



Friends of the Limberlost

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THE INDIANA STATE MUSEUM & FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST—HOW ARE WE DOING TODAY?

The picture on the right could describe the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, but it could also describe our relationship with the Indiana State Museum (ISM). Our previous newsletter came out in December last year, and that was the last time we updated our membership on how things stand between Friends of the Limberlost and ISM. As of March 27, this is how things stand:

We are working together with other State Historic Site Friends groups to find a way to regain some of our former status. It's been encouraging to see us working together on common goals and finding support with many Indiana legislators. One of our major accomplishments is getting the Indiana House of Representative and Senate to pass HB 1014 which should bring positive changes. See page 7 for more information.



NEW MANAGEMENT PLAN ADOPTED BY ISM IMPACTS LIMBERLOST

The “new management plan” for state historic sites rolled out by ISM in February has resulted in the loss of the site manager position at Limberlost. The site manager at the Gene Stratton-Porter site in Rome City is now the “northern regional manager”, and she is now the site manager for both the Geneva and the Rome City State Historic Sites. Each site will be allowed to hire an additional part-time “intermittent” to help fill in the personnel gap, but this means there is now only one full-time person working at Limberlost.

FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST HAVE NO GIFT SHOP

Many State Historic Site gift shops are now managed by the Indiana State Museum. The Limberlost gift shop was taken over in October 2019. Since October the staff at Limberlost has submitted four orders for merchandise and received nothing so far. The gift shop shelves are looking a bit bare. As far as we can determine the same scenario is taking place at other state historic site gift shops.



ISM still wants volunteers to help with events, but Friends can no longer initiate or organize any site events, and Friends should not be paying any event expenses. This departure from the usual way events and programs have been organized and paid for at Limberlost has strained the partnership between ISM and FOL causing volunteers to back off. Due to the lack of volunteer & the financial help of Friends groups, some sites have had to cancel events or scale back on their usual springtime events and programs. For example, the Friends of the Limberlost always paid most of the expenses and provided many of the volunteers needed to put on the Easter Egg Hunt at Limberlost. Since the ISM no longer wants the Friends to support the site in this way, that event was cancelled for this year.

Of course, the coronavirus protocols have resulted in the cancellation of events at all sites, and since March 17 all the state historic sites closed “until further notice”. So, the loss of Friends group support has been somewhat blunted for now. One thing remains constant for Friends of the Limberlost—we continue to support projects in the Limberlost wetlands that improve wildlife habitat and the environment.

ALL LIMBERLOST TRAILS ARE OPEN—Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, few Indiana attractions are open to the public. The Limberlost wetlands are open from dawn to dusk—7 days a week. Unless there is a stay-at-home order in effect, or other order that restricts your mobility, you can enjoy nature hikes & birding opportunities. Nature can rejuvenate your outlook. Get trail maps online at www.Limberlost.weebly.com (click on Resources/Maps). Even though Limberlost State Historic Site is closed, the kiosk outside the front doors of the visitor center is usually stocked with free maps of the Limberlost properties. Help yourself!

VISITOR ENHANCEMENTS TAKING PLACE THIS SPRING & SUMMER

You will soon see a new interpretive sign at the White Oak property paid for by a grant the Friends received from the Goodrich Family. The White Oak property is a 40 acre mix of wooded and tillable land that includes a parking area and a pioneer cemetery. The property has an interesting history, so this is a great time to include an article written by Board member and genealogist, Connie Smuts.

White Oak Cemetery & Church Jay County, Indiana

By Connie Smuts

The White Oak Cemetery, located in Jackson Township was the final resting place for many of the early pioneer families that settled the Indian lands originally occupied by the Miami, Potawatomi, Wyandotte, Seneca and Shawnee. The cemetery, established in 1840-1845, was being used for nearly 50 years before the church—a Quaker Meeting House—was built nearby.

The church, established in 1894, was located just 1750 feet south of the Adams-Jay County line. It closed in 1963. The picture of the White Oak Church shown above was taken around 1910. Today there is very little evidence the church ever existed.



Photo courtesy of
Diane Payne (Dec 09)
& the Jay Co.
Historical Society



The cemetery served the area settlers and was not aligned with any particular denomination. The earliest landowner of the cemetery was most likely John Engle, and so it was originally known as the Engle Cemetery. The earliest burial I found was James McDowell, died April 1, 1846, 6y. 5m. 14d., son of W. & R. McDowell. Many other tombstones show 1871 or 1872 as the year the person died. There was a measles epidemic during 1871 and 1872, so many tombstones are from that time.

The Friends of the Limberlost helped DNR purchase this 40 acre property in 2017. DNR also used funds from the Bicentennial Nature Trust and Indiana Heritage Trust. Not including the cemetery, the property is considered to be half agriculture and half woodland.

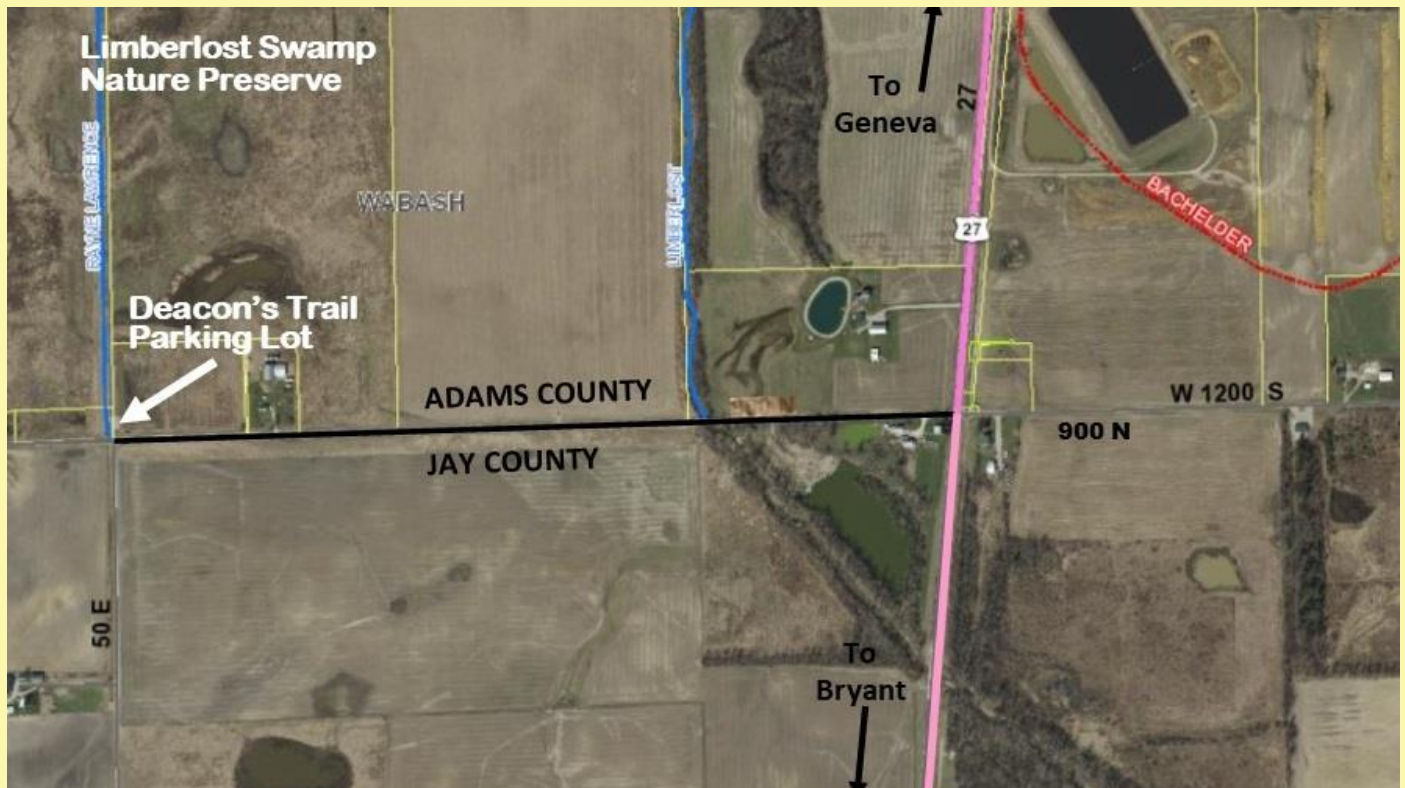
There are many native plant species, such as shooting star, fire pink, starry campion, Virginia spiderwort, white wild indigo, whorled rosinweed, yellow giant hyssop, and aniseroot. To date 173 native plants and 6 different species of oaks have been identified. DNR-Nature Preserves has cleared away debris and installed a locked gate across a lane that leads to the cemetery. The gate was installed to prevent more damage to the grounds.

In years past, located on or adjacent to the property, there was a grocery store with a post office, a one room schoolhouse, along with the church and cemetery. All are long gone except the cemetery. You can walk around the gate at the parking lot, just off County Road 850 North, and hike the 675 ft. lane that ends at the cemetery. The cemetery is maintained by the Jackson Township Trustee.

I can remember my grandmother saying she and her friends would sometimes attend Sunday evening service at the White Oak Church. When I was a lot younger, she and I tried to find the cemetery. All she could remember was that it was south of Perryville. Well, she was right, but we never did find it. The cemetery was far off the county road and the trees were all grownup. Today it's much easier to find!

OTHER ENHANCMENTS COMING TO THE LIMBERLOST WETLANDS

Two interpretation signs are planned for the Deacon's Trail at the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve. One sign will explain how the trail got its name. The trail takes you to the area where Gene Stratton-Porter and her husband, Charles Porter, found the vulture chick that Gene photographed from the time it was a hatchling to the day it was old enough to fly away. Plans call for the other sign to have information about the Limberlost Swamp before it was ditched and drained. The sign will list some of the animals extirpated during the days of drainage and settlement that now have returned to the Limberlost thanks to habitat restoration and wildlife management practices.



Another thing you'll notice in the coming months is a new kiosk at the Deacon's Trail parking lot and a bench or two located along the Deacon's Trail. The interpretation signs mentioned above and the kiosk are the result of a grant the Friends of the Limberlost received from the Indiana Parks Alliance. If you want to know more about their work please visit www.indianaparksalliance.org

Common Loon by Terri Gorney

"The loons! The loons! They're welcoming us back," exclaimed Katharine Hepburn in the movie *On Golden Pond* when she and her co-star, Henry Fonda, had arrived at their lake cottage in New Hampshire where the film takes place. It's a place where the common loons nest in the summer.

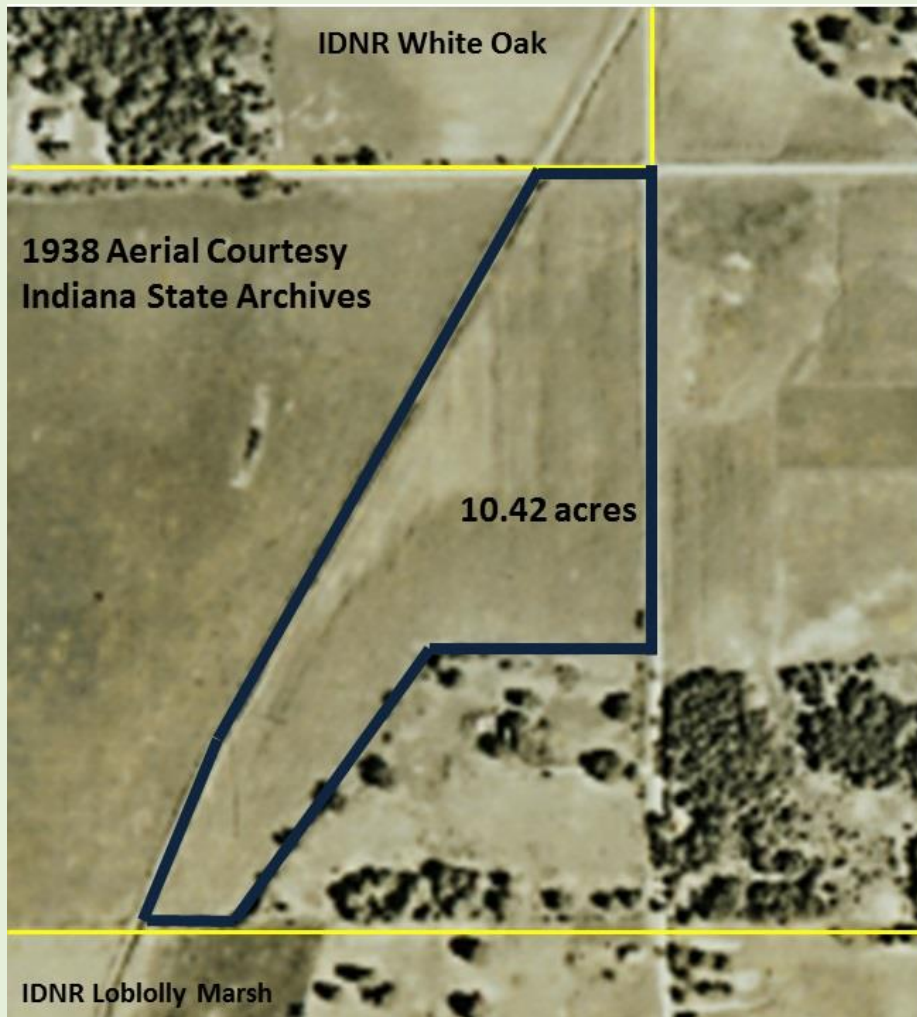
Northeast Indiana has hundreds of lakes and every year we welcome the loons on their way north to their breeding grounds in Canada and the northern United States. They are a striking bird in appearance with black round heads and a black and white patterned body. They are diving birds with dagger-like bills that are perfect for fishing. Their diet is mostly fish but they also consume aquatic insects, frogs, leeches, and mollusks.

For several years now, I have looked forward to the arrival of the first common loon that appears on Rainbow Lake in Geneva on their migration to their nesting grounds. This year I was not disappointed as the first one arrived on March 17. The earliest I have seen one on Rainbow Lake was March 10, 2017. A few days later, Bill Hubbard photographed loons on the Lake-of-the-Woods, also in Geneva (Bill's photo of the loon is above). According to the late Jim Haw's birding records, the earliest date a loon was spotted in Northeast Indiana was February 28.

The spring of 2017, we saw loons on the lake for four weeks. It was a long migration period that year. The latest date that a first loon was seen on the lake was April 8 2016. My most memorable March was in 2014 when a record fourteen loons appeared on the lake. What a beautiful sight they were, and one was calling! The sound of a loon call is eerie, but hauntingly beautiful. I hope you'll see a common loon migrating north. It is a sign spring is coming! https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common_Loon/sounds



HELP KEN BRUNSWICK & THE FRIENDS ENLARGE THE LOBLOLLY MARSH PLEASE DONATE TODAY



An Excellent Opportunity

This 10.42-acre area has once again come on the market. We were unsuccessful when it was on the market the last time. Now, after nearly 6 years of continued crop loss, the owner is wanting to get free of this problem property. For us, it is a great purchase, and it has been our highest priority area. It gives us a nice wildlife corridor connecting the White Oak property with the Loblolly Marsh.

Historically, this area was a very wet prairie, but the drainage ditch made it possible to grow crops in other areas, but not on this land. I hope you feel the same as I do about this purchase, and send a donation towards its purchase. This area has been top priority since the beginning of the wetland restoration project.

I want to personally thank you for helping with this vital purchase. I have envisioned this for 38 years, and I'm grateful to Friends of the Limberlost for this opportunity. Thank You!

Ken Brunswick

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO INTRACTABLE ISSUES by Randy Lehman

It's a small piece of the puzzle, only 10.42 acres, but it's a BIG acquisition for the overall restoration of the Loblolly Marsh—returning unproductive, flood-prone, agricultural land back to wetland habitat. Besides being a corridor for wildlife, there's long-term potential for putting in a trail connection between the Loblolly Marsh and the White Oak property. As you can read above, this is an opportunity Ken has envisioned for 38 years. Ken thinks now that the timing and circumstances are better than ever. The Friends are committed to make this purchase happen, but the financial burden will cut our bank account in half. With your financial help, we can get this project done in a way that allows us to keep more in reserve to help DNR Nature Preserves purchase other key properties at the Loblolly. Won't you please consider making a donation today. **

We thank Ken Brunswick for negotiating with the landowner and trying to find a way to add this property to the Loblolly Marsh. Ken has a good track record working with landowners. His knack for finding unexpected partners, financial opportunities, and creative solutions, is an ability that deserves to be more widely appreciated. When you think about what the Limberlost landscape looked like 25 years ago, and what it looks like today, the transformation is incredible, and one person gets the lion share of credit for this result. He's had some health scares, but Ken has managed to publish 4 books about his personal and professional experiences, and is now finding the spirit and the energy to come out of retirement and make another attempt at acquiring a critical piece of property for the benefit of the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve.

If you can help, please make your check payable to "Friends of the Limberlost". Write on your check that it is a donation for the "ROYER Property". Mail check to PO Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740

If you have questions for Ken about this acquisition, you can reach him at kbrunswick62@gmail.com

All donors will receive a letter of acknowledgement for any donation. The Friends are a 501(c)3 so your donation can be tax deductible.

***It is important to note that even with Ken's best efforts, nothing is certain about purchasing property until an agreement is signed. If the "ROYER" deal doesn't happen, your donation will be used for another specific project being considered to expand the Loblolly Marsh. Updates will be featured in future newsletters.*

WILL WE EVER KNOW ?

by Curt Burnette

"Big Wolf Hunt!" declares an ad in an old Bryant newspaper. This hunt was to take place on March 6, 1924 in the Bryant and Geneva area, and in his book *Limberlost Born Again*, Ken Brunswick tells a story told to him years ago of wolves hunted and killed at the White Oak Church, north of the Loblolly Marsh in 1918. However, in another book *Mammals of Indiana*, the authors state the last confirmed wolf kill in Indiana was in 1908 in Knox County, in the southwestern portion of the state. In Wayne County which is a few counties south of Geneva, the last reported wolf was in 1829. In Wabash County, three counties west of Geneva, the last reported wolf was in 1848. So what was happening here in the Geneva area in 1918 and 1924? Were there really still wolves in the Limberlost area as late as the 1920s?

Timber wolves were part of Indiana's wildlife when settlers first began living in what is now Indiana. The first settlers living in the Limberlost area reported wolves taking their livestock and shadowing them on occasion in the woods. As more and more settlers arrived they killed wolves to protect their livestock, and they cut down the vast forests the wolves lived in. Eventually wolves could only be found in the southern and western portions of Indiana where forests still remained and there were fewer farms. And then the last of these was killed in 1908.

So how could there still be wolves in the Limberlost ten and fifteen years later? The story told to Ken took place in 1918 when the storyteller was only five years old. His recollections of the tale probably came more from family and friends than from his own memory. Were the animals killed at the White Oak Church actually wolves? What else could they have been?

On rare occasions, young male wolves will wander hundreds of miles looking for new territory and mates. This happened fairly recently in eastern Indiana not far from the Limberlost. In June of 2003 in Randolph County, a one year old male was shot and killed. It had wandered down from northern Wisconsin. During the big wolf hunt in 1924, only one animal was seen and it managed to escape. It was certainly possible that animal was a lone wolf. But how do we account for a pack of five wolves killed around here in 1918?

The only other animals that might be mistaken for wolves would be certain breeds of dogs and coyotes. Most people would be able to tell wolves apart from, say, a German shepherd. Feral dogs will sometimes form packs though. What about coyotes? It is very unlikely there were coyotes in the area in the late nineteen teens. They were not very common around Indiana until the 1970s, according to *Mammals of Indiana*.

So were there really wolves in the Limberlost area as late as 1918 or 1924? Something apparently carried away a calf and piglets. Was it wolves? We will probably never know.

WOLF!

HELP CATCH THE WOLVES!

THURSDAY

March 6, 1924

BIG WOLF HUNT

In Vicinity of Bryant and Geneva

Drive will start at 10 o'clock A. M. and four lines will drive toward a common center. Captains will have charge of the lines. Persons attending drive inquire of captain for location and concerning rules.

Capt. Fred Bone, Bryant, Phone.
Sec'y. D. D. Fennig, Bryant Phone.

Marie Webster: Hoosier Entrepreneur

By Adrienne Provenzano

If you happen to be visiting the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve and are looking for a side trip to further explore Indiana history, consider a 35 mile drive west along IN-18W to the Quilters Hall of Fame, 926 S. Washington Street, Marion, Indiana. I visited the museum several years ago and look forward to stopping by again sometime!

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm, late February through mid-December (*due to closures caused by coronavirus protocols, you should contact them to confirm open hours*). General admission is \$4, and for seniors and students \$3. Free to those under 12 attending with an adult. Group tours are also available for \$3 per person.

The current exhibit, *de.light/FULL* is the first of four special exhibits this year. According to the museum website: www.quiltershalloffame.net in these works by quilters from Studio Art Quilt Associates, “fiber artists express the theme of delight and abundance in a creative or innovative way.” Quilts by Marie Webster are also regularly on display, and there is an annual celebration in the summer to install new “Hall of Fame” members.

The museum (pictured below) is housed in the former home of Hoosier quilter and entrepreneur Marie Webster. While I am not aware of any direct connections between this unique woman and the Limberlost’s Gene Stratton-Porter, the two women did share many common experiences and interests.



Both women were born in Wabash County, Indiana, and attended school there. Both women married bankers, and both had children and grandchildren. Both loved gardening, both had books published by Doubleday, and both women were successful entrepreneurs.

Marie Daugherty Webster (pictured above) was born in 1859 and lived a long life, dying in 1956. Gene Stratton-Porter was born about the same time, in 1863, but her life was cut short by an automobile accident in 1924.

Marie married George Webster of Marion in 1884, and they had a son named Lawrence. George was a banker and served on civic boards while Marie

was active in the community, including amateur theater. Gene married Charles Porter in 1886 and both were active in the community of Geneva.

Both women attended the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. It was at this exhibition that Gene found inspiration for her home in Geneva that she named the Limberlost Cabin. In 1909, the same year in which Stratton-Porter’s *A Girl of the Limberlost* was published, Marie began quilting in the applique style using her own designs. Many of these designs were later published in popular women’s magazines, such as *Ladies’ Home Journal* (the same magazine that serialized some of Gene Stratton-Porter’s novels). Eventually Marie started a business selling quilting kits for 50 cents each. Her son, who became an engineer, encouraged her to make blueprints for the patterns.

In 1915, Marie researched and wrote a book entitled *Quilts: Their Story and How to Make Them*, published by Doubleday. A new edition, with a biography of Marie by her granddaughter, Rosalind Webster Perry, was published in 1990. Over 400 quilt names are included in the book! In 1921, Marie Webster formed The Practical Patchwork Company with two friends and her sister Emma. “A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever” was selected as the company motto. Many of her designs were inspired by flowers in her own garden, with titles such as *Iris*, *Poppy*, *Sunflower*, and *Morning Glory*. In addition to running the company, she also lectured extensively about quilts. George Webster, her husband, died in 1938, and Marie retired in 1942 at age 82 and moved to New Jersey, where she died in 1956.

Webster House is in the Colonial Revival style and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993. It was built in 1902 and served as a home for Marie, George, and Lawrence. Marie later operated her quilting business out of the house. It was restored during the 1990’s. The gardens were a special delight to Marie and inspired many quilt designs. They, too, have been restored. A collection of her works can be viewed online at <https://quiltershalloffame.pastperfectonline.com>. The largest collection of Webster’s works is held by the Indianapolis Museum of Art.



TRAGEDY & HOPE

Review of the situation between the Indiana State Museum & the Friends of the Limberlost By Randy Lehman

The Indiana State Museum (ISM) owns and operates 11 Indiana State Historic Sites. Seven of the 11 have some kind of support group. In 2019, ISM declared that all state historic site Friends groups needed to be Type III integrated support groups. This had the effect of eliminating the decades-long partnership between Friends groups and ISM. Up to the day this policy was adopted, the Friends of the Limberlost (FOL) had a very good relationship with ISM.

Given the past volunteer and financial help Friends Groups have given their respective sites, it was difficult to understand why these changes were necessary.

Here's a list of some of the major projects FOL has helped fund at Limberlost State Historic Site in just the past 7 years:

- Contributed **\$75,500** for construction of the Limberlost Visitor Center completed in 2013.
- Paid an additional **\$16,550** for other expenses associated with the visitor center project: **\$6,300** to have the Smith House demolished (where the Visitor Center driveway is now located) , and FOL paid **\$10,250** for Visitor Center interior upgrades
- Paid **\$16,146** for the electronic sign in 2014.
- Paid **\$10,265.21** to ISM to help pay costs for the Limberlost Cabin kitchen restoration project completed in 2019.
- FOL has paid on average **\$8,500/yr.** in operating costs, event & program expenses, and other expenses for the "good of Limberlost State Historic Site".

FOL was able to provide this kind of financial support through donations & memberships and also from profits made operating the gift shop at the site. In addition, volunteer time provided by FOL averages **1,700 hrs.** per year.

All Friends groups have similar lists of important improvements and lists of expenses paid for the good of their respective sites.

In October 2019 ISM took possession of our gift shop. Similar takeovers have occurred at other state historic site gift shops. ISM characterized the transfer of the Limberlost gift shop inventory as a donation worth **\$10,265**. We did not offer the inventory as a donation, but did not challenge the takeover.

Without gift shop revenue FOL no longer has sufficient income to help support the site financially. If you look at the gift shop today, there are fewer items for sale, and the Limberlost Gift shop has not been restocked since October of last year.

As per instructions from ISM, none of the Friends groups can offer a membership or collect donations for general support of their site. Fundraising is allowed only for a specific project that has been approved in advance by ISM.

As requested by ISM, FOL has removed all references to Limberlost State Historic Site from our website and Facebook page.

As requested by ISM, FOL no longer advertises any ISM programs or events (except when explicitly asked by ISM to do so, which rarely happens). The result has been decreased attendance at Limberlost events. Our Facebook page was one of the primary ways people stayed informed about Limberlost events.

In a response to these policies taking place at Limberlost and other state historic sites, FOL joined other state historic site Friends groups seeking legislative relief from ISM management policies, apparently done with support from the ISM Board of Directors.

Fact-finding meetings with our respective state representatives resulted in the submission of House Enrolled Act No. 1014, which recently passed the House by a vote of 84 in favor, 5 against, and 11 excused.

It also passed the Senate: 44 in favor, 5 against, and 1 excused. The bill then went to the Governor's office, and he signed the bill. The protections that the bill provides to the Friends Groups, will be a basis for our continuing effort to come to an agreement with the ISM that allows the Friends Groups to give their full support to their respective Historic Sites, like they have done in the past.

The bill was repeatedly opposed by ISM. Its passage and implementation is a victory for all Friends groups. It does address some of the issues, like the loss of gift shops and many other measures taken by ISM, but much damage to Friends groups has already been done. Some groups, like the Friends of Angel Mounds, may never recover. So many good people, who lost their jobs at ISM and the state historic sites, will never return.

Despite the damage done to Friends groups, HB 1014 does offer some hope, and it serves as a notice that Friends Groups are asking ISM to reconsider and negotiate better terms. We know that our help is very important to the future success of the sites we support, and we know ISM's support is crucial as well.

FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST—NEW & RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Friends of the Limberlost, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, supports the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves. They manage the restored wetlands in the Limberlost Territories. They have an office located at the Limberlost State Historic Site in Geneva, IN. Your membership dues and donations support the many projects bringing back parts of the Limberlost Swamp—made famous by author, Gene Stratton-Porter, in her novels and nature studies.

Your annual membership dues will be used by Limberlost Swamp Remembered (a committee of the Friends of the Limberlost) primarily on Limberlost Swamp restoration projects.

Your annual dues and donation includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please fill out the form below to renew your membership or to sign up as a new member. If you have any questions call Randy Lehman at (260)849-0308, or email randyplehman@comcast.net.

Please make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST and mail both your check and completed Membership form to **PO Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740**.

Please Check the Box that best matches the type of membership you want.

☐ Senior Citizen/Limited Income—\$10 ☐ Business—\$50 (please enter contact name below)

☐ Individual—\$20 ☐ Family—\$35.00 ☐ Lifetime—\$1,000

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TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (Additional donation appreciated): \$ _____

COMMENTS: _____