 18 years. In 1991, the 125th Anniversary Year of the Town of Schererville, the Town Board had Larry Tucker, Vic Banter, Tom Kouros, John Fladeland, and D. Wes Shake as members; and Clarence Kuhn was the Clerk-Treasurer.

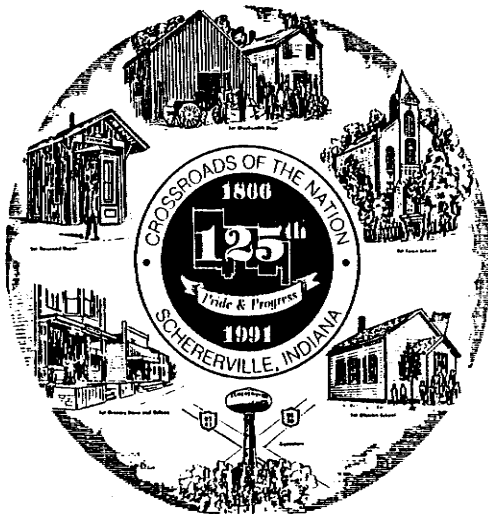
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Today, the Town of Schererville employs a Town Manager, a Town Attorney, and a comprehensive engineering firm, as well as several staff personnel and department employees. The Schererville Police Department and the volunteer fire department faithfully perform public safety duties in the town. The town's sewage treatment plant was completed in 1965, and continues to serve the residents today. The Town is governed by a five-member (5) Town Council and a Clerk-Treasurer.

The Town of Schererville continues to prosper today thanks to its hardworking civic and public officials. "Pride and Progress" are truly reflected in the Schererville residents who enjoy the rich history of the "Crossroads of the Nation" as they embark on the year 2000.

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125th Anniversary
Schererville, Indiana
1866 - 1991