

Slickville lives again at marker

By **DAVID PENTICUFF**
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The only living thing left from the community that grew up where Delaware County Roads 1000-W and 650-N now meet are the vines of morning glories that wrap around Gordon Carter's corn stalks each summer and the families that still reside in the area.

Those families haven't forgotten where they came from.

"Welcome to Slickville," Carter announced to about 70 people assembled Saturday afternoon on Ralph Umberger's barnyard lot.

He presided over the dedication of a historical marker commemorating the long-gone village of Slickville and its number one industry — the local tile works.

Much of northern and central Indiana was a swamp until tile factories, like the one that grew up in Harrison Township, started producing the means to drain the land.

"Much of [Indiana] was considered unfit for habitation, much less farming," Harold Brown, Delaware County extension educator, said.

But taking clay from the soil, turning it into tiles, which were then buried under the muck, took the water away and changed the local landscape during the 1800s.

"Ditching, to agriculture, is the same as superhighways, to transportation," said Harry Pearson, president of Indiana Farm Bureau and a Blackford County farmer, who was on hand for the ceremonies.

The tile works in what was Slickville consisted of a production mill and three "beehive kilns." It was developed by

Manassa Myers Sr. and started production in 1883.

His great-granddaughter, Sarah Ann Myers Voyles, worked with other family members and property owners in the area to have the historical marker placed along 650-N.

Carter, who now farms the land where the tile factory once stood, said it was originally suggested that the marker be placed along Ind. 28, but the final decision was to place it along the less-traveled county road.

"Maybe it's better to have a few read it than to have a thousand drive past," he said.

Kilns at the tile works were fueled by a natural gas well discovered at the site.

Carter said the the well also supplied gas heat to several homes in a 3-mile area around the factory by way of pipes that ran above the ground.

"There was a general sore, a grist mill, two blacksmith shops and a saw mill," Carter said of Slickville, also known as Lick Skillet.

The residents thought that if they could just get a railroad, then the community would grow, he said. But the railroad never came and the gas well stopped producing.

Slickville faded after about 25 years of existence. Occasionally, when Carter runs a disc through his farm field, he unearths a whole brick or tile fragments left from the factory.

He also watches the morning glories, remnants left from the gardens of Slickville residents, climb his corn.

Herbicides won't make them go away, Carter said. They are persistent.



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NEW MARKER: Dawn Werkmeister and Sarah Ann Myers Voyles, descendants of Manassa Myers Sr., unveil a historic marker Saturday at the site of Slickville in Harrison Township. Myers operated a tile works in the now-vanished Delaware County community.