



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

Summer Nights at the Drag Races!

Written by Carol Wentz

Anyone who lived in the Kettlersville area during the 1960's will undoubtedly remember the roar of the cars and the voice of the announcer at the Kettlersville Drag Strip on many hot summer nights. Most of us growing up at that time lived in homes without air conditioning, so windows were wide open. The sounds of the drag strip coming through those open windows were loud enough to keep many of us awake until late at night



Familiar to nearby residents and racers alike was the control tower at the beginning of the eighth mile track.



Ready to rumble!

on those Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights when the races took place.

Noel Leighton and his partner, Earl Gunnell laid out the track on 40 acres of land on the west side of Lucas-Geib Road that belonged to the Leighton family. Leighton used his own tractor and grader to make the strip which ended in a woods after a quarter of a mile. The races, which were first held on Sunday afternoons, began in 1959 and were timed for one fifth of a mile with the remainder of the track used for cars to stop before they hit the trees.

When it opened the Kettlersville Drag Strip was described by one racer as "drag racing in its purest form." It was considered an "outlaw track," not sanctioned by any national organization. As he said, "You run what you brung," meaning regular street cars could race. There was no starting light pole (Christmas tree). Earl Gunnell's son, David, served as the flagman starter.

Another former drag racer described the races this way, "The track ran slightly downhill, and there was a little rise about halfway down. At the finish line was a fellow with a white flag. He determined who the winner was by pointing his flag to the lane with the car that he thought crossed the line first. As soon as you crossed the finish line you had to brake hard. The asphalt ended quickly, and you were in gravel that ended in a woods. Not much chance of getting into the woods though as there was an old bulldozer sitting crossways in the gravel."

Adhs-oh.org

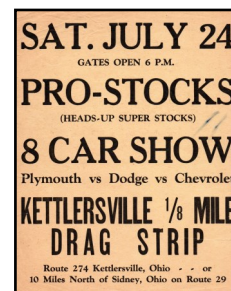
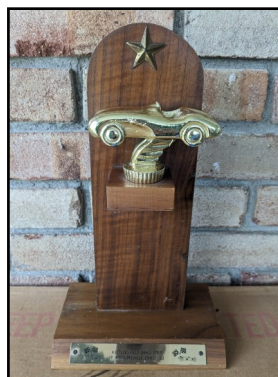
You can find all previous issues of the Skipping Village Gazette, as well as interviews, scrapbooks, vintage photos, and other items of historical significance on our website. Go to "Newsletters" or "Galleries."

As the cars progressed from street cars to much faster dragsters, the track was shortened to an eighth mile run. The faster cars needed more room to get stopped before hitting the woods.



Fans sat on the bleachers on the south side of the track, and the pit area which consisted of gravel lanes and grassy areas was located on the north side on Al Sudman's farmland. Al Sudman ran the general admission gate for years.

Races continued at the drag strip until the early 1970's. After it closed, the land was purchased by Buck and Sonie Buehler. They built a new house right where the original concession stand once stood. The drag strip itself became a driveway back to their trucking business. That part was repaved by the Buehlers, but the original track still runs back to the woods.



Poster and trophy from a bygone era at the Kettlersville Drag Strip



HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

Please consider becoming a member of the Anna District Historical Society.

Name of member _____

Name of spouse (family memberships) _____

Children under 18 (family memberships) _____

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Dr. Milliette Level _____ (\$50 per month)

Anna Carey Thirfield Level _____ (\$25 per month)

Lois Lenski Level _____ (\$10 per month)

Single Membership - \$20 yearly _____

Family Membership - \$25 yearly _____

Lifetime Membership - \$500 _____

Mail to: ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 133, Anna, OH 45302

Contact Susan Bertsch at 937.394.3072 for more information on leveled giving.

Renovation Completed

The front upstairs room at the Packer Historical Center, originally used for archival storage, has recently been completely renovated to serve as an office and work area. The ceiling and walls have been repaired, recoated, and painted with excellent work done by Troyer Drywall and Heinrichs Painting. The floor was refinished by Henschen Hardwood of New Knoxville, and a combination work desk and wall unit was crafted and installed by Randy Wentz. This is the final room at the PHC to be renovated.



New office area at the Packer Historical Center

Date Set for Next PHC Wine and Cheese Event

ADHS members have set Tuesday evening, September 17th, for our next historical slide show and talk, followed by wine, cheese, and soft drinks on the porch at the Packer Historical Center.

This year's historical talk will be about the 1937 Anna Earthquake and the effect it had on our school district. The Packer Center can only accommodate 25 individuals, so reservations will be necessary. Watch for additional details on how to reserve your spot when September draws nearer.



Demolition of White Brick School following the 1937 Anna Earthquake

Students Learn About Lois Lenski at the PHC

During this past school year the teachers, administrators, and elementary students have been focusing on books written by Lois Lenski, as well as the history of her time living in Anna (1899 - 1911). The teachers read numerous Lenski books to their classes or had the students read her books on their own that were appropriate for each grade level. Additionally, eight different groups of elementary students visited the Packer Historical Center to see a slide show of photos and hear a brief history of Lois Lenski and her family.

The Anna District Historical Society wants to commend the efforts by the elementary school staff to make our most notable and famous former citizen, Lois Lenski, known to this future generation of Anna residents.



Two of the fourth grade classes who visited the Packer Historical Center to learn more about Lois Lenski

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If you know of anyone who might enjoy getting the ADHS newsletter online, please contact us at carolwentz53@gmail.com, and we will be glad to add individual email addresses to our growing list of online recipients.

We can also send a copy to individuals who provide us with their postal addresses. Again, please contact us at carolwentz53@gmail.com or send a text message to 419-234-1344.

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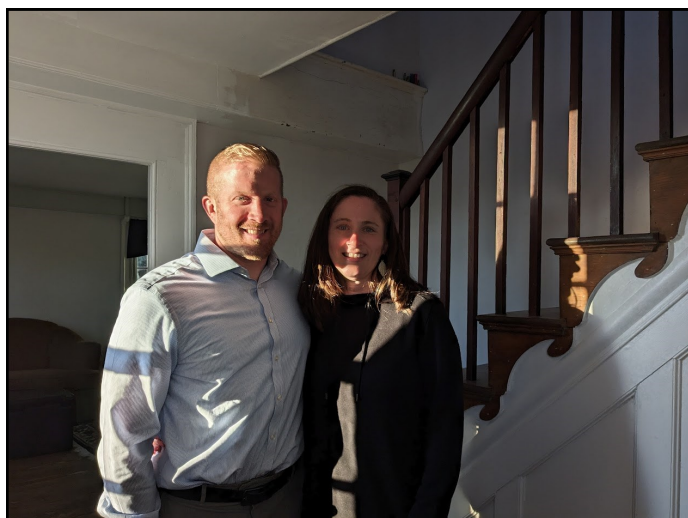
Recent photo of Lois Lenski's home in Harwinton, Connecticut taken by two of our ADHS members who traveled to Harwinton this past spring. This home was built six years before the Declaration of Independence



Interior of the former Lenski home

Anna District Historical Society
112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133
Anna, OH 45302
Phone: 937-646-0011

The Packer Center is now open by appointment only. Call 937.646.0011 to schedule a private tour.



Current residents of Lois Lenski's Harwinton home, Jason and Sarah Urso, who live there with their two children.