

Irvington

The Irvington Historical Society Newsletter

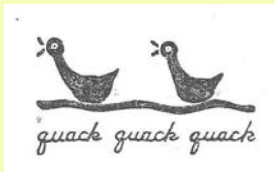
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Message from the President

Quack Quack Quack

No, the title above is not a self-deprecating comment on how I think my monthly messages are



viewed, but rather a reference to an early private kindergarten in Irvington where for many years pet ducks joined in the fun. Before IPS started offering kindergarten, educational opportunities for children before first grade were offered only by private individuals and groups. In Irvington the premier private kindergarten was the *Hibben School*, run by Miss Helene Hibben with assistance from her sister Hazen.

Helene Hibben was quite a remarkable woman. She was trained as an artist and was especially noted for her sculptures. She was considered

a member of the *Irvington Group*, along with such notable artists as William Forsyth and Clifton Wheeler.

The Hibben School began its existence as a school for girls teaching them how to be refined young ladies through lessons on etiquette, dancing, and French, but eventually developed into a kindergarten, preschool, and daycare for girls and boys aged three years old and up.

Originally located in the stunning Second Empire Hibben family home at the southeast corner of University and Downey Avenues, it was later moved to the home on Pleasant Run Parkway that Helen's architect brother Thomas designed for her.

I hope you enjoy reading our cover story about Helene Hibben, as well as the rest of this month's newsletter. *Quack quack quack!*

Don Flick
IHS President



In Celebration of Women's History Month

Helene Hibben: Sculptor and Educator

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Submitted by Don Flick, IHS President

The following article is taken from ". . . 60 Poles to a Sugar Tree and Thence to the Beginning": *A Social History of the Pioneer Hibben Family, 1730 to the early 1900s* by George C. Hibben, available online at www.hibbengenealogy.com.

Hélène Louise Hibben, the second child of Thomas Enriken Hibben and Jane Merrill, was born November 18, 1882, in Indianapolis. She attended Pratt Institute in New York City for training in early childhood education¹. Her other interest and ability lay in the arts. She "studied with William Forsyth and in Chicago with the famous sculptor, Lorado Taft. Later at the Art Students League in New York, she worked with Horace Fraser."² Later Hélène joined the faculty of the Art Institute of Indianapolis and enjoyed private commissions.

Helene C. [L.] Hibben found her first work as a sculptor in modeling of a very unusual

kind, that of miniature busts, which were very attractive and accurate likenesses. Her work is mostly bas-relief portraits in bronze. When sitters are few and miniature bronze figures are not in demand, she spends her time in her charming studio in the midst of the shrubbery of her own lawn, where she has a kiln and all the paraphernalia for making art tiles and pottery. Her dedicatory tablet of the Burdsal Unit of the City Hospital of Indianapolis is a relief sculpture in bronze. It has brought more than the usual commendation of artist and critics. The groups of figures on each side of the inscription are symbolical, representing the "Spirit of Giving" and the "Recipients." The half-draped figures gave the sculptor an opportunity to use in an admirable way the long, flowing line of the human figure and the floating drapery.³

Other bas-relief portraits created by Hélène, one of James Whitcomb Riley and the other of Vice

Helene Hibben *(cont'd from page 1)*

President Thomas R. Marshall, are in the archives of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.⁴

In an article in *The Indianapolis News* featuring six "Indianapolis women [who] have gained fame in State and Nation with brush and chisel," H el ene said:

*I can't exactly say what my work means to me. There are so many kinds of 'meanings.' My father used to say it was my 'safety valve'—when things pressed on every side and life seemed a struggle, then some idea would come, and in the work of creating something out of nothing and watching it grow to express the things I felt, it was like a long rest after a hard day's work, and, refreshed, I could begin again. Portrait work in bronze is a delightful study. One has to seek for, and portray, not only the face, but the soul within. Sometimes it will escape you for days and then, all at once, you have it.*⁵

During World War I she organized a French kindergarten in the family home. After the war she converted to a regular kindergarten and moved to a new house. It was known as the Hibben School for preschool children, located at 5231 Pleasant

Right: Photo from the May 15, 1955 issue of *The Indianapolis Star*.

Run Parkway.

It grew—from 12 students to its present 70—and the old family home proved inadequate. My brother, Thomas E. Hibben, Jr., the architect, designed this house especially for it—with special features like

*reinforced ceilings, light rooms for classrooms. It is on the site of an old inn where stagecoaches used to stop—and my father bought when he was a boy.*⁶



Mrs. Henry H. Prescott (left) and Miss Helene Hibben reminisce over the first play given by the Irvington Dramatic Club, organized in 1914 in the Hibben home formerly at Downey and University Avenues.

This following was taken from the 1941 publication, *Women of Indiana: A Work For Newspaper and Library Reference*, compiled by Blanche Foster Boruff.

MISS HELENE HIBBEN

• Hibben, Miss Helene, was born in Irvington, Indianapolis in 1882, the daughter of Thomas Entrekin and Janie Merrill Ketcham Hibben; educated in the Indianapolis public schools and Shortridge, studied art with William Forsythe at the John Herron Art Institute, Lorado Taft at the Chicago Art Institute and with Horace Frazier at the Art Students League in New York where she studied Bas-relief and medal work. Her chief work in sculpture is a Bas-relief portrait from life of James Whitcomb Riley, now in permanent collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. She made a medallion portrait of vice pres. Thomas R. Marshall and a Bas-relief memorial tablet in the Burdsall Memorial Hospital, Indianapolis. Miss Hibben was, at one time, teacher of children's classes in sculpture and pottery at John Herron Art School and in 1917 was a teacher of children's conversational classes in French and director of children's pageants. She was the first director of dancing in the Indianapolis Matinee Musicale.

Miss Hibben is the director of the Hibben School for Children, instructor in corrective speech; designs educational material, toys and games for child development. A member of Arthur St. Clair chapter, D. A. R.; Woman's Rotary Club; Indianapolis Matinee Musicale; National Society of Craftsmen of New York; Indiana Artists Club; one of the founders and first president of the Irvington Dramatic Club; a member of the Protestant church; Republican. Miss Hibben resides at 5237 Pleasant Run Parkway, Indianapolis.



Helene Hibben (cont'd from page 2)

She was assisted by her sister, Priscilla Hazen. The school's motto was "Learning Can Be Fun." Several of her students fondly remember the sisters and the educational head start they got at the school. One of them reported:

I attended the Hibben School for two years. . . This was during the depression, probably 1936 and 1937. My father was a teacher and although my parents paid for me to attend two or three days a week, I believe Helene Hibben gave us a scholarship so that I could attend five days a week. I still remember sharing the back seat of her Dodge with a group of other children she picked up and brought to school. What a lovely place that school was. The ducks, Truck and Taxi, wandered the lawn of the school, art supplies were plentiful, and by the time I began public school, I was reading well enough that I was placed in second grade. We always called our teachers Miss Helene and Miss Hazen.⁷

At the height of H el ene's career in 1941, the Indiana Women's Biography Association published her biography which enumerated additional achievements [see sidebar on page 2].

H el ene never married. She died March 19, 1968 and is buried at Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis.

¹ Note: Ruth Glidden, wife of Heron K. Hibben also attended Pratt Institute at about the same time.

² *Indianapolis Star*, October 14, 1945, part 4, page 5, column 5.

³ Mary Q. Burnett, *Art and Artists of Indiana*, 1921, New York, (The Century Company), pages 341-42.

⁴ Blanch Foster Boruff, *Women of Indiana*, 1941, Indianapolis, (Matthew Farson, Publisher), page 169.

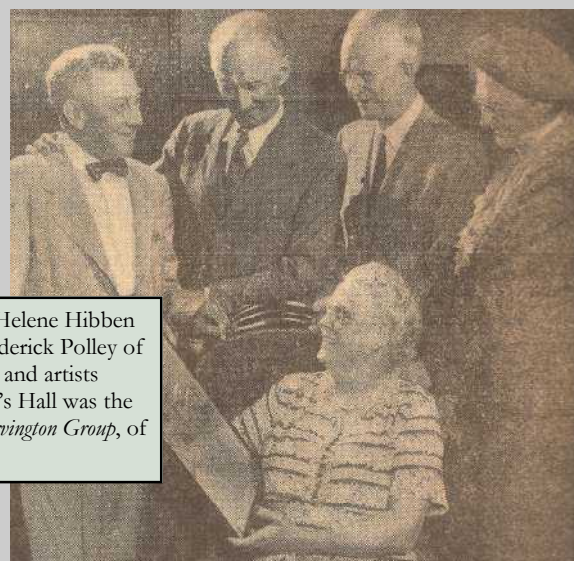
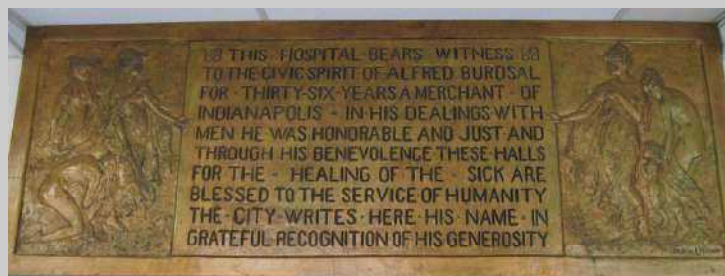
⁵ *Indianapolis News*, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana, January 20, 1917.

Other women mentioned: Miss Julia Graydon Sharpe and Ruth Pratt Bobbs.

⁶ *Indianapolis Star*, [Note 2], October 14, 1945, part 4, page 10, column 5.

⁷ Recollection of Phyllisann Hibben Courtis.

Bronzes by Helene Hibben include bas reliefs of James Whitcomb Riley (1911) and a small child (undated), as well as the entrance plaque (1915) to the Burdsal Unit at the current Wishard Hospital, with inscription by noted Hoosier author Meredith Nicholson. Helene also completed a bronze medallion of Indiana Governor (and later US Vice-President) Thomas Marshall (1911).



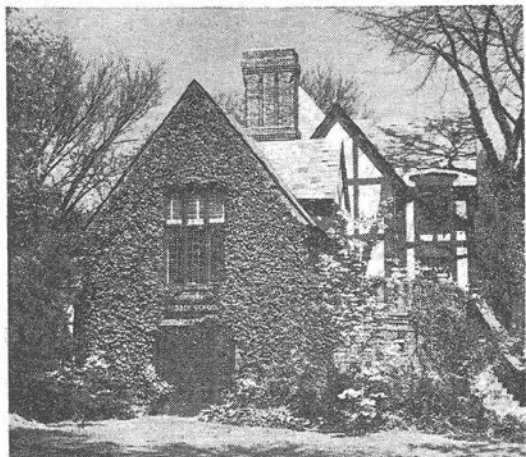
In this September 1951 photo from the *Indianapolis News* Helene Hibben is seated holding a framed drawing by Irvington artist Frederick Polley of Carr's Hall. Surrounding her are, from left, Dr. Silas Carr and artists Simon Baus, Clifton Wheeler, and Dorothy Morlan. Carr's Hall was the venue for numerous art showings featuring work of the *Irvington Group*, of which Helene Hibben was a member.

The Hibben School, 1917-1963

Submitted by Don Flick, IHS President

The following article appeared in the August 18, 1955 issue of *The Indianapolis Herald*.

The Hibben School Is A Little School For Little People



Shown above is the attractive entrance to Hibben School, 5237 Pleasant Run Parkway, South Drive. It is a year-round school for young children from three to six years of age and includes a kindergarten, pre-school classes, and day-care for children of employed parents.

Opened in 1917

The Hibben School has been operated continuously in Irvington since 1917, and registers approximately eighty-five children in the kindergarten. The day-care group at Hibben averages fourteen pupils.

The school carries a large staff of experienced and accredited teachers under the personal supervision of Miss Helene Hibben, founder of the school.

The Day-Care school is the answer for many school teachers, secretaries and office personnel who find it necessary to be employed away from the home. Health certificates are required from children in this group, showing that they are in average good health.

It is difficult to understand the meaning of "Day-Care" at Hibben School unless you take a mental journey through the daily schedule.

There is a pleasing atmosphere about this group who begin to arrive at six-forty-five, sleepy and a bit bewildered as they climb out of their cars and open the big iron gate that they love.

The children rush upstairs to wave goodbye to their cars. They make a fringe of elbows and chins and big round eyes around Miss Hibben's breakfast table while telling all the home news. Then the older children go to the cloak room to be Big Brothers or Sisters to the little ones, and help unbutton the hard coats. Many are "only children" and need this responsibility.

In the classrooms the Day-Care children work with the kindergarteners for two-and-a-half hours, then wash for a good warm dinner.

After lunch, they are taken for a "hike". They must see Blackie, the hitching post horse, and Rastus, the little iron man who stands, hand outstretched to greet them, even when covered with snow. There is Buster,



the friendly dog, and also the "talking trees" you put your ear against them and they will give you the answer to all problems, so the children believe.

Back at school, the kindergarten group have returned to their homes. It is "nap time" for the Day-Care school. Each child hops in his own cot, girls upstairs, boys down in the playroom.



Top: Ad from the March 14, 1963 issue of *The East Side Herald*.

Left: Current photos of 5237 E. Pleasant Run Parkway, South Drive, the second home of the Hibben School.



on Friday, fastened on a plastic tree. They made up a song to sing to—"Sucker tree, sucker tree, if I'm good as I can be, shake a sucker down to me".

From four-thirty to six, parents call for their children, who are busy playing outside or sitting under the trees, listening to story time, or in the sand beds or ball games.

A busy day is finished and characters are being built, problems have been solved, and Hibben School Day Care and Kindergarten is ready for another day.

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The teacher presses an imaginary buzzer, calling each name. They flop over on their sides and drift into dream land.

All are awakened at "tea time" for milk and cookies and a lolly pop



Above left: Portrait of Hazen Hibben by Constance Forsyth.

Above: Photo from the June 6, 1952 issue of *The Indianapolis Herald*.

Indiana Historical Society—Irvington Historical Society Partnership

Destination Indiana: Irvington Journey



The Irvington Journey Begins!

The Irvington Historical Society and the Indiana Historical Society have teamed up to offer the Irvington Journey, part of the Indiana Historical Society's Destination Indiana exhibit. Board member Paul Diebold and Executive Director Steve Barnett combed through the Irvington Historical Society's archives for images. The Irvington Historical Society also provided research materials and photo captions. The Indiana Historical Society has scanned the images at high resolution for viewing on their 10'x24' touch screen monitors. Combined with Indiana Historical Society images, the exhibit is an interactive look at Irvington from 1870-1950.

Don't miss the free preview night, April 4, 2013 at the Indiana Historical Society. Thanks to our partners at the Indiana Historical Society for honoring Irvington with this opportunity.

The Irvington Journey is sponsored by F.A. Wilhelm Construction Company and T. Peacock as a dedication to Augusta M. Peacock



Destination Indiana: Irvington Journey Grand Opening

April 4, 2013

Indiana Historical Society
450 W. Ohio St.

5:30-7:30 pm

Complimentary wine and cheese

Reception is no cost

The first 50
Irvington Historical Society
members get into the exhibit
for free—a \$7 value.



PNC Bank: Irvington Branch

Written by Don Flick, IHS President

PNC has announced that the last day of business for their Irvington branch, located at 6031 E. Washington Street, would be Friday, March 15. Irvington branch customers are being invited to use the Eastgate branch after this time.

The Irvington branch of PNC began life in 1954 as a branch of Indianapolis-based Merchants Bank. The first bank manager of the Irvington branch was Eastside resident Albert Slater, a graduate of Arsenal Technical High School.

Merchants Bank maintained its Irvington branch until it be-



NOW OPEN
For your convenience

A NEW EAST WASHINGTON ST. OFFICE
6031 EAST WASHINGTON ST.

This new modern office is fully staffed and equipped to provide complete banking and trust services for the residents and businesses in the neighborhood of East Indianapolis and Irvington.

Everyone is cordially invited to visit this new neighborhood bank. Free parking space is provided in our own parking lot.

21 MAJOR SERVICES

- Checking Accounts
- Business Accounts
- Credit Cards
- Home Improvement Loans
- Personal Loans
- Auto Loans
- Commercial Loans
- Foreign and Travel Services
- Safe Deposit Boxes
- Financial Planning
- Investment Services
- Insurance Services
- Trust Services
- Financial Planning
- Retirement Planning
- College Planning
- Charitable Planning
- Life Insurance
- Health Insurance
- Disability Insurance
- Long-Term Care Insurance

FREE PARKING

MERCHANTS NATIONAL BANK & TRUST COMPANY
OF INDIANAPOLIS

MAIN OFFICE
Merchants and Washington Bldg.



came a victim of the bank mergers of the 1990s when the company was bought by Cleveland-based National City in 1991. National City was then bought by Pittsburgh-based PNC in 2008.

Future use of the neo-Georgian building has not been determined.

Upper right: Article from a January 1954 issue of *The Indianapolis Herald* announcing the opening of the Irvington branch.

Middle right: Original concept drawing of building included with the bank's announcement that a branch would be built in Irvington, from the January 23, 1953 issue of *The Indianapolis Herald*.

Middle left: Ad from the a January 1954 issue of *The Indianapolis Herald*.

Left: Current photos.



Kessler Exhibit at Bona

George Edward Kessler (July 16, 1862 – March 20, 1923)



was a German-American city planner and landscape architect. Over the course of his forty-one year career, Kessler completed over 200 projects and prepared plans for 26 communities, 26 park and boulevard systems, and 49 parks, among his other work. He not only designed projects in 23 states, but completed work in such international locations as Mexico City and Shanghai.

The main feature of his park and boulevard systems was the development of scenic

parkways, usually paralleling waterways, connecting already-established, or in some cases, new city parks. In Indianapolis this was indeed the case. Pleasant Run Parkway, connecting Garfield, Christian, and Ellenberger Parks, was one of the



components of Kessler’s Indianapolis Park and Boulevard System. Other boulevards developed for this system were Fall Creek Parkway, Riverside Drive, Burdsal Parkway, Brookside Parkway, and Kessler Boulevard.

Currently on display at the Bona Thompson Center is the exhibit **“A Century of the City Beautiful”**, illustrating Kessler’s 1912 park and boulevard system for the City of Fort Wayne. The exhibit was developed by Ball State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture and was made possible through a matching grant from Indiana Humanities in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Irvington Terrace Hosts “State of the Street”



Irvington Terrace will host a meeting at the Bona Thompson Center on Monday, April 1. The "State of the Street" will feature the people who hopefully can provide answers to any and all questions that Irvington residents may have about the future of Washington Street.

Subjects will include safety, buildings new and old, businesses, transportation, beautification, and the Penny Trail. Featured speakers will be Steve Barnett, Executive Director of the Irvington Historical Society, and Margaret Banning, Executive Director of the Irvington Development Organization.

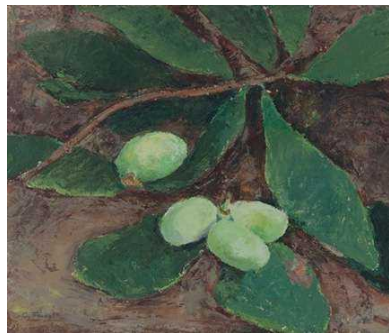


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Connie Forsyth Paintings Donated

The IHS recently acquired three paintings by Irvington artist Constance Forsyth, through a generous donation by Susan Sklar, niece of the artist.

A portrait of Irvington kindergarten teacher Hazen Hibben is shown on page 4 of this newsletter. The other two are shown here. One is of a patch of pawpaws and the other is a portrait of Collier Young, an Irvingtonian who eventually moved to



Hollywood and had a distinguished career as a director.

These paintings will be a welcome addition to the society’s ever-growing collection of works by Hoosier and Irvington Group artists..

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The Angels are Coming!



Be on the Lookout!