

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Even after discovering her dead baby in the trunk of her car, the community embraced Elba and her art.

From accolades in 1926 through local scandal ten years later and beyond, Elba Louise Riffle Penwell continued to live and paint in her small hometown, Winamac in rural northwest Indiana.

Even before she graduates high school, she wins a scholarship to the prestigious John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. While attending that institute five years later, Elba, 21, was a prize winner at its annual exhibit. Throughout her academic career at the institute, she annually won a scholarship.

In 1927, Elba made her first bad choice in men. The 22-year-old accepted a car ride home to Winamac from a fellow art student. Even over the macadam roads of those years, the 100-mile drive should have taken only about three or four hours. The trip took an unexpected turn. According to the news story, she said that, "he became mentally unbalanced and had driven around all night.<sup>1</sup>". He was arrested in Logansport just 20 miles short of her home, and Elba was safely returned by her parents.

According to an interview with Elba's daughter, Zoe Ann, in 1986, Deborah Ann Jones Gearhart related, "[Zoe Ann] explained that her biological father was Lester Pierce. This man had married her mother, but [he] died before she was born. Zoe's mother remarried another widow, Harmol C. Penwell, before her birth. He insisted that Zoe Ann take his name, so that all the children in the home would have the same name. Harmol C. Penwell [abandoned] them all within a few months of their marriage. Elba put her step-children into an orphanage, while she returned home to her parents with her daughter, Zoe Ann."<sup>2</sup>

In the first half of the 1930s, Elba was at the top of her game artistically. She was exhibiting in Indianapolis and another large city as well as in her hometown. In 1932, she won top honors at the Indiana State Fair. She started to receive commissions through "New Deal" programs. She even got a commission from my grandfather for a mural in the "Family Room" of the Indian Head Tavern that he built just after Prohibition ended.

By 1936, in her early 30s, Elba was an established artist in her hometown of Winamac, living with her parents and Zoe Ann.

As far as men, she had struck out three times, but she was not done with them.

In May 1936, she was in financial troubles. Her Oldsmobile was repossessed by the car dealership. Three weeks later, after providing \$15 in cash and a check for \$23, she retrieved

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<sup>1</sup> *Winamac (IN) Republican* 25 Aug 1927: 1. Microfilm.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/31035001/person/12353681762/media/a2c0ae83-d73d-40ce-b692-bcf5d35a8105?\\_phsrc=jWk10&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/31035001/person/12353681762/media/a2c0ae83-d73d-40ce-b692-bcf5d35a8105?_phsrc=jWk10&usePUBJs=true)

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the car. But the check bounced within days, and the car was once again repossessed that weekend. Monday morning at the dealership, a "noxious" odor from the car lead to a newspaper-wrapped bundle in the trunk.

The bundle was a dead baby.

In her confession, she stated that the baby was stillborn on the evening of May 1st. Hiding the birth, as well as the entire pregnancy, from her parents, she wrapped the body in newspapers the next morning and place it in their coal bin behind the house. There it lay for almost three weeks. She then moved it to the Oldsmobile trunk where it lay until it was discovered six days later.

The father was an unnamed artist in Chicago.

The county coroner, a physician from a nearby town, ruled death by strangulation. She admitted tying a scarf around the child's neck. Elba, charged with homicide, intended to plead insanity. But the three local physicians reported that she was sane.

Due to lack of evidence, the Grand Jury did not indict Elba. They did doubt her sanity and recommended that she be institutionalized for observation and treatment until she was determined to be sane. Additionally, the Grand Jury recommended voluntary sterilization. There is no news report of those events ever coming to pass.

By 1938, the scandal had been two years behind her. There are newspaper articles of her paintings in the local Winamac library and the Marshal Fields department store in Chicago. There is even an article in 1939, in which Elba is making posters for the local PTA which are placed in the windows of local businesses, so the community had put her errors in judgment behind her.

Through 1941, she appears to continue to live in Winamac. Her daughter, Zoe Ann, is cited in the Student section of *The Republican*, as well as items about them in *The Democrat*.

Based on a reference in the obituary of her sister, Esther, Elba likely moved to Indianapolis in the fall of 1941 with ZoeAnn starting 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Between 1941 and 1948, Elba married Lyman F. Vernon.

Her last show may have been the Hoosier Salon in Indianapolis in 1965

In 1980, Elba died in Indianapolis at 75. According to her death notice and obituary, she was working in "renovation art" and teaching art to seniors at community centers.

Her last marriage lasted 35 years.

# Stalking My Hometown 1924-1947

## Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba Riffle Vernon at Crown Hill (Indianapolis IN)



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46038978/elba-vernong>

In 1910, Elba (5) living with her folks in Winamac IN

U.S. Decennial Census, 1910. Website ([ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)).

In 1920, Elba (15) living with her folks in Winamac IN

U.S. Decennial Census 1920. Website ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com))

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Elba accepted at John Herron Art Institute

Miss Elba Riffle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle of Winamac, has been honored with a scholarship to the John Herron Art Institute at Indianapolis. She has only finished her second year in the local high school, but won the scholarship through her success in drawing.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 9 Jun 1921. Microfilm.

Elba Riffle graduating High School



Winamac (IN) High School Totem Yearbook 1923: 18, Website (ancestry.com)

Class poem (related fragment)

Elba Riffle is an artist,  
Who I'm sure will win renown.  
Couldn't find a better one  
If you'd search in every town.

Winamac (IN) High School Totem Yearbook 1923: 31. Website (ancestry.com)

Elba does the Art for the Yearbook



Winamac (IN) High School Totem Yearbook 1923: 10. Website (ancestry.com)

Elba returns to school

Miss Elba Riffle went to Indianapolis Saturday to resume her studies at the Herron art school.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat Jan 3 1924. Microfilm.

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Elba (21) wins prize at her Indianapolis art school.

## WINAMAC GIRL WINS HIGH HONOR AT ART EXHIBIT

Miss Elba Riffle, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle of this city, an art student at the John Herron Institute at Indianapolis, was among the prize winners at the annual exhibit of the art work of the students of the institution, held last week. The exhibition will be on view for the remainder of the month. The following paragraph from the Indianapolis Sunday Star tells of the work of the Winamac girl:

"Visitors to the student show should hunt out the work of the talented young student, Elba Riffle, for she received the \$250 scholarship award from the Delzell fund for the best work in the water color class, also the alumni prize of \$10 for the best work in water colors."

Miss Riffle has been a student at the Herron school for three years and during that time has won three scholarship prizes. Her home friends consider it not unlikely that in the future list of Indiana artists her name will hold a prominent place.

Elba (22) has two brothers who are doctors! [Raymond, physician, was 18 years older and Bertram, dentist, was 14 years older.]

Mrs. William Riffle went to Indianapolis Wednesday to visit until Sunday in the homes of her sons, Dr. Raymond Riffle and Dr. and Mrs. Bertram Riffle, and her daughter Miss Elba. The latter was a member of the graduating class of the Herron Art school of that city, the commencement exercises being held Tuesday evening.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 9 Jun 1927: 8. Microfilm.*

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 17 Jun 1926: 1. Microfilm.*

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Elba graduates

## WINAMAC GIRL WINS HONOR AT ART SCHOOL

Miss Elba Riffle, who was graduated last week from the John Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis, was awarded the John Appel scholarship of \$300 as the best student of painting and composition in fine arts, and received two prizes of \$10 each for the best cast drawing and for the best costume. There were twelve members of the graduating class.

With the exception of one semester, Miss Riffle has made her four years at the institute on scholarships, having entered that school upon a scholarship for a drawing submitted before she had finished her course in the Winamac high school. She went to Indianapolis a year and then returned home to complete her high school work. Miss Riffle has disposed of several paintings at a fair figure to patrons of art, and has received much praise from instructors and others upon the quality of her work.

Miss Riffle is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle, and is now at home for a few weeks' vacation. She expects to go to Winona Lake soon for the study of out-door painting during the summer.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 16 Jun 1927: 1. Microfilm.

Elba earns scholarship

Miss Elba Riffle of Winamac, a member of the graduating class of the John Herron Art institute, has been awarded a \$400 scholarship and a cash prize for her excellency in work.

*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune* Jun 18 1927: 7. Microfilm.

Elba makes a poor decision

## LOGANSPORT POLICE RESCUE LOCAL GIRL

A man giving his name as Guy Hammond, 41, Columbia, N. C., was arrested in Logansport Wednesday morning after he had been reported as "driving haphazardly" down the road. It is said that he had become mentally deranged while enroute from Indianapolis to Winamac, in company with Miss Elba Riffle, who had been attending the John Herron Art Institute at Indianapolis.

When Hammond was arrested, Miss Riffle said she had left Indianapolis for Winamac Tuesday evening with him, and he had become mentally unbalanced and had driven around all night. Miss Riffle's parents were called and went to Logansport after her.

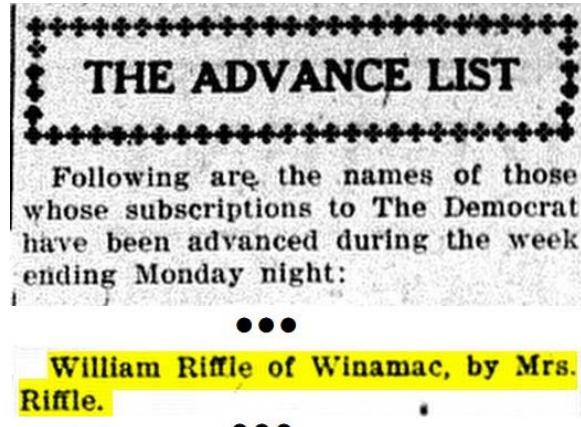
Although Hammond gave as his home Columbia, N. C., and had New York license plates on his car and Florida license plates in his car, it is understood that he, too, attended Herron Institute, where he became acquainted with Miss Riffle.

In a talk with the Winamac authorities, the Logansport police stated that they intended holding Hammond in custody until his true condition can be learned.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 25 Aug 1927: 1. Microfilm.

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Elba's momma, Mary Ellen (65), buys her daddy, William (70), a subscription to *The Democrat*. William is a self-employed teamster, i.e., delivery wagon driver.



Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 May 1928: 7. Microfilm.

In 1930, Elba (25) living with her folks in Winamac IN

| 1930 United States Federal Census for Elba S Penwell |      |                 |      |                      |      |   |      |             |      |  |       |
|--|------|-----------------|------|----------------------|------|---|------|-------------|------|--|-------|
| Indiana > Pulaski > Winamac > District 0007          |      |                 |      |                      |      |   |      |             |      |  |       |
| State  |      | Indiana         |      | Incorporated place   |      | Winamac Town  |      | Block No.   |      | Save   |       |
| County   |      | Pulaski         |      | Ward of city         |      |   |      |             |      |  |       |
| Township or other division of county                 |      | Nora's Township |      | Unincorporated place |      | (Enter name of town or city, or name of town, post office, district, etc. for unincorporated place) |      | Institution |      | (Enter name of institution, if any, and indicate the State or which the records are kept. See instructions.) |       |
| Place of birth                                       |      | Name            |      | Home data            |      | Personal description  |      | Education   |      | Place of birth   |       |
| 1  | 2    | 3               | 4    | 5                    | 6    | 7   | 8    | 9           | 10   | 11   | 12    |
| 13   | 14   | 15              | 16   | 17                   | 18   | 19  | 20   | 21          | 22   | 23   | 24    |
| 25   | 26   | 27              | 28   | 29                   | 30   | 31  | 32   | 33          | 34   | 35   | 36    |
| 37   | 38   | 39              | 40   | 41                   | 42   | 43  | 44   | 45          | 46   | 47   | 48    |
| 49   | 50   | 51              | 52   | 53                   | 54   | 55  | 56   | 57          | 58   | 59   | 60    |
| 61   | 62   | 63              | 64   | 65                   | 66   | 67  | 68   | 69          | 70   | 71   | 72    |
| 73   | 74   | 75              | 76   | 77                   | 78   | 79  | 80   | 81          | 82   | 83   | 84    |
| 85   | 86   | 87              | 88   | 89                   | 90   | 91  | 92   | 93          | 94   | 95   | 96    |
| 97   | 98   | 99              | 100  | 101                  | 102  | 103   | 104  | 105         | 106  | 107  | 108   |
| 109  | 110  | 111             | 112  | 113                  | 114  | 115   | 116  | 117         | 118  | 119  | 120   |
| 121  | 122  | 123             | 124  | 125                  | 126  | 127   | 128  | 129         | 130  | 131  | 132   |
| 133  | 134  | 135             | 136  | 137                  | 138  | 139   | 140  | 141         | 142  | 143  | 144   |
| 145  | 146  | 147             | 148  | 149                  | 150  | 151   | 152  | 153         | 154  | 155  | 156   |
| 157  | 158  | 159             | 160  | 161                  | 162  | 163   | 164  | 165         | 166  | 167  | 168   |
| 169  | 170  | 171             | 172  | 173                  | 174  | 175   | 176  | 177         | 178  | 179  | 180   |
| 181  | 182  | 183             | 184  | 185                  | 186  | 187   | 188  | 189         | 190  | 191  | 192   |
| 193  | 194  | 195             | 196  | 197                  | 198  | 199   | 200  | 201         | 202  | 203  | 204   |
| 205  | 206  | 207             | 208  | 209                  | 210  | 211   | 212  | 213         | 214  | 215  | 216   |
| 217  | 218  | 219             | 220  | 221                  | 222  | 223   | 224  | 225         | 226  | 227  | 228   |
| 229  | 230  | 231             | 232  | 233                  | 234  | 235   | 236  | 237         | 238  | 239  | 240   |
| 241  | 242  | 243             | 244  | 245                  | 246  | 247   | 248  | 249         | 250  | 251  | 252   |
| 253  | 254  | 255             | 256  | 257                  | 258  | 259   | 260  | 261         | 262  | 263  | 264   |
| 265  | 266  | 267             | 268  | 269                  | 270  | 271   | 272  | 273         | 274  | 275  | 276   |
| 277  | 278  | 279             | 280  | 281                  | 282  | 283   | 284  | 285         | 286  | 287  | 288   |
| 289  | 290  | 291             | 292  | 293                  | 294  | 295   | 296  | 297         | 298  | 299  | 300   |
| 301  | 302  | 303             | 304  | 305                  | 306  | 307   | 308  | 309         | 310  | 311  | 312   |
| 313  | 314  | 315             | 316  | 317                  | 318  | 319   | 320  | 321         | 322  | 323  | 324   |
| 325  | 326  | 327             | 328  | 329                  | 330  | 331   | 332  | 333         | 334  | 335  | 336   |
| 337  | 338  | 339             | 340  | 341                  | 342  | 343   | 344  | 345         | 346  | 347  | 348   |
| 349  | 350  | 351             | 352  | 353                  | 354  | 355   | 356  | 357         | 358  | 359  | 360   |
| 361  | 362  | 363             | 364  | 365                  | 366  | 367   | 368  | 369         | 370  | 371  | 372   |
| 373  | 374  | 375             | 376  | 377                  | 378  | 379   | 380  | 381         | 382  | 383  | 384   |
| 385  | 386  | 387             | 388  | 389                  | 390  | 391   | 392  | 393         | 394  | 395  | 396   |
| 397  | 398  | 399             | 400  | 401                  | 402  | 403   | 404  | 405         | 406  | 407  | 408   |
| 409  | 410  | 411             | 412  | 413                  | 414  | 415   | 416  | 417         | 418  | 419  | 420   |
| 421  | 422  | 423             | 424  | 425                  | 426  | 427   | 428  | 429         | 430  | 431  | 432   |
| 433  | 434  | 435             | 436  | 437                  | 438  | 439   | 440  | 441         | 442  | 443  | 444   |
| 445  | 446  | 447             | 448  | 449                  | 450  | 451   | 452  | 453         | 454  | 455  | 456   |
| 457  | 458  | 459             | 460  | 461                  | 462  | 463   | 464  | 465         | 466  | 467  | 468   |
| 469  | 470  | 471             | 472  | 473                  | 474  | 475   | 476  | 477         | 478  | 479  | 480   |
| 481  | 482  | 483             | 484  | 485                  | 486  | 487   | 488  | 489         | 490  | 491  | 492   |
| 493  | 494  | 495             | 496  | 497                  | 498  | 499   | 500  | 501         | 502  | 503  | 504   |
| 505  | 506  | 507             | 508  | 509                  | 510  | 511   | 512  | 513         | 514  | 515  | 516   |
| 517  | 518  | 519             | 520  | 521                  | 522  | 523   | 524  | 525         | 526  | 527  | 528   |
| 529  | 530  | 531             | 532  | 533                  | 534  | 535   | 536  | 537         | 538  | 539  | 540   |
| 541  | 542  | 543             | 544  | 545                  | 546  | 547   | 548  | 549         | 550  | 551  | 552   |
| 553  | 554  | 555             | 556  | 557                  | 558  | 559   | 560  | 561         | 562  | 563  | 564   |
| 565  | 566  | 567             | 568  | 569                  | 570  | 571   | 572  | 573         | 574  | 575  | 576   |
| 577  | 578  | 579             | 580  | 581                  | 582  | 583   | 584  | 585         | 586  | 587  | 588   |
| 589  | 590  | 591             | 592  | 593                  | 594  | 595   | 596  | 597         | 598  | 599  | 600   |
| 601  | 602  | 603             | 604  | 605                  | 606  | 607   | 608  | 609         | 610  | 611  | 612   |
| 613  | 614  | 615             | 616  | 617                  | 618  | 619   | 620  | 621         | 622  | 623  | 624   |
| 625  | 626  | 627             | 628  | 629                  | 630  | 631   | 632  | 633         | 634  | 635  | 636   |
| 637  | 638  | 639             | 640  | 641                  | 642  | 643   | 644  | 645         | 646  | 647  | 648   |
| 649  | 650  | 651             | 652  | 653                  | 654  | 655   | 656  | 657         | 658  | 659  | 660   |
| 661  | 662  | 663             | 664  | 665                  | 666  | 667   | 668  | 669         | 670  | 671  | 672   |
| 673  | 674  | 675             | 676  | 677                  | 678  | 679   | 680  | 681         | 682  | 683  | 684   |
| 685  | 686  | 687             | 688  | 689                  | 690  | 691   | 692  | 693         | 694  | 695  | 696   |
| 697  | 698  | 699             | 700  | 701                  | 702  | 703   | 704  | 705         | 706  | 707  | 708   |
| 709  | 710  | 711             | 712  | 713                  | 714  | 715   | 716  | 717         | 718  | 719  | 720   |
| 721  | 722  | 723             | 724  | 725                  | 726  | 727   | 728  | 729         | 730  | 731  | 732   |
| 733  | 734  | 735             | 736  | 737                  | 738  | 739   | 740  | 741         | 742  | 743  | 744   |
| 745  | 746  | 747             | 748  | 749                  | 750  | 751   | 752  | 753         | 754  | 755  | 756   |
| 757  | 758  | 759             | 760  | 761                  | 762  | 763   | 764  | 765         | 766  | 767  | 768   |
| 769  | 770  | 771             | 772  | 773                  | 774  | 775   | 776  | 777         | 778  | 779  | 780   |
| 781  | 782  | 783             | 784  | 785                  | 786  | 787   | 788  | 789         | 790  | 791  | 792   |
| 793  | 794  | 795             | 796  | 797                  | 798  | 799   | 800  | 801         | 802  | 803  | 804   |
| 805  | 806  | 807             | 808  | 809                  | 8010 | 8011  | 8012 | 8013        | 8014 | 8015   | 8016  |
| 8017   | 8018 | 8019            | 8020 | 8021                 | 8022 | 8023  | 8024 | 8025        | 8026 | 8027   | 8028  |
| 8029   | 8030 | 8031            | 8032 | 8033                 | 8034 | 8035  | 8036 | 8037        | 8038 | 8039   | 8040  |
| 8041   | 8042 | 8043            | 8044 | 8045                 | 8046 | 8047  | 8048 | 8049        | 8050 | 8051   | 8052  |
| 8053   | 8054 | 8055            | 8056 | 8057                 | 8058 | 8059  | 8060 | 8061        | 8062 | 8063   | 8064  |
| 8065   | 8066 | 8067            | 8068 | 8069                 | 8070 | 8071  | 8072 | 8073        | 8074 | 8075   | 8076  |
| 8077   | 8078 | 8079            | 8080 | 8081                 | 8082 | 8083  | 8084 | 8085        | 8086 | 8087   | 8088  |
| 8089   | 8090 | 8091            | 8092 | 8093                 | 8094 | 8095  | 8096 | 8097        | 8098 | 8099   | 80100 |

U.S. Decennial Census 1930. Website (ancestry.com)

Elba takes a break from school

Miss Elba Riffle of Indianapolis spent the weekend here with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 6 Dec 1928: 5. Microfilm.

Elba's brother and sister visit their folks [Raymond is 19 years older than Elba, and Nora is 12 years older.]

Dr. Raymond Riffle and daughter Jean of Indianapolis, and Mrs. Nora Webster of Logansport were here over Sunday visiting in the home of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 7 Mar 1929: 5. Microfilm.

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Elba places third at the Indiana State Fair

**PAINTING WINS PRIZE.**

Miss Elba Riffle of this city was awarded third prize on a water color which she exhibited at the Indiana state fair last week. Miss Riffle has been a student at the John Herron art institute at Indianapolis, but has been here for several weeks at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 11 Sep 1930: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba's on exhibit at the Indianapolis Art Institute

**Enters Water-Color in  
Indianapolis Exhibit**

"Summer Flowers," a water color painting by Miss Elba Riffle of Winamac, is included in the twenty-fourth annual exhibition of Indiana artists and craftsmen conducted by the John Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis. The exhibition opened Saturday evening with a reception for the exhibitors, the members of the Indiana Artists Club, and the members of the Indianapolis Art Association.

According to Wilbur D. Peat, director, the number of entries was greater than for any previous exhibition. From more than seven hundred paintings submitted eighty-eight oils and fifty-five water colors were chosen. In addition there are twenty-four pieces of sculpture, twenty-three prints and twenty-one articles of applied art.

The exhibition will continue throughout March and many clubs are planning to meet at the Institute some time during the month.

The title of Miss Riffle's painting, "Summer Flowers," suggests the gardening activities carried on by her mother, Mrs. William Riffle, at the family home on North Monticello street.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 5 Mar 1931: 8. Microfilm.*

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Elba paints for the Christians

## **Oil Painting by Local Artist Draws Approval**

The painting just completed by Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell of this city, for installation over the new baptistry in the Christian church, was on display in one of the Fry & Lange windows the latter part of last week and was admired by many passers-by.

A view of the Tippecanoe river from a point on the Shellhart farm southwest of Winamac was chosen as the subject. When commissioned to paint the picture, Mrs. Penwell visited the site and made a pencil sketch. This was transferred and enlarged to the 4 x 6-foot section of wall board on which the oil painting was executed.

The colors are harmonious and true to life. A willow tree occupies a prominent place in the foreground of the picture, and the stream gently winds out of sight toward the rear.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 13 Aug 1931: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba on exhibit at local public library

## **COUNTY ARTISTS CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC EXHIBIT**

An exhibit by artists of Pulaski county, the first of its kind to be held in Winamac, will open at the public library next Thursday, for one week. The main exhibit will be held in the basement auditorium, and in the smaller room will be a collection of prize winning photographs from the collection of the Association of Photographers of Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, secured through the co-operation of R. J. Gifford.

Among the artists who expect to be represented at the exhibit are Mrs. Elba Penwell, Miss Janet Keller, Joseph Musial, Miss Wilma Ale, Francis Murray and Russell Rearick, all of Winamac, with possibly a few others from the county. It is planned to make the exhibit an annual affair, in an effort to stimulate an interest in art in the community. The art committee of the Mothers' Club, composed of Mrs. Earl D. Roudebush, Mrs. Michael Garigan and Mrs. John Russell, is taking an active interest and assisting in the exhibit.

The exhibit will be open from 2:30 until 5:00 and from 7:00 until 9:00 each week day and on Sunday afternoon.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 8 Oct 1931: 1. Microfilm.*

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Elba to exhibit at local public library

**WILL HOLD ART EXHIBIT**

An art exhibit to stimulate the art interest in the county will be held in the large room in the basement of the library from October 15 to 21. Some of the pieces to be on exhibit have taken prizes at the state fair.

The hours will be from 2:30 until 5 each afternoon including Sunday and each evening except Sunday from 7:30 until 9 o'clock.

The art exhibit will become an annual affair if the public is interested in the first.

In addition to the art picture exhibit R. J. Gifford, local photographer, will have an exhibit of special prints some of which were taken in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.

There will probably be twelve exhibitors some of whom are Elba Riffle Penwell, Joe Musial, Janet Keller, Wilma Ale, Francis Murray and Russell Rearick. The public is invited.

Winamac (IN) Republican 8 Oct 1931: 1. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at local public library

**WIDE VARIETY IN ARTISTS' EXHIBIT**

**Color Reigns as County Display Opens in Winamac Library.**

The four walls of the auditorium in the basement of the Winamac public library fairly teem with color this afternoon, as the doors are thrown open on the initial exhibit planned by Pulaski county artists. Additional space in an adjacent committee room, as well as a screen through the middle of the main room, were found necessary to properly arrange all the contributions.

Tiny plaques vie for the visitor's eye along with massive oils; water colors and pastels throw their radiant hues across quiet drawings in charcoal and ink; silken wall hangings in bright shades surround a display of sculpture on a background of sombre black, with posters and photographs adding to the spice of variety.

Interest in the exhibit was aroused recently when a few artists began to talk about a display showing work accomplished by residents of the county. Instead of a score or two of pieces, as originally hoped, the project gradually grew to proportions that tax the capacity of the quarters chosen for the event, which is already regarded as the first of an annual series.

**Local Artists Take Charge.**

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell of Winamac is one of the largest contributors, with works in oil, water colors, still life, and black and white. As a former student at the John Herron art institute at Indianapolis, Mrs. Penwell has been active in arranging the exhibit, as has also Russell Rearick, another native of this city. His contribution consists of sculptured articles in marble, limestone, plaster and even salt. The display occupies a prominent place on the rostrum.

R. J. Gifford has likewise been a guiding spirit in the affair, and along with his own photographs has secured a collection selected to be hung at the Ohio-Michigan-Indiana Photographers' convention. A number of oils have been contributed by Mrs. C. H. Leeson of this city and daughter Miss Florence. The latter, who is teaching art in the schools at Mulberry, has added a group of decorative plaques and specimens of work with the palette knife.

A display offered by Miss Janet Keller, Winamac young lady now an art supervisor in the Indianapolis schools, consists of water colors and charcoal drawings, while her sister, Mrs. Joseph Musial, presents several batik wall hangings and a bas relief. Mr. Musial presents a number of cartoons and modernistic posters.

**Art Supervisors Contribute.**

Miss Ellen K. Phillipson, a graduate of the Winamac high school with the class of 1931, has a display of oils and a pastel. Her uncle, George Scheuer of Monterey but now employed at South Bend, contributes some oil paintings and a sample of linoleum printing.

Francis Murray, now a resident of Winamac but employed as supervisor of art in the Seymour schools, has a collection of pastels. Miss Wilma Ale, also of this city, supervisor of art at Angola, has some water colors, a decorative motto and a sample of gesso panel.

Mrs. Roy Hoch, now living at Rochester, contributes several water colors, mostly autumn scenes, which she did while a resident of Winamac. Herbert Hoch, young Winamac business man, shows some oils and a collection of plaques.

There are pen and ink drawings by two young men, Owen Wacknitz of Medaryville and Elmer Howard of Winamac. Mrs. Ralph Curtis of this city shows a water color, and there is a plaque done by the late Paul Burkley.

The exhibit is to be held open for one week, from 2:30 to 5:30 each afternoon, including Sunday, and from 7:00 to 9:00 each week day evening. Members of the Mothers' Club are acting as hostesses. There is no admission charge, and the public is invited to attend.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 15 Oct 1931: 1. Microfilm.

## Stalking My Hometown

1924-1947

Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at local public library

### ART EXHIBITION AT LIBRARY COLORFUL

A colorful array of oil paintings, water colored pictures, charcoal drawings, pencil sketches, sculptural work and batiks, together with plaques, cartoons and posters marked the opening this afternoon at 2 o'clock of the exhibit by Pulaski county artists, of their work in the basement of the public library. Members of the Mother's Club are acting as hostesses to the many who are visiting the exhibit.

The affair was planned several weeks ago by Miss Alma Doyle, librarian, together with a number of Pulaski county artists who were interested in forming a club and making the display an annual affair if the public was interested and to also have a permanent smaller exhibit in the reading rooms of the library.

Various degrees of talent can be seen in the showing and some of the best art schools in the United States are represented. No awards are to be made, but the exhibit, complete as it is in almost every detail, was made possible by the generosity of the artists, who have co-operated to give almost every type of painting and sculptural work.

Of special interest is the exhibit of Russell Rearick. Sculptures from blocks of salt, together with work in limestone, plaster and clay in almost every stage of the making and the tools with which they are made is displayed.

A number of portrait prints, made by R. J. Gifford, of Kewanee, local artist and photographer, are exhibited in the smaller art room of the library.

A number of the oil paintings are scenes which many will recognize as being made along the river, from the cemetery hill or of various homes. A painted portrait of a local young lady is also exhibited.

Among those whose work is on display are: George Scheuer, Katherine Philipson, Herbert Hoch, Mrs. Roy Hoch, Mrs. Don Davis, Florence Leeson, Mrs. Charles Leeson, Lois Keller, Joe Musial, Janet Keller, Wilma Ale, Paul Burkey, R. J. Gifford, Russell Rearick, M. H. Adams, Owen Wacknitz and Elba Riffle Penwell.

The exhibit is open to the public in the afternoons from 2:30 until 5 o'clock and in the evenings from 7:30 until 9 o'clock every evening except Sundays. The exhibit will continue until October 21.

Winamac (IN) Republican 15 Oct 1931: 1. Microfilm.

Elba earns commendation

### ART EXHIBIT REVEALS COMMUNITY TALENT

The first annual exhibit of Pulaski county artists came to a close last evening at the Winamac library. To the more than 1,000 visitors who viewed the work of our local artists the exhibition was a revelation as few were aware of the talent in our community.

The portraits, sketches, posters, cartoons, scenic paintings, plaques, batiks, wall panels, bas reliefs and sculpturing were clever in design and artistically rendered and each received its merited meed of praise.

Commendation is due Elba Riffle Penwell, Miss Alma Doyle, R. J. Gifford and Russell Rearick, who planned, arranged and supervised the exhibit. The Art Committee of the Mother's Club acted as hostesses.

Tuesday noon the Kiwanis Club adjourned in a body to the library, where they were entertained with short talks on the paintings by Mrs. Penwell and on sculpturing by Mr. Rearick. The Kiwanians were especially interested as one of their members, Herbert Hoch, was an exhibitor.

Winamac (IN) Republican 22 Oct 1931: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at Marshall Field

## Winamac Artist has Pictures in Chicago Show

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, Winamac artist, is represented by two pictures in the Eighth Annual Hoosier Salon which is now being held in the Marshall Field galleries, Chicago. One is an oil still life of the yellow forsythia and the other a water color of tulips. The latter drew favorable comment from other exhibiting artists who saw it Saturday night at a preview of the salon.

Miss K. Ellen Philipson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry W. Philipson of Winamac, and George Scheuer of Monterey and South Bend, were present at the preview, which was attended by many of the painters and patrons of the salon.

Scheuer reported the event for the South Bend News-Times and the United Press.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 28 Jan 1932: 1. Microfilm.

Elba and Zoe party

## MRS. MARY TERRY HONORED

A group of neighbors surprised Mrs. Mary Terry Monday evening upon the occasion of the 76th anniversary of her birth, which occurred on Sunday.

Those who participated in the delicious covered dish supper were: Mrs. E. J. Blew, Mrs. Ray Conn, Mrs. William Holmes, Mrs. Charles Kroft, Mrs. William Riffle, Mrs. Elba Penwell and daughter, Zoe Ann, Miss Minnie Dommer and Miss Lizzie Dressler.

Winamac (IN) Republican 28 Jan 1932: 6. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits permanently at Winamac Public Library

## PAINTINGS IN LIBRARY

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell has established a permanent exhibit of some of her pictures at the library, and the public is invited to view them. Mrs. Penwell will change her exhibit occasionally and will show pictures which have been in a number of art exhibits in America.

Winamac (IN) Republican 18 Feb 1932: 6. Microfilm.

Elba's daddy renews

## THE ADVANCE LIST

Following are the names of those whose subscriptions to The Democrat have been advanced during the week ending Monday night:

• • •  
William Riffle of Winamac.  
• • •

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 7 Apr 1932: 3. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba and ZoeAnne visit relatives in Logan  
[Logansport is a large city about 20 miles south  
of Winamac.]

Mrs. Elba Penwell and daughter  
Zoeanne visited relatives in Lo-  
gansport the latter part of the  
week.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 26 May 1932: 6. Microfilm.

Elba's brother visits  
[Bertram Riffle is 15 years older than Elba.]

Dr. and Mrs. Bertram Riffle of  
Indianapolis visited here Sunday  
in the home of the former's par-  
ents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle.  
Dr. Riffle is improving from sev-  
eral weeks' illness following a light  
stroke of apoplexy.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 23 Jun 1932: 1. Microfilm.

Elba's brother visits  
[Ortho Riffle is 9 years older than Elba.]

Mr. and Mrs. Otho Riffle and  
twin children Billy and Mary of  
Indianapolis are spending the week  
in the home of the former's par-  
ents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 11 Aug 1932: 5. Microfilm.

Elba will exhibit at Indiana State Fair

## LOCAL EXHIBITORS TO BE AT THE STATE FAIR

Several entries are being made in  
the Indiana State Fair from Pulaski  
county. Lowell Podell, of Denham,  
has entered his 4-H beef calf in the  
Shorthorn senior calf class which will  
show Saturday, September 3. Betty  
Bell Kessler, of Star City, who was  
winner in the 3rd year work at the  
County Club day, entered clothing in  
the 4-H exhibit. Others making en-  
tries in the art classes are: Wilma  
Ale, painting; Russell Rearick, sculp-  
turing, and Alba Riffle Penwell,  
painting.

Merchants tickets will not be avail-  
able through the county agent's office  
this year, as the State Fair Board has  
discontinued this practice.

Farm people who attend the fair  
will be particularly interested in ex-  
hibits at the Purdue building on the  
corn borer, forestry, weed control,  
how to cut corn growing cost and an  
exhibit on how to control insects.  
Many other interesting educational  
exhibits will be shown in the new In-  
diana University building.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 1 Sep 1932: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba wins at State Fair!

## OIL PAINTING BY WINAMAC LADY WINS STATE PRIZE

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell of Winamac was awarded first place on her landscape entry in the oil painting class at the state fair this week. The picture is a study of two houses in the north part of Winamac, painted on a dreary, wet morning, and is such a faithful picturization of the subject that residents of Winamac can readily recognize the scene.

The out-of-state judge, Raymond S. Stites, director of the department of art and esthetics in Antioch college at Yellow Springs, Ohio, said in regard to the awarding of prizes: "I tried to pick the pictures, not only for their technical skill, but also for their sincerity of interpretation of life right here. An example of this is the winner of the first prize in landscape by Elba Riffle. It is my belief that with the proper encouragement and educational opportunities, Miss Riffle might rise to great heights in the art world. I am glad that the state has backed such artists as these."

Others from Winamac who had entries in the art department at the fair were Miss Wilma Ale, Russell Rearick and Miss Janet Keller.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 8 Aug 1932: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba exhibits at Winamac Public Library

## Artists of County to Hold Annual Exhibit

The second annual exhibit by artists of Pulaski county will open Friday of next week at the Winamac public library. The main exhibit will be held in the basement auditorium and will consist of crafts combined with other art work.

Most of the artists who exhibited last year plan to show their work again this year, in addition to a number of others, according to the committee in charge, Russell Rearick, Miss Wilma Ale and Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell.

The exhibit will continue until October 16, and will be open from 2:00 until 5:00 and from 7:00 until 9:00 each week day and on Sunday afternoon. There is to be no charge.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 6 Oct 1932: 5. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba and her winning oil painting



Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell of Winamac is shown above with her painting, "Across The Street," which won first place in the oil-landscape entries in the art exhibition this year at the State Fair at Indianapolis. The prize winning picture was painted last winter by Mrs. Penwell from a front window at her home on North Monticello street. It has received much praise for its interpretation of a bleak subject. The photograph was taken by R. J. Gifford of Winamac, and used through courtesy of the South Bend News-Times.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 13 Oct 1932: 8. Microfilm.

Elba elected Arts&Crafts Guild prez!  
[Probably wining first place at the Indiana State Fair didn't hurt.]

## Artists' Club Opens Annual Exhibit Friday

The second annual exhibit by the Pulaski County Arts and Crafts Guild is to be held in the auditorium of the Winamac library the latter part of this week. The open hours are 2:00 to 5:00 on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and 7:00 to 9:00 Friday and Saturday evenings.

The county organization was effected following the successful exhibit held a year ago, and Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell elected president. She and a number of associates have been active for several weeks in arranging for this year's display, which is to be open to the public, without charge.

Articles to be on exhibition are being put in place today, ready for the opening tomorrow afternoon. Contributors so far are as follows:

Oils—Herbert Hoch, Katherine Phillipson, George Scheuer, Mrs. Penwell, Mrs. Stella Morehart, Mrs. C. H. Leeson.

Water Colors—Mrs. Roy Hoch, Wilma Ale, Mrs. Penwell, George Ott, Mrs. Ralph Curtis, Janet Gorrell, Hazel Agnew.

Crayons and Charcoal—Miss Ale, Mrs. Morehart, Miss Phillipson, Dick Joyce.

Sculpture—Russell Rearick, Gene Huddleston.

China Painting—Mrs. Charles Byfield, Mrs. Margaret Shine, Mrs. Morehart, Mrs. L. A. Smith (pieces by Mrs. E. G. Smith).

Wall Hangings—Mrs. Florence Leeson Dunk, Velma Long, Miss Ale.

Photography—R. J. Gifford.

Craft Work—Owen Wacknitz, linoleum engraving; Mrs. Bessie Davis, wall plaques; W. E. Huddleston, wood carving by his father; Mrs. William Crim, sampler by her grandmother.

A meeting of members of the association and other interested persons is to be held in the library at the close of the exhibit Sunday afternoon.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 13 Oct 1932: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at Winamac Public Library

## ART EXHIBIT TO OPEN TOMORROW AT LIBRARY

The second annual exhibit of Pulaski county artists will open in the basement of the Winamac library Friday afternoon and will continue Saturday and Sunday. Hours will be from 2 until 5 and from 7 until 8:30.

Among those who will exhibit are:

Oil Paintings—Katherine Philipson, George Scheuer, Herbert Hoch, Elba Penwell, Mrs. C. H. Leeson.

Black and White—Jack Barnett, Elmer Howard and Owen Wacknitz.

Water Colors—Bessie Baugh Davis, Wilma Ale, Pha Curtis, George Ott, Dick Joyce, Elba Penwell, Katherine Philipson and Janet Gorrell.

Pastel and Charcoal—Mrs. Morehart, Francis Murray, Katherine Philipson and Wilma Ale.

Sculpture—Russell Rearick and Imogene Huddleston.

Wood Carving—William E. Huddleston's father.

Needlecraft—Mrs. William Crim's grandmother.

China Painting—Mrs. Morehart, Mrs. J. Frank Shine, Lin Smith's mother.

Wall Hangings—Velma Long, Wilma Ale and Florence Leeson Dunk.

Wall Plaques—Bessie Baugh Davis.

Winamac (IN) Republican 13 Oct 1932: 1. Microfilm.

Elba demonstrates

The Arts and Crafts Guild will hold an open meeting Wednesday evening, October 26, at the library auditorium. Mrs. Elba Penwell will give a demonstration of a crayon wall hanging.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 20 Oct 1932: 8. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at Marshal Field

## TWO PAINTINGS BY WINAMAC ARTIST IN HOOSIER SALON

Two paintings by a Winamac artist, Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, are among those on exhibition in the Ninth Annual Hoosier Salon in the Marshall Field galleries in Chicago. The paintings shown are "Still Life" and "Last October—Morning." The second is an interesting landscape painted at Pulaski. The exhibition continues to February 11.

Among those present at the opening of the salon were Miss Katherine Ellen Philipson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Philipson, who is an artist member of the salon, and George Scheuer of South Bend and Monterey.

Mrs. O. H. McNary, president of the Winamac Mother's club, is one of the patronesses of the salon.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat -9 Feb 1933: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at Indy Art Institute

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell went to Indianapolis Sunday to be present at the John Herron Art Institute during the showing of her one-man exhibit of pictures. She is showing twenty-five pictures in the exhibit, which opened on Thursday of last week to last two weeks.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 23 Feb 1933: 5. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at Marshall Field

## MOTHER'S CLUB HAS RARE ART EXHIBIT

The Mother's Club has secured from the Hoosier Art Salon, a large oil landscape which is now on exhibit at the library. The picture is a Brown county scene—“Afternoon in Autumn,” by Adolph Robert Shulz, of Nashville, and is priced at \$250.

The Hoosier Art Salon Association is an organization which sponsors the work of Indiana artists by the exhibit and sale of their pictures. The Mother's Club this year voted a \$10 membership in the association and are hereby entitled to the loan of pictures.

The picture may be kept for one month and it is hoped that many will call at the library and enjoy it.

In this connection it is interesting to note that Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell is exhibiting two paintings at the Ninth Annual Hoosier Salon in the Marshall Field galleries at Chicago.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 23 Feb 1933: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba praised

## Display of Paintings by Winamac Artist Receives Critical Praise

A description of an exhibit of paintings by Elba Riffle Penwell of Winamac, now on display at the John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis, appeared in last Sunday's issue of the Indianapolis Star. The author of the article speaks in commendatory terms of Mrs. Penwell's work, as follows:

"Across the Street," a picture of drab houses that maintain a semblance of dignity, is the small oil painting that brought Elba Riffle the outstanding prize at the Indiana state fair last fall, and that may now be seen in a varied selection of oils and water colors that represent Miss Riffle in the series of one-man shows at the Herron art institute.

Those who were in class with Elba Riffle at the Herron art school a few years ago will recall that she was regarded as one of the most talented of the pupils. The present exhibit may give evidence that her talent is slowly unfolding but is nowise in full flower.

About every subject that is paintable has been included in the twenty-three pictures, and Miss Riffle is not only trying her hand at landscape, flower and still life painting, portraiture, figure compositions, interiors and city scenes, but she is experimenting with methods and media. She has imagination—that most precious of gifts for the artist—and a sensitiveness to mood. Likewise hers is a fine feeling for color arrangement as well as for line and mass arrangement in composition.

### Something in Every Picture.

Elba Riffle has something to say in every picture she paints. But this is not to say that the manner of her saying might not be im-

proved, occasionally. Now and then a carelessness creeps into her work—perhaps it is an experiment that was not so successful as others. In her child portrait she gets the subtle essence that means childhood. In her flower paintings, many of them exquisitely fashioned and tinted, she captures the soul of the flowers—their personality; if flowers can be said to have soul and personality.

Occasionally she paints brilliantly—her view of village houses, many of them nestled in trees, entitled "Back Streets," is brilliantly executed. Her selection of titles is fresh and unhackneyed—an oh, so desirable a thing in long catalogue lists—and she does not hesitate to omit that useless article "the" which weakens so many titles.

Her sense of humor is delicious in her play upon the meaning of words in the water color, "Harlequin and Columbine," in which the useful feminine figure appears as a bouquet of rose-colored columbines.

"Rhyming Willows" is her one pastel, a creek scene, charmingly painted. Would there were space to tell of many of the oil and water colors. Titles must suffice. You must go to see the pictures. They come down on Thursday. A reception is to be held for the public this afternoon from 3 to 6. Among the titles are "Apple Butter Kettle," "Going After the Cows," "Back Streets," "Forsythia," "Still Life, Blue and Ivory," "Creek Mouth," "The Potted Cyclamen," "Outdoor Still Life," "Gladflowers," "Peonies," "Old Barnyard," "Tulips," "Spring Morning," "Sunrise" and "One Summer Day."

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 2 Mar 1933: 5. Microfilm.

Elba 'contributed to the enjoyment'

## CLUB WOMEN ENJOY ANNUAL GATHERING

Mental Hygiene—Mrs. Harry Snyder.

Music—Mrs. Luther Thompson. Rural Co-operation—Mrs. O. H. McNary.

Art—Mrs. O. C. Small.

Literature—Miss Alma Doyle. Press and Publicity—Mrs. Theron L. Warrick.

The district president, Mrs. Harry Lee Beshore, of Marion, gave a splendid talk, outlining the aims of club federation and the benefits derived therefrom.

At noon a delightful luncheon was served in the basement of the church to 60 ladies by the Ladies Aid of the Methodist church. The decorations were baskets of cut flowers with a color scheme of yellow and white.

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, Winamac artist, contributed much to the enjoyment of the occasion by having on exhibition a number of her paintings.

At 2 o'clock the meeting was again called to order, with two organ numbers by Mrs. R. M. Carothers. Mrs. John Downing Johnston, of Indianapolis, gave a very instructive address on the Century of Progress Exposition, her talk being well illustrated with mounted pictures of the buildings.

Miss Mary Co Pattison gave two beautiful numbers on the cello, accompanied at the piano by her mother, Mrs. W. D. Pattison.

An invitation will be extended to the District Federation of Clubs to hold their meeting next year in Winamac.

Winamac (IN) Republican 6 Apr 1933: 1. Microfilm.

Elba hosts WHS art class

## STUDENTS VISIT STUDIO.

Members of the high school art class, under direction of Edward Reutebuch, instructor, visited the studio of Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell at her home on North Monticello street Tuesday. Mrs. Penwell showed the students many of her drawings and paintings, gave a talk on art work, and presented each with a souvenir.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 18 May 1933: 8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba inspires WHS art class (from Student section)

### ART CLASS AT PENWELL'S

Mr. Reutebuch and his art class made an interesting visit to Mrs. Elba Penwell's Tuesday morning during their regular class period. They greatly enjoyed Mrs. Penwell's exhibit of her wonderful work, and each was the recipient of a gift made by Mrs. Penwell.

Those who enjoyed Mrs. Penwell's hospitality were: Hazel Agnew, Anasue Shill, Janetta Shank, Elaine Smith, Virginia Zellers and Janet Gorrell.

Winamac (IN) Republican 18 May 1933: 6. Microfilm.

Elba in class of '23 (from Student section)

#### EXTRA EDITION

You are probably wondering why the "Students Cycle" makes its appearance this week since you who read it observed that our intentions were to make last week's the final copy. The explanation is in the fact that there were so many activities at the school this week that we felt it necessary to acquaint the public with them.

#### \* OLD GRADS

We discovered these things concerning the graduates of the past twelve years:

1921

Ruth Benbow married Charles Jackson, Jr., and is living in the East.

1922

Viola Mitchell is an instructor at Hanover College. Herbert Hoch is married and is in business with his father. Eunice Emmett is employed as a stenographer in the Reidelbach law office. Louis Houlton is married to Geneva Fites. Miriam Keller is married and lives in Vincennes.

1923

Kermit Shank is married and is in partnership with his father in Shank's dry goods store. Kathryn Overholser is employed as night operator in the telephone office. Eunice Connor is married to Raymond Smeltzer and has a son. Kathryn Huddleston is reporter for the Pulaski County Democrat. Elba Riffle has painted several excellent pictures for which she has received prizes. Helen Keller is now Mrs. Wes Hickman of Lafayette.

1924

Willard Baker is manager of the Schultz Bros. store. He is married and has a son. Dorothy Haas is Mrs. Dave Seigel, of Chicago. She has a son. Newton Shank is working in his father's clothing store. Louise Smith is the 3rd grade teacher in the Winamac public schools.

1925

Charles Doyle is married to Mae Troutman and is living in Chicago. Frances McBride is teaching in San Jose, Ill. Margaret Shill is married and living in South Bend.

1926

Blanche Bachtenkircher is commercial teacher in the Winamac high school. Ralphi Mae Curtis is married and has two children. Dorothy Barnett is a nurse. Bessie Baugh is married and is living in Winamac. Dorothy Reynolds is reporter for The Winamac Republican. Harry Kocher is manager of the Wholesale Beverage Co. of Winamac.

1927

Cecil Robinson is employed in the Linco filling station. Richard Lowry recently completed the term of office as county treasurer. Olive Hoesel is employed by the Aetna Life Insurance Co. Doreas Holmes is married to Francis Weldy and has a small daughter. Wilma Ale is teaching at Angola. Ruth Shank is now Mrs. Richard Falvey and has a daughter, Margaret Ann. Morris Notheis is in Cincinnati.

1928

John Bob Keller is completing four years at Indiana University this year. Stuart Dornberg is in Cincinnati. Jennings Stipp is employed in a Fort Wayne bakery. Woodrow Breitweiser is a partner in the Winamac Transit Co. Argyl Ash is opening his own grocery store in Winamac. William Kocher is an employee of the First Union Bank & Trust Co. John Selle is in Chicago.

1929

Lermond Stout is at home. Alberta Wilson is married and has a daughter. Claude Weeks is attending Ball State College. Esther Thomas is office girl at W. H. S. Dorothy Obright works in Kelly's hardware.

1930

Lowry Ashley is attending Indiana University. Bob Thompson is attending Purdue. Bob Dornberg is in Cincinnati. Joe Huddleston and Bus Henry are attending Kentucky University. Virginia Johnson is at home. Lorene Long is employed in Chicago. Viola Haschel graduated this year from the Epworth hospital in South Bend.

1931

Albert Ginther is in Chicago. Bess Gorrell and Dorothy Hoesel are attending Indiana University. John Kruger is clerk in Carper's drug store. Wilbur Yocom is a partner in the Winamac Transit Company. Jane Munson is at home. Evelyn Phillips is with her grandmother in Syracuse, N. Y. Mary Reynolds is stenographer for the Aetna Life Insurance Co. Agnes Shank is a clerk in Shank's dry goods store. Della Wagerman and Lillian Knarr are at home.

1932

Imogene Huddleston is completing her course this year although she was honorary graduate last year. Marshanna Clester is at home. Marshall Long is employed by The Winamac Republican. Harry Pearson is working in his father's grocery. Lester Stout is attending Indiana University.

Winamac (IN) Republican 25 May 1933: 6. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown

1924-1947

Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at Logansport Public Library

**LOCAL ARTIST EXHIBITS**

An art exhibition of the work of Mrs. Elba Penwell will be held at the Logansport public library beginning Friday, December 15, and continuing for two weeks.

The collection consists of a number of local sketches and water colors, flowers and Logansport sketches. Mrs. Penwell has gone to much work to frame and prepare these subjects and the public is invited to go see them.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 14 Dec 1933: 8. Microfilm.

Elba paints for library for a "New Deal" agency  
[During The Depression, the federal government sponsored employment program, including for artists.]

**Commissioned to Paint Picture for Library**

Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell has received a commission from the Indiana Division of the Public Works of Art Projects, through the John Herron Art Institute, to paint a picture to be hung in the Winamac public library. The picture is to have a historical setting, and Mrs. Penwell has chosen a Tippecanoe river scene with an old mill on the river bank. The painting is to be completed by February 15.

A painting entitled "Play," entered by Mrs. Penwell at the Hoosier Art Salon in Chicago, was awarded Saturday a \$50.00 purchase prize offered by the State Federation of Women's clubs. The prize winning painting depicts a group of children at play.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 1 Feb 1934: 1. Microfilm.

Elba wins 50 bucks

**WINS \$50 ART PRIZE**

Elba Riffle Penwell, Winamac artist, won the Indiana Federation of Clubs purchase prize of \$50 on a water color, "Play," at the tenth Hoosier salon, which opened to the public at the Marshall Field galleries in Chicago Monday.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 1 Feb 1934: 8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba is critiqued in student assembly (from  
Student Section)

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Miss Long gave a very interesting talk about a picture painted by Elba Riffle Penwell. The picture was painted about the fourth book of Aenid and was painted for Miss Long. The picture shows great skill and workmanship.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 8 Feb 1934: 6. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits commissioned painting for local  
public library

**New Painting Delves Into  
Town's Early History**

At a meeting of the library board last week, the painting for Winamac by Mrs. Elba Penwell, made possible through CWA funds, was officially accepted. The painting has been framed and is now hanging in the library.

Entitled "Early Pioneer Industry," the picture authentically depicts a Tippecanoe river scene at the north edge of Winamac and the old Bruce mill. Persons familiar with early history of the town recall that water furnished the motor power for Winamac's most important manufacturing industry of those days, the grist mill, the saw mill and the cider mill, all of which were operated together.

The river itself did not furnish the power. Instead, the water that turned the wheel was diverted from the Quigley (Terry) ditch by a dam just west of the Terry bridge at the north edge of Winamac, to the mill race that entered the river near the location of the present power house. The Bruce mill was located at this point, and was among the first to be built in the community. It was built by Stephen Bruce, probably in the middle fifties. The mill burned down about 1889 but was fast being replaced by the Barnett steam power mill.

Mrs. Penwell has been commissioned to paint two additional pictures by the CWA committee of critics at the John Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis. These are to be exhibited in the schools of the state as paintings of an Indiana artist.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 12 Apr 1934: 3. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits in South Bend  
[South Bend is a very large city about 60 miles north of Winamac.]

## Winamac Sculptor Wins Prize in Art Exhibit

A piece of sculpture by Russell Rearick of Winamac, entitled "Public Opinion," was awarded first prize at the spring exhibition by the Midland Academy of Arts, being held at South Bend this week. Twenty-seven Northern Indiana artists have contributed to the display, which includes oil paintings, water colors, pastels, etchings and sculpture.

Other Pulaski county exhibitors are K. Ellen Philipson, in oils, and Elba Riffle Penwell, in water colors.

In commenting on the sculpture prize winner, the South Bend News-Times says of "Public Opinion": "Mr. Rearick has attempted to give the idea of the 'highbrow' attitude toward life. The line of the elongated neck and face sweep upward to the eyes where one notices that the right is closed to all things while the left peeks out to catch what it can unobserved. The hard hair curls back in a horn-like form to show the force back of public opinion. 'The Shower,' another stone carving by Rearick gives the impression of a cloud, skitting over a partly plowed field."

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 24 May 1934: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba even got a commission from my grandfather!

## KRUZICK WILL OPEN TAVERN NEXT WEEK

Under the ownership of John Kruzick and managed by James Atwood, of Logansport, the Indian Head Tavern will open next week at the north edge of Winamac, near the Johnson service station. The exact day of opening has not been named as the decorating is not yet completed.

The building, which was begun several months ago, will be one of the most attractive in Winamac. The entire outside will be painted white, with an attractive rock work entrance. The first floor is comprised of a large dance floor, with attractive booths along the east and west sides and orchestra pit at the north end. The room is featured by an unusual bar, the outside of which resembles a number of beer kegs placed side by side. Beautiful lighting effects complete the room. A private dining room with murals depicting the political history of the country, painted by Elba Riffle Penwell, is located at the far south end of the first floor.

The spacious basement contains private dining rooms, a smaller bar and a larger room for private parties and club meetings.

Mr. Atwood plans to have dancing each night, with Monday set aside for old fiddlers and square dancing.

*Winamac (IN) Republican 16 Aug 1934: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba even got a commission from my grandfather!

## New Tavern's Beauty Brings High Praise

What has been declared by numerous visitors to be the most beautiful building in this part of the state was thrown open to the public last evening, when guests were formally received at the new Indian Head Tavern at the north edge of Winamac.

On a knoll overlooking the little creek whose waters turned mill wheels in the Winamac of early days, close by the bridge over which state road No. 29 crosses the stream, the ornamental doors in the white, stone-trimmed structure seem to beckon a welcome to every passing motorist.

Once inside the caller finds delicately tinted walls and soft crystal lights, comfortable refreshment booths surrounding a shiny dance floor, musical instruments, appropriate pictures. On the walls of a small dining room at one end is a series of historical murals painted by Elba Riffle Penwell of this city that are indeed intriguing.

John Kruzick, owner of the building, has put much of his own clever handiwork into the structure, particularly where cement was to be handled. The plans, prepared by Architect Carl Horn of Logansport, followed suggestions by Mr. Kruzick based on an extended investigation of refreshment and amusement establishments.

In the basement, where concrete walls glisten under an aluminum finish, are dining rooms to accommodate parties of any size, including groups up to forty in number. There also are the refrigerating room, lavatories and hot water heating plant. The basement rooms may be reached from side entrance. (Continued on page Six.)

### New Tavern's Beauty Brings High Praise

(Continued from page One.)

trances separate from the main floor.

Jim Atwood, for several years connected with food establishments at Logansport, is here as manager of the new tavern. Mrs. Atwood is at Delphi convalescing from a hospital illness, but they expect to move here shortly.

From the crowd that assembled for the opening last night came many compliments for the new venture, and many expressions of approval over the management's published assurance of genteel conduct.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 23 Aug 1934: 1&6. Microfilm.

Elba to exhibit in local public library

## MRS. PENWELL TO EXHIBIT

Elba Riffle Penwell, local artist, will open an art exhibition at the Winamac library Monday afternoon. The exhibit will consist mostly of water colors and oils. It will be open daily from 1 to 5 and 7 to 8:30 p. m. and Sunday afternoon, March 3, from 2 to 5 o'clock.

Mrs. Penwell has won acclaim as an artist in the state and has exhibited at the Marshall Fields salon in Chicago.

Winamac (IN) Republican 21 Feb 1935: 1. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at Winamac Library

Elba Riffle Penwell, local artist will open an art exhibition at the Winamac Library Monday afternoon. The exhibit will consist mostly of water colors and oils. It will be open daily from 1 to 5 and 8 to 8:30 p. m. and Sunday afternoons March 3, from 2 to 5.

Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune 22 Feb 1935: 3. Website (newspapers.com)

Elba exhibits in local public library

## LOCAL ARTIST EXHIBITING

Paintings by Elba Riffle Penwell are on exhibit this week at the Winamac library. The display includes local scenes in oil and water-color. It may be seen during the regular library hours, 1 to 5 p. m. and 7 to 8:30 p. m., daily and also will be open from 2 to 5 p. m. Sunday.

The local artist's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions including the Hoosier Salon in Chicago, the Midland Academy of Art in South Bend and the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis.

Winamac (IN) Republican 29 Feb 1935: 8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba speaks (from Student section)

**ART**

Mr. Reutebuch wishes that who ever borrowed an old cigar box full of large wax crayons would please return them to him immediately.

The grade classes are still working on Holland posters.

Elba Riffle Penwell, local artist, gave a talk to both the high school art classes last week and is offering a prize to the pupil who writes the best theme on any one or more of her pictures.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 21 Mar 1934: 3. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits in South Bend again

**Portrait Wins Art Academy Prize**



This costume study and portrait of Miss K. Ellen Phillipson, Winamac girl now studying art in South Bend, won for Vernon R. Scott the first prize in oil at the second annual spring exhibition of the Midland Academy of Art, held at South Bend.

Other exhibits in the Midland show of interest in Pulaski county are a portrait painted by Miss Phillipson; a water color by **Elba Riffle Penwell** of Winamac; nine pieces of sculpture by Russell Rearick of Detroit, now visiting his mother in Winamac, and a linoleum print by George Scheuer of South Bend, formerly of Monterey.

The picture is here shown through courtesy of the South Bend News-Times.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 4 Apr 1935: 6. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba gets a new do!

**The Office Window**

Friday—Some poor cuss with a sore throat. Clay Zellers all dressed up and everyone wonders why. Margaret Hunneshagen from the lake—wonder where the boy friend—not Bill, the tiny one. **Mrs. Elba Penwell with a brand new haircut.** Paul Davis youngster with two sleds!!! Mrs. Ida Rowles with her daughter and tiny granddaughter. The usual Friday work of cleaning the coils across the street attracts the curious. There goes Willy Werner, but Margaret's nowhere around now. Lowell Wilson in golf pants. Mrs. Ida Marvin from Harrison township.

Saturday—Pearson's big truck making a lot of noise. A lady wearing a pink dress, green coat, orange tam, brown hose, black shoes and carrying a blue purse—wonder if she has a white hanky. Jim Wilson getting a nice ride on the side of a car. Robert Johnson doing a nice job of painting on the street. Link Williams of Star City wearing a poppy and we hope everyone helped the disabled veterans with their dime. George Selle, pushing a lawnmower down the street—well, you remember Ex-president Hoover's remark about grass growing in the street.

Monday—Clint Haisley, from way out west, drives by in his car. Mrs. Albert Bulander from the same neighborhood walks by. Pat Boyles was fortunate enough to have a rain coat at the shop to wear home at noon, when it began to rain at just noon. Joe Grant jay-walks across the street with another gentleman, and both wearing grey suits. A. J. Vanscoyk—who was it was telling of seeing him with three \$100 bills Sunday afternoon. Bill Hudd—wears a perfectly beautiful knitted shirt.

Tuesday—Forest James with his small brown-eyed son. Frank Spicer, puffing on a cigarette. Mrs. Herb Weltzin, nee Vera Felton, rides in with Helen Low to attend the H. E. meet. Mr. and Mrs. Herman Lichtwark, near Monterey — wonder where the family is. A truck and trailer park parallel to the curb in front of a no truck parking sign and take up four parking spaces. A dog sleeps all day along the curb until it starts to rain, then scurries for cover. "Dyke" Galbreath from Aldine, drifts by.

Winamac (IN) Republican 30 May 1935: 8. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at Indy studio

**M**rs. Elba Penwell, a member of the recently organized club "The Twenty-Five Gallery," whose membership is made up of Indiana artists, has hung five pictures in the Miss Ruth Kealing studio at Indianapolis, where club members exhibit their work. Three of the pictures were painted this fall and are autumn scenes along the Tippecanoe river.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 14 Nov 1935: 1. Microfilm.

Is Elba 'showing' yet?

**T**hanksgiving day guests of Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle and family were Mr. and Mrs. Otho Riffle and children and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Atwood, of Indianapolis.

Winamac (IN) Republican 5 Dec 1935: 5. Microfilm.

Wait'll he reads the May 28 issue!

**D**r. Bertram Riffle, of Indianapolis, a former Winamac boy, is among the new subscribers to The Republican.

Winamac (IN) Republican 2 Apr 1936: 7. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Isn't Elba puttin' on some weight?

## CLUB WOMEN

Gothic Architecture in France was discussed by Mrs. J. E. Shill at a meeting of the Woman's club Monday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Herman Stalker. In a detailed account of the Gothic influence on early cathedrals and other public buildings of lasting beauty, illustrations that had been made by **Mrs. Elba Penwell** were shown. These drawings are now on file at the library. During the business session Mrs. Theron Warrick was named delegate to the state Federated club convention to be held in Indianapolis in May, and Mrs. C. C. Jordan was admitted to membership. Mrs. R. E. Thompson, Mrs. Gill Gordon and Mrs. G. H. McCaskey were named to the program committee.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 15 Apr 1936: 3. Microfilm.

Find Winamac Baby Strangled

# Find Winamac

## Baby Strangled

### Hide Body of Infant Inside Car

**Badly Decomposed Form of Child  
Discovered in Rear Compartment of Coupe**

**WINAMAC, Ind., May 23**—The death of the new born baby found in the rear of an automobile here early today was a plain case of murder, Hilbert Wachnitz, sheriff, announced Saturday afternoon. A woman's silk stocking of small size, was wrapped about the infant's neck, drawn tightly and tied, the officer declared.

WINAMAC, Ind., May 23—Mys Dr. C. E. Linton, coroner, and tery surrounds the presence of the Hilbert Wachnitz, sheriff, were badly decomposed body of a new notified and opened an investiga-  
born baby found Saturday morning tion.

in the rear compartment of a 1930 The physician stated that the model coupe at the Charles Duggle body was that of a possible still by garage. born baby or one that had perished

The machine recently came into soon after birth. possession of the local garage. Neither the machine door or the owner, who also handles used cars, rear compartment of the car had and for several days had been locked during the period it parked on a lot at the rear of the had remained parked outside the building. However, last night it garage. was driven inside.

When employees arrived for work this morning they were attracted by the odor that came from the auto. An investigation revealed that in the rear compartment were sacks and rags and the body of the child.

*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune May 23 1936: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Report Noted Winamac Artist Has Confessed Slaying Baby

# REPORT NOTED WINAMAC ARTIST HAS CONFERRED SLAYING BABY

## Body Of Infant Hidden In Coal Pile And Rear Compartment Of Her Car

**Elba Riffle Penwell, Tearfully Admits Child Was Born to Her on May 1 and That She Tightened Stocking About Its Neck to Make Sure It Was Dead; Young Woman Will Be Charged with Murder in the First Degree, According to Prosecutor James Nye Who Obtained Confession in Case.**

**WINAMAC, Ind., May 25.**—Elba Riffle Penwell, 32-year-old sculptor and artist estranged from her husband, was reported by authorities today to have confessed to the murder of the infant whose decomposed body was found stuffed into the rear compartment of an automobile here Saturday.

Mrs. Penwell, in custody since late Saturday afternoon and held in jail at Rochester, was said to have broke and made her confession this morning to Prosecutor James Nye who intends revealing the text of the purported confession at the coroner's inquest which will open Tuesday afternoon at the court house with Dr. Charles Linton of Medaryville in charge.

### Prepare Charges

Prosecutor Nye, working night and day on the case since the discovery of the body early Saturday morning in the automobile repossessed May 19 from Mrs. Penwell and stored in the Charles Duggeley garage, announced Monday afternoon that he was preparing to file a first degree murder charge against Mrs. Penwell who is the mother of a daughter seven years old. First degree murder is punishable in Indiana by life imprisonment or death.

In discussing the case and its sensational developments in the past 48 hours, Prosecutor Nye said that Mrs. Penwell had told him that she thought the child was dead when it was born on the night of May 1 in her bedroom at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle, but that to make sure that it was she fastened a silk stocking about its neck and drew it tight.

### Finger of Suspicion

The corpse was found Saturday morning about 7 o'clock by garage employees who investigated when the rancid odor of the decomposed flesh filled the building. Sheriff Hilbert Wacknitz, Prosecutor Nye and Coroner Charles Linton were notified and the investigation was under way without delay.

Naturally Mrs. Penwell came under the ray of suspicion since the automobile had only recently been taken from her possession and she was taken into custody Saturday afternoon about 4 o'clock. Officers whisked her away to Indianapolis for tests by a lie detector and then returned her to the jail at Rochester to await the coroner's inquest at which she will be asked to testify. Results of the lie detector tests were not revealed. The reported confession was the last of the startling developments, officers said, but the inquest will go on as scheduled at 1:15 o'clock.

### Will Plead Insanity

Mrs. Penwell, whose water colors have been shown in leading Indiana exhibits, was quizzed by A. J. Daugherty, Pulaski county deputy sheriff, and Mrs. Daugherty before the purported confession was obtained, it was learned.

It was also reported that Mrs. Penwell has indicated that she will plead insanity as defense for the crime which may send her to the electric chair.

Mrs. Penwell returned to Winamac about six years ago after being away for some time. Her daughter was then about a year old. She and her husband had separated then.

Authorities revealed that Mrs. Penwell had given them the name

of the father of the death child but

other than saying that the father

did not live in this community

they would not discuss this angle

in detail or disclose the name.

The woman was taken to Indianapolis late Saturday and submitted

to a lie detector test and a physical

examination. Lieut. Don Koken

of state police said "she did not

clear."

Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune May 25 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Jury Will Probe Baby Case

# JURY WILL PROBE BABY CASE

## Young Winamac Artist Held In Child's Death Is Present At Inquest

Coroner Launches His Investigation Into Sensational Elba Riffle Penwell Case Before Crowd Which Packs Courtroom; Prosecutor James Nye Reveals Confession Signed By Young Woman Who Admits That Child Was Born To Her and That She Attempted To Dispose of the Body.

### HER CONFESSION

Statement Credited To Elba Riffle Penwell in Connection With Death of New-Born Baby, Released By Prosecuting Attorney.

Elba R. Penwell, being first duly sworn, says that she is 21 years of age, and was born in Winamac, Ind., that on May 1, 1936, she gave birth to a child at about 10 p. m. or 11 p. m. of said day and that said birth took place at the home of her parents on North Monticello street in Winamac, Pulaski county, Ind. That said child was born on the floor and immediately after its birth this infant laid down on the bed and slept some; that said child never at any time uttered a sound of life; that said infant continued to lay on the bed until her mother called her about 3 or 4 o'clock a. m. of May 2, 1936, at which time affiant arose, dressed herself, and saw the child lying naked on the floor, upon the bed on which affiant had been lying, said child having laid on the floor from the time of its birth until affiant arose about 5 or 6 o'clock on the morning of May 2, 1936, a period of 6 or 8 hours; immediately upon arising from said bed and dressing affiant observed said child and observed that it was lying in the same position as it had been just before affiant laid down; that during the interval from 10 or 11 p. m. of May 1, 1936, to 5 or 6 o'clock a. m. of May 2, 1936, this affiant was continually in the same room as said child and did not hear said child utter any sound whatsoever; neither did said child move at all, although affiant watched it closely in order to detect some sign of life but affiant could observe none.

Affiant further says that upon arising and dressing as aforesaid and observing no sign of life in said child, this affiant wrapped a stocking around the neck of said child, tied the same there for the reason that she was not sure that child was dead; then affiant wrapped the child in some newspapers and placed some old stockings under its head and left it lying on the floor and affiant went down stairs; later in the forenoon of May 2, 1936, affiant carried said child down stairs and carried the same to the back part of the lot on which it is situated the house in which the child was born and placed it in a coal bin, where it remained until about 4 o'clock p. m. on May 19, 1936, and on said last mentioned date affiant wrapped some car board and burlap round said child and carried it out and put it in the rear compartment of her 1935 Oldsmobile coupe which at the time was standing in front of the said residence on Monticello street, laid down since which time affiant has not touched or seen said child.

Affiant further says that no person whatsoever knew anything about the facts as aforesaid above. Not even her father or mother except as this day made known to her mother.

Affiant further says that she makes this affidavit of her own free will and accord and not through fear or violence of any kind and not on account of any threats or promises whatsoever and after being advised that any or all statements she may make may be used against her.

Affiant also says that all of the above statements were made in the presence of her mother, Marietta Riffle, A. J. Daugherty, Velma Daugherty and Jay M. Nye.

Signed: ELBA R. PENWELL.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 22nd day of May, 1936.

JAY M. NYE,  
Prosecuting attorney of the 20th judicial circuit of Indiana.

My Commission expires Dec. 31, 1936.

### Suspected Of Infanticide

Elba Riffle Penwell, 21, Winamac, Prominent Young Artist, Who Is the Central Figure in the Death of Her New-Born Baby.



WINAMAC, Ind., May 26.—The coroner's inquest into the death of the new-born baby of Elba Riffle Penwell, talented young artist who was adored abruptly at 8:15 o'clock this morning, will be adjourned until noon, with the coroner's inquest being adjourned until the arrest and detention at the order of Coroner Charles Linton and upon the recommendation of Prosecutor Jay M. Nye. She was returned to her cell in the jail at Rochester.

John H. J. Hallbeck, last inquest witness, testified that he could not tell how or when the infant met death nor the sex of the deceased.

Other witnesses were Sheriff Hilbert Wachnitz, E. C. Gorrell, and Elba Riffle, mother of Elba Penwell.

At the request of the prosecution, Judge John Reidelbach issued a writ for the Pulaski county grand jury to meet at 10 a. m. Thursday, May 26.

Judge H. J. Hallbeck, last inquest witness, testified that he could not tell how or when the infant met death nor the sex of the deceased.

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Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Winamac Woman Admits Strangling Infant

# WINAMAC WOMAN

## ADmits

# STRANGLING INFANT

## INQUEST IS SET FOR TODAY; PLEA OF INSANITY EXPECTED

**Coroner Linton Hints That Mrs. Elba Penwell Is Shielding Someone Else; Artist In Confession To Authorities Tells Of Slaying Baby And Hiding It In Rear Of Automobile**

Winamac, Ind., May 25.—A confession, wrung from Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, 31, today concluded one angle of the strange murder of a small baby and started authorities seeking further information in the case.

The confession was obtained by Prosecutor James Nye and was given in the presence of Sheriff Hilbert Wacknitz, Deputy Sheriff A. J. Daugherty and Coroner Charles E. Linton, of Minaryville.

"Mrs. Penwell is apparently shielding someone," Coroner Linton said after hearing the woman's story. "That doesn't ring quite true," he added.

A public inquest into the baby's death will be held at the Pulaski county courthouse here today at 1:15 p. m. Several witnesses have been subpoenaed for the hearing that is expected to attract one of the largest crowds in years.

The murder case has created the most interest of any crime here in years.

**Found in Auto**  
Questioned continually since being taken into custody Saturday, when the baby's decomposed body was found stuffed in the rear of an automobile here, Mrs. Penwell finally broke down today and gave authorities her version of the tragedy.

The baby was born on May 1 at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle, she said. The baby, she believes, was dead at birth but to make sure she fastened a silk stocking about its neck and drew it tight. Prosecutor James Nye said the woman told him.

Carefully concealing the fact of the baby's birth and death from her parents, Mrs. Penwell wrapped the small body in newspapers and placed it in a wood shed coal bin. This took place the day after the baby's reported birth.

On May 19 at 4 p. m. the woman took the baby's body. (Continued on Page 4)

**INQUEST IS**  
(Continued from Page One)

placed it inside a cardboard box, bundled it up in burlap and placed it in the rear compartment of a small coupe. About two hours later the car was repossessed by Charles Duggibley, local automobile dealer.

**Woman First Suspect**

The baby's body was found Saturday morning at 7 o'clock when the stifling odor from the decomposed body caused garage employees to investigate. Authorities were notified immediately and the first suspect taken in custody was Mrs. Penwell since she had recently possessed the car.

She was apprehended late Saturday for questioning. At first the woman registered negatively to questions showered upon her. She was taken to Indianapolis and given a lie detector test. "She did not clear" by the test. Lieut. Don Kooken of the state police said although the Winamac woman repeatedly denied any knowledge of the baby's death.

Returned to Winamac the questioning began again but authorities could make no headway with the suspected woman. She was removed to the jail at Rochester to await an inquest in Winamac courthouse Tuesday at 1:15 p. m.

**Obtain Confession**

This morning Daugherty, deputy sheriff, and his wife stopped to talk with Mrs. Penwell and it was then that the woman began to relate her story. Prosecutor Nye, Coroner Linton and Sheriff Wacknitz were called in to witness the story. Mrs. Penwell then signed a confession.

It was said that Mrs. Penwell has indicated she will plead insanity as a defense for the crime. She faces the electric chair if convicted of first degree murder, the charge which is to be placed against her.

Mrs. Penwell is said to have become estranged from her husband about six years ago. Her daughter was a year old at that time.

Prosecutor Nye said Mrs. Penwell had given him the name of the dead baby's father but refused to divulge his identity.

Mrs. Penwell has gained much recognition as an artist. She had on exhibit at the Logansport library some of her work a few months ago. At that time critics acclaimed her as one of the best water color artists in this part of the nation.

Logansport (IN) Press May 26 1936: 1&4. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Mother Admits Strangling Baby

[A daily Chicago paper can scoop this huge story  
from the two local weeklies, but not the Logan  
dailies.]



*Mrs. Elba Riffe Penwell, artist of Winamac, Ind., who faces murder charge following confession that she strangled baby born to her on May 1. The body was found in an auto when it was repossessed by dealer.*

[Associated Press Photo.]

Chicago (IL) Tribune 27 May 1936: 9. Website (newspapers.com)

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Case to Grand Jury

# BABY CASE GOES TO PULASKI GRAND JURY

## MRS. ELBA PENWELL ORDERED ARRESTED FOLLOWING INQUEST

Winamac Artist Stoically  
Listens To Coroner's  
Inquiry Tuesday

(A complete confession by  
Mrs. Penwell as given to Jay  
Nye, Pulaski Prosecutor, may be  
found on page 12.)

Winamac, May 26 — Sitting  
calmly through a brief coroner's  
inquiry into the death of her  
newborn baby, Mrs. Elba Riffle  
Penwell today heard Circuit Judge  
C. E. Linton, Pulaski county coroner,  
order her arrest and the case  
recommended to the grand jury  
for investigation. The inquest  
lasted an hour and 20 minutes.

Mrs. Penwell, dressed in a  
pounds blue coat and skirt and  
wearing a dark-colored straw  
hat, remained stoic during the  
hearing but twice during the  
reading of her confession by  
Prosecutor James M. Nye, she  
closed her eyes as if to shut out  
an undesired memory and her  
lips twitched nervously.

Courtroom Crowded

At the start of the hearing  
Coroner Linton ordered all persons  
under 18 years of age to  
leave the courtroom but even  
this action left the room crowded  
with curious and interested  
townspeople. A photographer  
snapped a flashlight picture of  
Mrs. Penwell but John Spangler,  
attorney for the defense, asked  
that the coroner order the sheriff  
seize the film and destroy it.  
The request was granted.

Mrs. Penwell was not called  
upon to testify. Her confession  
entered by Prosecutor Nye as an  
affidavit was the only words  
from the accused woman that  
were written into the inquest  
records.

It was upon the recommendation  
of Prosecutor Nye that Coroner  
Linton ordered the arrest of the woman, who is noted as a  
water color artist, gifted with an  
unusual talent, and the arrest of  
the prosecutor and coroner Judge  
John Reidelbach of Pulaski circuit  
court, issued a call for the  
grand jury to convene Thursday  
at 10 a. m. in the courthouse.

Grand Juries Listed

Grand juries who will be  
subordinated are Verne S. Gorrell,  
Harry Fisher, Andrew Nuler,  
Ray Whipple, Stella Mots and J.  
C. Christianson.

Mrs. Penwell walked into the  
main courtroom alongside her 77-  
year-old mother and six-year-old  
daughter. The accused woman  
was seated next to her attorney  
and directly in front of the  
judge's chair. Later, William Riffle,  
51, father of Mrs. Penwell entered  
the courtroom and took a seat  
next to his granddaughter.

Prosecutor Nye, after reading  
the confession submitted to him  
by Mrs. Penwell, called Charles  
Freeman, an employee of the Dugleby  
garage, where the badly decomposed  
body of the baby was found  
stuffed in the rear compartment of a 1933 Oldsmobile coupe, told  
the court about the sale and re-  
possession of the car.

Car Repossessed

Freeman stated the car was re-  
possessed twice, first on May 16  
and the second time on May 19.  
On Saturday morning, May 19,  
Mrs. Penwell gave the Dugleby  
firm a check in payment on the  
car and was allowed to drive it  
away but when the bank found  
there was not sufficient funds to  
cover the draft it was not honored.  
Freeman said. It was about  
6 o'clock on May 19 that the car  
was reported as the second time,  
Freeman told the court. He said  
(Continued on Page 2)

MRS. ELBA PENWELL

(Continued from Page One)

Keith James, another employee of  
the garage drove the car back to  
the place of business after Mrs.  
Penwell had produced the key.  
Linking the confession with  
this testimony it was shown that  
the baby's body had been placed  
in the car about two hours before  
the machine was driven away.  
Francis Girtton, 25, a mechanic  
in the Dugleby garage, told of  
being attracted to the machine by  
the odor emanating from the rear  
compartment and on investigating  
made the gruesome discovery.

Sheriff H. S. Hall told the  
stand. He told of being notified  
by Freeman of the discovery  
and his subsequent investigation.

Freeman said he notified Coroner  
C. E. Linton at Medaryville.

From the Dugleby garage the  
package containing the small  
body was moved to the Fry and  
Lange undertaking establishment.

Lange, undertaker, said it was there  
that an examination revealed

the stocking had been wrapped  
around the infant's neck three

times and then tied in a single

knot. Other stockings, belonging

to a small child of about five or

six years of age, were found under  
the infant's head, serving as a

a pillow, the sheriff related.

Launching an investigation us-  
ing the findings some old news-  
papers in which the body was

wrapped, the burlap and corrugated

cardboard, as clues, Sheriff

Wacknit apprehended Mrs. Pen-  
well for questioning. The paper  
used in making the bundle were  
found to be April 26 and April 29  
indicating the crime was com-  
mitted sometime after these dates  
the sheriff set forth.

Businessman Called

E. C. Gorrell, Winamac busi-

nessman, a witness to the exam-  
ination of the body at the under-  
taking establishment, said seeing the

badly decomposed body, but was

unable to state if the papers in

which the body had been wrapped

contained blood stains.

Marietta Riffle, mother of the

young Winamac artist, told from

the witness stand that Mrs. Pen-

well had lived with her for the

past six years.

"Did you know or observe that  
your daughter was about to be-  
come a mother?" Prosecutor Nye  
asked.

"I did not," she replied.

"Did you know about or did  
your daughter at anytime tell you  
she had given birth to a child?"  
Nye asked.

"No," Mrs. Riffle answered.

Mrs. Riffle then went on to re-  
late that although she was a  
light sleeper she was not aroused  
during the night of May 1 by any  
noise. She said Mrs. Pen-  
well did not sleep during the next  
morning when she arose shortly  
before 6 o'clock and that she had  
no idea a baby had been born  
in her house until her daughter  
made the confession at Rochester  
Monday morning.

Coroner's Inquest Body

Dr. Harold J. Halling told the  
coroner's court that he had exam-  
ined the baby's body at the re-  
quest of Coroner C. E. Linton. He  
said the body was one that ap-  
peared to be firm, full term  
body but that the flesh was so  
deserted that it was impos-  
sible to tell the sex of the child  
or if it had ever lived.

With the recording of Hall-  
ing's testimony Nye entered his  
suggestion that Mrs. Penwell be  
arrested but that as the inquest  
was only a court of inquiry the  
grand jury should be called into  
session.

A few moments later Mrs.  
Penwell was escorted to her home  
by Deputy Sheriff Addison J.  
Daugherty and Mrs. Daugherty  
and obtained some painting ma-  
terials. The accused woman plans  
to do some painting while con-  
fined in jail at Rochester, authori-  
ties said.

Mrs. Penwell is incarcerated in  
the Rochester jail because there  
is no lockup at Winamac.

Although a rumor had spread  
that Mrs. Penwell would plead  
guilty, no mention of her men-  
tal faculties was made during the  
inquest.

Has Four Brothers

The accused woman has four  
brothers, Raymond Riffle, an In-  
dianapolis attorney; Forrest Riffle,  
of Detroit; Charles, of Toledo, both  
of Indianapolis; and Orlando Riffle,  
of Seattle, Wash.; two sisters,  
Mrs. Nora Webster living near  
the Pipe Creek Falls community  
and Mary, at home, and her par-  
ents, who have been residents of  
Winamac for more than 30 years.

When the grand jury convened  
Thursday it is expected to exam-

ine the evidence submitted at the  
inquest and view the burlap,  
newspapers, cardboard, stockings  
and other articles connected with

the confessed slaying of the child.

Prosecutor Nye, in his opening  
statement, said he expected the grand  
jury would, in view of

all evidence, return an indictment  
against Mrs. Penwell for taking

the life of her child. He declared  
that it would then be his duty  
as a representative of the state  
to prosecute to the fullest extent  
of the law and that he intends to  
do.

Logansport (IN) Press May 27 1936: 1&2. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Mrs. Penwell's Confession

|  |
|--|
| <b>MRS. PENWELL'S CONFESSION<br/>AS GIVEN TO PROSECUTOR NYE</b>  |
| <p>Elba R. Penwell, being first duly sworn, says that she is 31 years of age, and was born in Winamac, Ind., that on May 1, 1936, she gave birth to a child at about 10 p. m. or 11 p. m. of said day and that said birth took place at the home of her parents on North Monticello street in Winamac, Pulaski county, Ind. That said child was born on the floor and immediately after its birth this infant laid down on the bed and slept some; that said child never at any time uttered a sound of any kind nor made any kind of motion, nor did it in any way show signs of life; that said infant continued to lay on the bed until her mother called her about 5 or 6 o'clock a. m. of May 2, 1936, at which time affiant arose, dressed herself and saw the child lying naked on the floor close to the bed on which affiant had been lying, said child having laid on the floor from the time of its birth until affiant arose about 5 or 6 o'clock on the morning of May 2, 1936, a period of 6 or 8 hours; immediately upon arising from said bed and dressing affiant observed said child and observed that it was lying in the same position as it had been just before affiant laid down; that during the interval from 10 or 11 p. m. of May 1, 1936, to 5 or 6 o'clock, a. m., of May 2, 1936, this affiant was continually in the same room as said child and did not hear said child utter any sound whatsoever, neither did said child move at all, although affiant watched it closely in order to detect some sign of life but affiant could observe none.</p> <p>Affiant further says that upon arising and dressing as aforesaid and observing no sign of life in said child, this affiant wrapped a stocking around the neck of said child, tied the same there for the reason that she was not sure that child was dead; then affiant wrapped the child in some newspapers and placed some old stockings under its head and left it lying on the floor and affiant went downstairs; later in the forenoon of May 2, 1936, affiant carried said child downstairs and carried the same to the back part of the lot on which is situated the house in which the child was born and placed it in a coal bin, where it remained until about 4 o'clock, p. m., on May 19, 1936, and on said last mentioned date affiant wrapped some cardboard and burlap around said child and carried it out and put it in the rear compartment of her 1933 Oldsmobile coupe which at the time was standing in front of said residence on Monticello street in said town since which time affiant had not touched or seen said child.</p> <p>Affiant further says that no person whatsoever knew anything about the facts as stated above. Not even her father or mother except as this day made known to her mother.</p> <p>Affiant further says that she makes this affidavit of her own free will and accord and not through fear or violence of any kind and not on account of any threats or promises whatsoever and after being advised that any or all statements she may make may be used against her.</p> <p>Affiant also says that all of the above statements were made in the presence of her mother, Marietta Riffle, A. J. Daugherty, Velma Daugherty and Jay M. Nye.</p> <p>Signed: ELBA R. PENWELL.<br/>Subscribed and sworn to before me this 25th day of May, 1936.<br/>JAY M. NYE.<br/>Prosecuting attorney of the 59th judicial circuit of Indiana.<br/>My commission expires Dec. 31. 1936.</p> |

Logansport (IN) Press May 27 1936: 12. Microfilm.

Pulaski County Grand Jury Ready to Investigate Death of Infant

# PULASKI COUNTY GRAND JURY READY TO INVESTIGATE DEATH OF INFANT

## Baby Case Quiz Opens Thursday

Prosecutor Jay M. Nye Gathers His  
Evidence for Presentation  
To Grand Jury

WINAMAC, Ind., May 27—Prosecutor Jay M. Nye announced today that he was ready to present evidence before the Pulaski county grand jury when it convenes tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock to consider the case of Reba Riffel Penwell, 31-year old artist, detained for the death of her child whose decomposed body was found stuffed in an automobile last Saturday, a silk stocking tied around its neck.

Five men and a woman constitute the jury which will sit at the court house, but it was learned that the woman, Stella Metz, desires to be excused and that is likely her request will be granted. Her petition is based upon the simple fact that she is past 60 years of age, grounds for excusal in the eyes of the state. The men on the jury are: Verne Gorrell, Harry Fisher, Andrew Nufer, Ray Whipple and J. C. Christenson.

Prosecutor Nye, whose time has been almost solely devoted to the case since the body was discovered last Saturday morning in a car repossessed from Mrs. Penwell and held at the Duggeby Motor Sales garage, said that witnesses who will appear before the jury will include those who testified at the coroner's inquest yesterday and Coroner C. E. Linton. Others undoubtedly will be called at the request of the jurors once they have opened their probe into the details surrounding the death.

### Devotes Time to Art

How long the jury will remain in session was a matter of much conjecture today. Prosecutor Nye said that so far as he knew the death of the Penwell child was the only case scheduled for investigation.

In the meantime, Mrs. Penwell remains in jail at Rochester, occupying herself with her crayons and paint brushes which have brought her state wide recognition in the past.

John Spangler, retained as counsel for Mrs. Penwell, revealed that he was ready to fight if the grand jury indicts, when he made a statement after the inquest Tuesday afternoon. He said in no uncertain terms that no case of murder had been shown by the evidence thus far. "There is no guilt there and the evidence shows it," he declared.

According to the purported written confession introduced by Prosecutor Nye at the inquest, Mrs. Penwell admitted the birth of the child in her bedroom at the home of her parents and left the infant lying on the floor all night, uncertain whether it was dead or alive. In the morning she drew the stocking about the child's neck, wrapped it in paper and cardboard and put it in a coal bin at the rear of the home. That was on the night of May 1 and the following morning. On May 19 Mrs. Penwell put the body in the rear compartment of the car and a few hours later the automobile was repossessed by the Duggeby Motor Sales with the resultant discovery of the decomposed remains four days later.

Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune May 27 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Grand Jury at Work in Baby Case

# Grand Jury At Work in Baby Case

Defense Counsel Submits Elba  
Riffle Penwell To Intelligence Test

WINAMAC, Ind., May 28.—While defense counsel girded itself for a fight should an indictment be returned, the Pulaski county grand jury convened today to consider the strange case of Elba Riffle Penwell, 31 year old Winsamac artist, whose dead child was found stuffed in the rear compartment of an automobile last Saturday, a silk stocking twisted around its neck.

John Spangler, veteran attorney who has been retained by Mrs. Penwell, revealed this afternoon that he had prevailed upon Donald Crise, county superintendent of schools, to conduct an intelligence examination on his client at the Rochester jail Wednesday evening but declined to disclose the results. Louis Reidelbach, law partner of Spangler, and Spangler himself witnessed the examination.

Asked the purpose of the intelligence test, Mr. Spangler replied that it was designed to supply information to the defense counsel.

Workings of the grand jury are cloaked in secrecy and the result of their findings—indictment of the woman or passing up the case entirely—will not be known until the jury reports to Circuit Court Judge John Reidelbach.

Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune May 28 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Grand Jury at Work in Baby Case

# Grand Jury Opens Baby Case Probe

Pulaski Body Convenes  
At Winamac This  
Morning

Winamac, May 27.—The strange case of Elba Riffle Penwell, 31 year old Winsamac artist, confessed slayer of her new born child, will be placed in the hands of the Pulaski county Grand Jury Thursday morning at 10 o'clock when the jury will convene at the courthouse.

It is presumed that the baby case will be the only matter considered by the grand jury at this time, Prosecutor James Nye said. It was at Nye's suggestion that Judge John Reidelbach Tuesday ordered the calling of a jury session.

Much Interest  
Investigation of the case has attracted considerable interest in this community as evidenced Tuesday when a crowded courtroom heard the evidence presented at a coroner's inquest.

The grand jury consists of Verne Gorrell, Harry Fisher, Stela Metz, Andrew Nuer, Ray Whipple and J. C. Christenson. However, the woman juror, Stela Metz, has asked to be excused due to her advanced age. It is likely she will be excused.

Coroner May Testify

Coroner Charles E. Linton of Medaryville who teamed with Prosecutor Nye in questioning the witnesses at the inquest Tuesday, will probably be one of the major witnesses called before the grand jury today. At least half a dozen others will be called, it is believed.

Prosecutor Nye believes a murder indictment will be returned against Mrs. Penwell, who is held in Rochester jail. John Spangler, who has been retained as counsel for the accused woman, declares he will fight the case if it comes to trial.

Logansport (IN) Press May 28 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Dead baby in trunk leads to Elba (31)

# DISCOVERY OF DEAD BABY LEADS TO ARTIST'S ARREST

## Accused of Silk-Stocking Death



Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, Winamac artist, who faces possible court action following a grand jury probe into the death of a child which she admits was born to her five weeks ago; is shown in the above photograph alongside the oil painting upon which she won first place at the Indiana state fair.

## Discovery of Dead Baby Brings Arrest

(Continued from page one)  
dated April 26 and 29, and the  
Chicago Herald-Examiner of April  
11.

### Decomposed Beyond Recognition.

Inside was the body of an infant, so blackened by decomposition that many who first saw it assumed that it had been burned before being wrapped up. Sheriff Hilbert J. Wacknitz was called, and he summoned Dr. C. E. Linton, county coroner, of Medaryville.

The coroner, the sheriff, Dr. H. J. Halleck and others examined the package at the Fry & Lange funeral home. The remains of the body were in such condition that no estimate could be made of the child's age at time of death, nor its sex. Near the head, at what had presumably been the neck, Dr. Linton found a woman's silk stocking, looped and partially knotted. In the package also were

two or three pairs of child's stockings, much worn and darned.

### "Rubber Check" Causes Trouble.

Inquiries concerning the car brought out the fact that it was one which Mrs. Penwell had bought of Mr. Duggleby on an installment contract. Because of default in the payments, about three weeks previously, the company which had financed the purchase caused the car to be repossessed.

A week ago last Saturday evening Mrs. Penwell went to the garage with \$15 in cash and a check for \$23 to apply on the delinquency, and was allowed to take the car. The check was turned down by the bank, and on the following Tuesday employees of the garage again went to the Riffle home, on North Monticello street, secured the key from Mrs. Penwell, and drove the car back to the garage.

### Submits to "Lie Detector."

Shortly after discovery of the package and identification of the car, Mrs. Penwell was summoned by Jay M. Nye, prosecuting attorney. She stoutly denied any knowledge of the package, both in the conversation with the prosecutor and with other officials.

Doubting the truth of her statements, officials asked her if she would submit to examination under a "lie detector." To this she is said to have readily agreed, and went to Indianapolis Saturday evening with the sheriff and prosecutor, State Policeman Delva Masterson, Mrs. Velma Daugherty and Mrs. Hazel Apt.

With the "detector" in operation at an office in charge of Lieutenant Kooken of the state police, Mrs. Penwell was twice asked a series of twelve questions. The chart which the machine turned out showed a high reaction to those questions relating to the

baby which were in doubt, officials stated.

### Dictates and Signs Confession.

Mrs. Penwell had been remanded to jail at Rochester, and while she was being returned there Sunday evening by Deputy Sheriff Addison Daugherty and Mrs. Daugherty, she changed her story and admitted to them that the baby in the package was hers.

Mr. and Mrs. Daugherty and Mr. Nye went to Rochester Monday morning, when the prosecutor wrote out Mrs. Penwell's new statement, which she signed. It follows:

State of Indiana)

Fulton County )

Elba R. Penwell, being first duly sworn upon her oath, says: That she is thirty-one years of age; and was born in Winamac, Indiana; that on May 1, 1936, she gave birth to a child, and about 10 or 11 o'clock of said day, and that said birth took place at the home of her parents on North Monticello street in Winamac, Pulaski county, Indiana; that said child was born on the floor, and immediately after its birth this affiant laid down on the bed and slept some; that said child never at any time uttered sound of any kind nor make any kind of motion nor did it in any way show signs of life; that said affiant remained to lay on the bed until her mother came home about 5 or 6 o'clock a.m. of May 2, 1936, at which time affiant arose, dressed herself and saw the child lying naked on the floor close to the bed on which affiant had been lying, said child having laid on the floor from the time of its birth until affiant arose about 5 or 6 o'clock on the morning of May 2, 1936, a period of 6 or 8 hours; immediately upon rising from the bed and dressing, affiant observed said child and observed that it was lying in the same position as it had been just after its birth and before affiant laid down, that during the interval from 10 or 11 o'clock p.m. of May 1, 1936, to 5 or 6 o'clock a.m. of May 2, 1936, this affiant was continuously in the same room as said child and did not hear said child utter any sound whatsoever; neither did said child move at all, although affiant watched it closely in order to detect some sign of life but affiant could observe none.

Affiant further states that upon arising and dressing as aforesaid and observing no sign of life in said child, this affiant wrapped a stocking around the neck of said child tied the same there for the reason she was not sure that child was dead; then affiant wrapped the child in some newspapers and placed some old stockings under its head and left it lying on the floor and affiant went down stairs later in the forenoon of May 2, 1936, affiant carried said child down stairs and carried the same to the back part of the lot on which is situated the house in which the child was born and placed it in a coal bin, where it remained until about 4 o'clock p.m. on May 19, 1936, and on said last mentioned date affiant wrapped some card board and burlap around said child and carried it out and put it in the rear compartment of her 1933 Oldsmobile automobile which the time was standing in front of said residence on Monticello street in said town since which time affiant has not touched or seen said child.

Affiant further says that no person whatsoever knows anything about the facts as stated above, not even her father or mother, except this day made known to her mother.

Affiant further says that she makes this affidavit of her own free will and accord and not

through fear or violence of any kind and not on account of any threats or promises whatsoever and after being advised that any or all statements she may make may be used against her.

Affiant also says that all of the above statements were made in the presence of her mother, Marietta Riffle, A. M. Daugherty, Velma Daugherty and Jay M. Nye.

ELBA R. PENWELL.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 25th day of May, 1936.

JAY M. NYE, Prosecuting  
Attorney of the 5th  
Judicial Circuit of  
Indiana.

### Mother Disclaims Knowledge.

The above was read at the coroner's inquest, and testimony supporting the various facts concerning the package was introduced.

Mrs. William Riffle, mother of Mrs. Penwell, was also examined at the inquest. She declared that although Mrs. Penwell had lived at the Riffle home right along, she (the mother) had no knowledge of any kind concerning the birth of the baby, neither its expectation nor its arrival, and that she knew nothing of its disposition.

Friends of Mrs. Penwell who have conversed with her this week quote her as stating that a Chicago artist who visited her briefly last year is the father of the child.

Prosecutor Nye states that he will request the grand jury to return an indictment charging "Mrs. Penwell with murder.

### Prominent As Artist.

Mrs. Penwell, who is thirty-one years of age, has been a resident of Winamac practically all her life. She was graduated from the Winamac high school in the class of 1923 and later attended art school at Indianapolis. She returned here about six years ago, accompanied by a small daughter and announced that she had been married to a man named Penwell. They have not lived together since her return here, although he was recently employed for a few months at the Indian Head tavern. The daughter, Zoe Ang, has just completed her first year in school.

As an artist Mrs. Penwell has won considerable recognition. At the Indiana state fair four years ago her painting "Across the Street" won first place in the oil landscapes exhibition, and she has also gained honor in smaller art shows.

Those called for grand jury service this forenoon were Verne S. Gorrell and Mrs. Stella Metz of Winamac, Andrew Nuer and Ray Whipple of Monroe township, Harry Fisher of Indian Creek, and J. C. Christensen of White Post.

## ELBA PENWELL FACES CHARGES

**Grand Jury Probes Mother's Claim that Child Was Born Dead.**

### STRANGULATION CHARGE ADVANCED

### Stocking Around Neck Is Held As Possible Cause of Infant's Death.

A grand jury which went into session at 10 o'clock this forenoon was expected to hear evidence that might lead to a formal charge of murder against Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, well known Winamac artist, who is now in jail following the discovery last Saturday of the dead body of a baby which she admits was hers.

The discovery led to a series of events which set the community aghast, culminating in a public coroner's inquest in the circuit court room Tuesday afternoon, attended by a crowd that more than filled all seats.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 28 May 1936: 1&2. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Dead baby in trunk

# STATE TO ASK A MURDER CHARGE

FINDING OF INFANT'S BODY  
BRINGS ARREST OF ELBA  
R. PENWELL, THE  
MOTHER

With the finding of the badly decomposed body of an infant in the rear compartment of a car at the Duggleby Motor Sales Saturday morning and the subsequent confession of Elba Riffle Penwell, 31, local artist, that she had given birth to the child and, after strangling it with a silk stocking, had made an attempt to dispose of its body, this community has become enmeshed in a drama that has brought it national publicity due to the fact that Mrs. Penwell is a prominent artist who has received recognition for many of her paintings in this section of the middle west.

The car in which the body of the infant was found is an Oldsmobile coupe, which had been repossessed from Mrs. Penwell. According to employes of the garage, Mrs. Penwell had paid \$15 in cash and had given a \$28 check for redemption of the car Saturday, May 16. The following Monday, when the check was taken to the bank for deposit, it was found there was not sufficient funds to cover it, and Tuesday evening about 5 o'clock the machine was again repossessed.

Saturday morning the body was discovered by Francis Girton and Howard Wildermuth, employes of the garage, when a noxious odor was traced to the car.

#### Mrs. Penwell Questioned

Sheriff Wacknitz was called by Charles Freeman and after a preliminary investigation called Coroner Linton. Accompanied by Deputy A. J. Daugherty and Prosecutor Jay M. Nye, the sheriff then went to the William Riffle home on North Monticello street and told Mrs. Penwell she was wanted for questioning. She agreed to go along and was taken to the Court House, where she was questioned but denied she knew anything about the body. A physical examination by Drs. H. J. Halleck and C. E. Linton indicated otherwise. At 6:30 she was taken to Indianapolis by Sheriff Wacknitz, Prosecutor Nye, Mrs. A. J. Daugherty and Mrs. Elbert Apt for submission to a lie detector test by the state police. Here she again denied knowledge of the affair, but the detector indicated her answers as untruthful.

At 2:30 Sunday morning she was placed in the Rochester jail for investigation, and Sunday afternoon returned to Winamac for further questioning. She was again returned to the Fulton county lockup.

#### Confession Is Made

Monday, shortly before noon, in the presence of Prosecutor Nye, Deputy Sheriff Daugherty, Mrs. Daugherty, and the prisoner's mother, Mrs. Marietta Riffle, she made a complete confession, text of which will be found on Page 5. The principal points of the confession are that the child was born at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Riffle, on North Monticello street, the night of May 1, the next day she tied a

(Continued on Page 8)

## STATE TO ASK A MURDER CHARGE

(Continued from Page 1)  
stocking about its neck and concealed its body in a coal bin.

There the body remained, according to the confession, until Tuesday afternoon, May 19, when she put more paper around the body and wrapped it in burlap and placed it in the rear compartment of the coupe. A short time later the car was repossessed by Charles Freeman and Keith James for Dugglebys.

#### Inquest Tuesday Afternoon

Shortly after 1 o'clock Tuesday afternoon Mrs. Penwell was brought from the Rochester jail to the local court room for a coroner's inquest.

The court room was packed with the curious and sympathetic, to see and hear the first inquest of that kind here for many years. Newspaper photographers and several reporters for large papers were present.

Before the actual hearing was under way a crying child was taken from the room by its mother, all under 18 were asked to leave and there was a hush over the room as Mrs. Penwell, her 6-year-old daughter, her mother, attorneys and witnesses appeared. A photographer flashed a picture of Mrs. Penwell and the plate was immediately seized by Sheriff Hilbert Wacknitz.

With Coroner Linton on the bench the inquest was opened, witnesses were sworn in and the alleged confession was read by Prosecutor Nye.

#### Six Witnesses Called

The first witness to be called was Charles Freeman, an employee of the Duggleby garage, who told of repossessing the car. Francis Girton, another Duggleby employee, was the next witness and told how he and Howard Wildermuth had found the body. Sheriff Wacknitz, E. C. Gorrell and Dr. H. J. Halleck each told of seeing the body and the manner in which it was wrapped and the condition it was in.

Mrs. Marietta Riffle, 77-year-old mother of Mrs. Penwell, told a dramatic tale from the witness chair, in which she said she did not know her daughter was about to become a mother and knew nothing of the alleged birth of the child until taken to Rochester Monday and hearing Mrs. Penwell's confession.

Prosecutor Nye demanded that Mrs. Penwell be held for grand jury investigation and Coroner Linton returned the following verdict:

#### Verdict of Coroner

"I, Charles E. Linton, M. D., coroner of Pulaski county, state of Indiana, having viewed the remains of an infant found in the rear compartment of an Olds coupe, owned by Elba Penwell, Winamac, Indiana, and said infant being less than one week old, and said infant being the child of said Elba Penwell according to her own confession, and also confessed tying a woman's stocking around the neck of said infant, and after hearing the evidence of Dr. H. J. Halleck, Sheriff H. J. Wacknitz, Charles Freeman, Ned Gorrell, Mrs. Marietta Riffle and others, do believe that said infant came to its death by strangulation caused by the said Elba Penwell, mother of said infant, and I do hereby recommend that the said Elba Penwell be placed under arrest and confined to the county jail without bail and that the Grand Jury of Pulaski county, state of Indiana, make a complete investigation of this case.

(Signed) "Charles E. Linton,  
Coroner of Pulaski County, State  
of Indiana. (Dated) May 26,  
1936."

#### Charged with Homicide

Later Tuesday afternoon Mrs. Penwell was taken before Justice Manders, where she was formally charged with homicide, and was bound over to Circuit court, after which she was returned to the Rochester jail.

The grand jury was called for 10 o'clock this morning to hear evidence in the case. It is understood Prosecutor Nye demands an indictment charging first degree murder, and that Mrs. Penwell will plead insanity.

Members of the grand jury are Verne S. Gorrell, Harry Fisher, Andrew Nufer, Ray Whipple, Stela Metz and J. C. Christiansen.

Winamac (IN) Republican 28 May 1936: 1&8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba's confession

**MRS. ELBA R. PENWELL'S CONFESSION**

"Elba R. Penwell, being first duly sworn, upon her oath, says: That she is 31 years of age, and was born in Winamac, Indiana; that on May 1, 1936, she gave birth to a child at about 10 p. m. or 11 p. m. o'clock of said day, and that said birth took place at the home of her parents on North Monticello street in Winamac, Pulaski county, Indiana; that said child was born on the floor and immediately after its birth this affiant laid down on the bed and slept some; that said child never at any time uttered a sound of any kind nor made any kind of motion nor did it in any way show signs of life; that said affiant continued to lay on the bed until her mother called her about 5 or 6 o'clock a. m. of May 2, 1936, at which time affiant arose, dressed herself, and saw the child lying naked on the floor close to the bed on which affiant had been lying, said child having laid on the floor from the time of its birth until affiant arose about 5 or 6 o'clock on the morning of May 2, 1936, a period of 6 or 8 hours. Immediately upon arising from said bed and dressing affiant observed said child and observed that it was lying in the same position as it had been just after the birth and before affiant laid down; that during the interval from 10 or 11 o'clock p. m. of May 1, 1936, to 5 or 6 o'clock a. m. of May 2, 1936, this affiant was continuously in the same room as said child and did not hear said child utter any sound whatsoever, neither did said child move at all, although affiant watched it closely in order to detect some sign of life, but affiant could observe none.

"Affiant further says that upon arising and dressing as aforesaid and observing no sign of life in said child, this affiant wrapped a stocking around the neck of said child, tied the same there for the reason she was not sure that child was dead; then affiant wrapped the child in some newspapers and placed some old stockings under its head and left it lying on the floor, and affiant went downstairs. Later in the forenoon of May 2, 1936, affiant carried said child

downstairs and carried the same to the back part of the lot on which is situated the house in which the child was born and placed it in a coal bin, where it remained until about 4 o'clock p. m. on May 19, 1936, and on said last mentioned date affiant wrapped some cardboard and burlap around said child and carried it out and put it in the rear compartment of her 1933 Oldsmobile coupe, which at the time was standing in front of said residence on Monticello street in said town, since which time affiant has not touched or seen said child.

"Affiant further says that no person whatsoever knows anything about the facts as stated above, not even her father or mother, except as this day made known to her mother.

"Affiant further says that she makes this affidavit of her own free will and accord and not through fear or violence of any kind and not on account of any threats or promises whatsoever and after being advised that any or all statements she may make may be used against her.

"Affiant also says that all of the above statements were made in the present of her mother, Marietta Riffle; A. J. Daugherty, Velma Daugherty and Jay M. Nye.

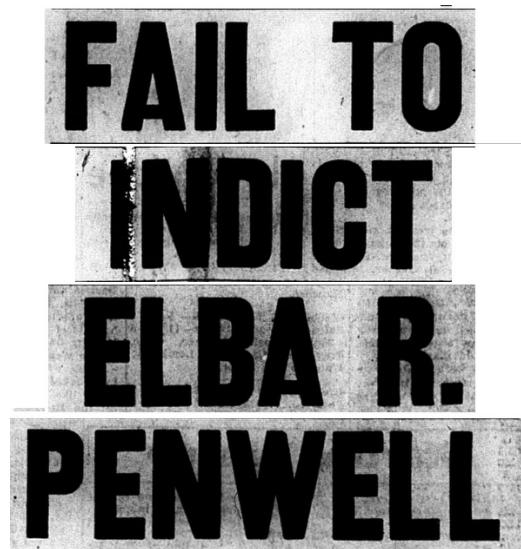
(Signed) "Elba R. Penwell."

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 25th day of May, 1936. Jay M. Nye, Prosecuting Attorney of the 59th Judicial Circuit of Indiana.

*Winamac (IN) Republican 28 May 1936: 5. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

**Fail to Indict Elba R. Penwell**



**Grand Jury Ends Baby Case Probe**

**Pulaski County Investigating Body Finds That Evidence is Insufficient But Recommends That Young Artist Be Held for Sanity Examination.**

**WINAMAC, Ind., May 29**—The Pulaski county grand jury, in session since yesterday morning, returned today without indicting Elba Riffle Penwell, 3-year-old artist, in the strange death of her child whose body was found stuffed into the rear compartment of an automobile last Saturday.

The jury did, however, make certain recommendations to Circuit Judge John Reidelbach and those in authority were inclined to believe that the suggestions will be followed to the extent of ordering a sanity inquest, so Mrs. Penwell is still detained in jail at Rochester and yet face to face with a chance of losing her freedom, at least temporarily.

The text of the grand jury's recommendations to the court follow:

"We, the grand jury of Pulaski County, Indiana, because of lack of evidence that there has been life, we cannot find an indictment in any degree of murder or manslaughter against Elba Riffle Penwell, and therefore make the following recommendations to the court:

"No. 1.—That an inquest be held as to her sanity, there being doubt in our mind as to her being mentally normal.

"No. 2.—Her being placed in an institution for her care, both physical and mental should the finding of the board of inquiry into her case reveal that she should be placed under observance and treatment.

"No. 3.—That for the good of society that she be sterilized provided that she voluntarily submit to such operation, and that the doctors or those in authority in such institutions deem such operation necessary or prudent.

**Woman Foreman of Jury**  
"No. 4.—That she be held in custody until such time as the inquest as to her sanity shall have been held."

Stella Meix, the only woman on the jury, served as foreman and signed the recommendations.

Prosecutor Jay M. Nye, contacted after the grand jury had made its formal report to the court, said that he had talked this morning with Mrs. Penwell's brother, Dr. Bertram Riffle of Indianapolis, and was assured that if it was deemed necessary to conduct an inquest the Dr. Bertram himself will file the petition for the examination of his sister.

The first paragraph of the written recommendation of the grand jury discloses that the verdict hinged upon the technicality of whether or not the baby was born dead or alive. In Mrs. Penwell's purported confession to Prosecutor Nye, it is said that she did not know whether the baby was dead or alive when she wrapped a silk stocking around the infant's neck and drew it tight.

John Spangler, veteran attorney who has been retained as counsel for Mrs. Penwell, had been grooming his defense if the jury had returned an indictment against the woman.

Defense counsel's next move, in view of the report of the grand jury could not be ascertained. Mr. Spangler was out of the city and could not be reached.

The jury made its report shortly before noon.

Officials indicated that Mrs.

Penwell will be held at Rochester pending the decision of the court in regards to the recommendations presented for consideration.

*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune May 29 1936: 1. Microfilm.*

Pulaski Jury May Give Its Finding Today

# PULASKI JURY MAY GIVE ITS FINDING TODAY

## Several Witnesses Examined In Strange Case At Winamac

Winamac, May 28.—The Pulaski county grand jury late tonight recessed until Friday in considering the case of Elba Riffle Penwell, 31, well known artist, whose dead child was found in the rear of an automobile here last Saturday. The jury is expected to return its findings sometime Friday.

Examination of nearly a dozen witnesses occupied the jury in its opening stages of investigation today. Three physicians, including Coroner C. E. Linton, who recommended at the inquest Tuesday the case be brought to the attention of the Pulaski grand jury, were examined. Others to be heard by the jury were Mrs. Marietta Riffle, mother of the accused woman; Lizzie Dressler, Mr. and Mrs. L. V. Robinson, neighbors of the Riffle family.

### Nye With Jury

Prosecutor Jay M. Nye is working with the jury during its investigation. At the coroner's inquest Tuesday Nye expressed belief the jury would return an indictment against Mrs. Penwell.

Whether the jury will indict the Winamac woman or drop the case will not be known until a report is formally made to Judge John Reidelbach, of the Pulaski circuit court.

Should an indictment be returned against Mrs. Penwell, John Spangler, veteran Winamac attorney, has announced he will be ready to defend the artist in every way possible.

Logansport (IN) Press May 29 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Mental Care of Woman is Recommended

## MENTAL CARE OF WOMAN IS RECOMMENDED

### Pulaski Jury Fails to Indict Mrs. Elba Penwell

Winamac, May 29.—The Pulaski county grand jury recessed today that Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, 31-year-old artist accused of killing an infant born to her several weeks ago, be detained in jail until she can be placed in some institution "for physical and mental care."

Mrs. Penwell had been held on a homicide charge filed by coroner C. E. Linton after an inquest at which company witnesses testified concerning the finding of the infant's body with a silk stocking knotted about its neck in an automobile repossessed from the artist.

The grand jury declined to return a murder indictment asserting there was "lack of evidence."

### Woman Quizzed

Officers who questioned Mrs. Penwell said she admitted the baby was born to her but she believed it dead at birth.

The jury had been in session since Thursday morning. Failure to return an indictment against the artist was based solely on the fact that doubt was left in the minds of jurors as to whether the baby was born dead or alive.

In the grand jury's report it was stated that an inquest should be held to determine the sanity of Mrs. Penwell as doubt remained in the minds of jurors as to her being mentally normal. Too, they recommended she be placed in an institution for her care, both physical and mental, should the findings of a sanity test re- (Continued on page 6)

## MENTAL CARE

(Continued from Page One)

veal that such action should be taken.

### Held In Jail

Meanwhile Mrs. Penwell will be held in the Rochester jail pending decision of the court in regards to the recommendations presented.

Stella Metz, the woman on the jury, served as foreman. Prosecutor Jay M. Nye worked with the board during its two day session.

Logansport (IN) Press May 30 1936: 1&6. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Leaving Courtroom

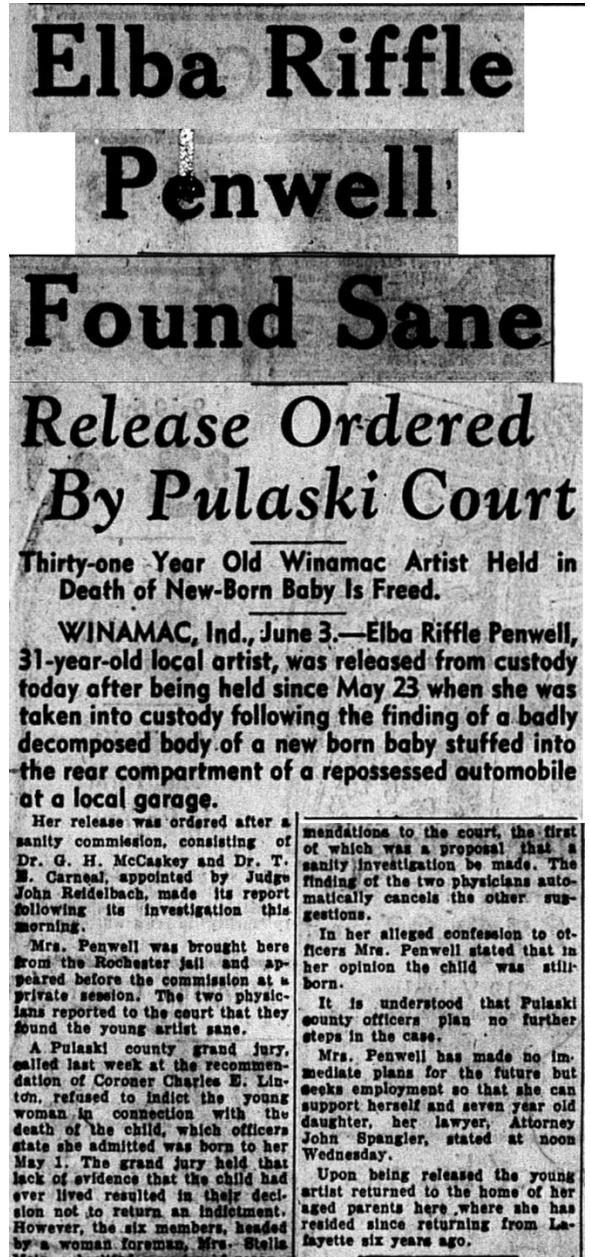


**Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell**

Accused of choking to death her new-born baby, born without medical aid, Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, Indiana artist, is pictured leaving jail at Rochester, Ind., to be transferred to Winamac, where she was held pending arraignment on homicide charges. Mrs. Penwell said she believed the baby was dead at birth. She requested water colors so she could sketch in her jail cell at Winamac.

*Daily Iowan, Iowa City IA 30 May 1936: 8.*  
Website ([newspapers.com](http://newspapers.com))

Elba Riffle Penwell Found Sane



*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune Jun 3 1936: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba not indicted

## 'ARTIST IS SANE,' STATE EXAMINERS

### Physicians Fail to Find Any Evidence of Insanity.

An inquest into the sanity of Elba Riffle Penwell was opened Wednesday morning following the action of Judge J. G. Reidelbach in appointing three physicians to examine her. This was done in accordance with the report of the grand jury, which met last week to investigate the case.

The three physicians, Dr. G. H. McCaskey, Dr. T. E. Carneal and Dr. H. J. Halleck, filed their report this morning, and state that in their opinion Mrs. Penwell is sane. The court received, examined and approved the report, and Mrs. Penwell was discharged at once from the custody of the sheriff.

The action of the grand jury the latter part of last week relieved tension that had existed in the community ever since the discovery, a week ago last Saturday, of the decomposed body of a baby in a car that had belonged to Mrs. Penwell, together with the events that led up to her arrest, her confession, and a coroner's inquest into the probable cause of death.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 4 Jun 1936: 1. Microfilm.

**Sterilization Recommended.**  
The verdict of the county coroner, Dr. C. E. Linton of Medaryville, had expressed the belief that the baby came to its death by strangulation with a silk stocking. Following is the report of the grand jury, dated May 29:

"We, the Grand Jury of Pulaski County, Indiana, because of lack of evidence that there had been life, we cannot find an indictment in any degree of murder or manslaughter against Elba Riffle Penwell — make the following recommendations to the court:

"(1) That an inquest be held as to her sanity, there being doubt in our minds as to her being mentally normal;

"(2) Her being placed in an institution for her care — both physical and mental, should the findings of the board of inquiry into her sanity reveal that she should be placed under observation and treatment;

"(3) That for the good of society she be sterilized, provided that she voluntarily submit to such operation, and that the doctors or those in authority in such institution deem such operation necessary or prudent;

"(4) That she be held in custody until such time as the inquest as to her sanity shall have been held."

The report was signed by the six members of the grand jury, including Mrs. Stella Metz, foreman; Verne S. Gorrell, Andrew Nufer, Ray Whipple, Harry Fisher and J. C. Christensen.

Elba not indicted.

## GRAND JURY FAILS TO INDICT ARTIST

### MRS. ELBA R. PENWELL IS RE- LEASED AFTER GRAND JURY AND INQUEST ACTIONS

Elba Riffle Penwell, held in custody since Saturday, May 23, in connection with the finding of the body of a child which she confessed was hers, was released Wednesday following a sanity inquest, when she was declared sane.

The grand jury finding, which was made public Friday, read as follows:

"Winamac, Indiana, May 29, 1936

"We, the Grand Jury of Pulaski County, Indiana because of lack of evidence that there had been life, cannot find an indictment in any degree of murder or manslaughter against Elba Riffle Penwell, make the following recommendations to the Court:

"1. That an inquest be held as to her sanity, there being doubt in our minds as to her being mentally normal;

"2. Her being placed in an institution for her care — both physical and mental, should the findings of the board of inquiry into her sanity reveal that she should be placed under observation and treatment;

"3. That for the good of society she be sterilized; provided that she voluntarily submit to such operation, and that the doctors or those in authority in such institution deem such operation necessary or prudent;

"4. That she be held in custody until such time as the inquest as to her sanity shall have been held.

"Stella Metz, Foreman."

These actions, it is believed, will bring to an end the furor, which brought national notoriety to Mrs. Penwell and our community.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 4 Jun 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba's momma complimented

**The Office Window**

Friday—It's warm in the Office Window and flies make it miserable for everyone. A stranger stops his car, loses a shoe (a spare) but finds it when he returns. Another local man (no names mentioned) counting his money, all \$4 of it. Ada Weldy, one of those girls with a smile, enroute to her work. Our very welcome visitor, Joseph Fremont Ale, tells us this is the first year in '47 that some member of his immediate family is not in school—either as a teacher or pupil. Also that each member of his family, including Mrs. Ale went to school to HIM, except his youngest daughter Wilma. That's a record.

Saturday—The fire alarm sounds for the first fire in a long time. Schaloupe Davis in town and he looks like he means business. Mrs. William Riffle with flowers on her hat which so nearly match the beautiful flowers in her garden. Mrs. Romaine Coulson here from Mooseheart, saying hello to her friends in her usual gracious manner.

Monday—A Republican confab on the corner between Art Kroft, Alva Mitchell and Oscar Strasser. Oscar was seen later leaning on his shovel—must have been watching WPA workers. A nice shower, then sunshine. Kilander, former Francesville basketball star, walking our busy streets. Trustee Reish ditto.

Tuesday—What a day. It clouds up, rains, sun shines, rains again, etc. A well dressed old gent begging to get money to get a shoe fixed. White dog hairs on the back of a ladies coat. Two big girls in red holding hands. Wonder what brand Oscar chaws. A car with a green body and a purple front. This is what you call a day which doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Wednesday—Donald Crise all in a rush but not too much to stop and talk about his old cronic Huey Long. Bicycle armys flood the streets as soon as school is out. Clarence Riggs from out west of town to find votes. Mrs. J. M. McClure, who likes it along the Tippecanoe, and why not, in town for a time. Sant Browning from White county, known for the roads he builds, inquires about seeing Landon in Logansport. Verne Gorrell talking about a certain man, says he's a nice girl.

Winamac (IN) Republican 8 Oct 1936: 8. Microfilm.

Keepin' an eye on Sis

**OUR SUBSCRIBERS**

Jesse DeWolfe, well known Jefferson township contractor, now working in Gary, dropped in for a visit and to advance his Republican.

Harrison Trustee Henry Brust came in to renew the family Republican.

Vern Hoch of Elkhart, home for a week with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Hoch, came in for a visit and to add his name to the ever-growing Republican subscription list.

Anna Magee was a pleasant visitor while advancing her Republican.

Mrs. Elmer Overmyer of Mishawaka sent in her sister to add her name to The Republican list.

Mrs. William Linn was in renewing The Republican for self and husband.

J. J. Peterson of Lawton vicinity, accompanied by his wife and daughter, was in advancing the family Republican.

Charles Linback of White Post came in to visit and renew his Republican.

Attorney James W. Noel of Indianapolis always remits very promptly with his Republican renewal.

Mrs. John Newman, wife of the well known Marshall county dairy man, having been brought up on The Republican by her dad, Gottlieb Warmbrod, never forgets to advance her Republican.

Mrs. F. C. Moose of Rich Grove was in advancing the family Republican.

Our old schoolmate, Dr. Bert Riffle of Indianapolis, mailed in his renewal to "Shorty's paper."

Grocer T. H. Dunkin is always  
Winamac (IN) Republican 22 Apr 1936: 8. Microfilm.

Elba's daddy dies

## - Deaths -

### WILLIAM RIFFLE.

Funeral services for William Riffle are to be held Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock at the Fry & Lange funeral home. His death occurred Wednesday at Indianapolis at the home of his son Dr. Raymond Riffle, where he was taken two weeks ago. He was seventy-nine years of age.

Mr. Riffle lived in or near Winamac all but the first few years of his life, coming here from Ohio with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Riffle. The family settled on a farm south of Winamac, now the Richards farm. Surviving are his wife, who was formerly Miss Marietta Felker; four sons, Orlando of Washington state, Dr. Raymond, Dr. Bertram and Otho, all of Indianapolis, and three daughters, Mrs. Nora Webster of Logansport, Mrs. Elba Penwell and Esther at home.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 27 May 1937: 3. Microfilm.*

Elba's daddy dies

## WILLIAM M. RIFFLE DIES AT SON'S HOME

William Martin Riffle, 79, died at the home of his son Raymond in Indianapolis Wednesday morning following a six months' illness. He was taken to Indianapolis two weeks ago from his home on North Monticello street.

Mr. Riffle was born Sept. 20, 1858, in Champaign, Ill., and came here 59 years ago. He was married November, 1882, to Marietta Felker who survives with the following children: Orlando of Seattle, Wash., Dr. Raymond, Dr. Bertram and Otho Riffe of Indianapolis, Mrs. Nora Webster of Logansport, **Mrs. Elba Penwell** and Esther at home.

Funeral services will be held Friday at 2 o'clock at the Fry & Lange funeral home and burial will be made in the local cemetery.

*Winamac (IN) Republican 27 May 1937: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Appreciation

# Appreciation

(One cent per word—Minimum, 50c)

We take this manner of expressing our sincere thanks to our friends and neighbors for their sympathy and kindness during the illness and at the death of husband and father; also Mr. Fry and Mr. Lange for their services.—Mrs. Marietta Riffle and Children. :

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 3 Jun 1937: 8. Microfilm.

Card of Thanks

### CARD OF THANKS

We desire in this manner to thank our friends and neighbors for the kindness, sympathy and floral offerings during the illness and at the death of Mr. Riffle.

Mrs. William Riffle and Family..

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 3 Jun 1937: 8. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits

## Winamac Paintings on Exhibit in Chicago

Two Winamac artists have paintings on exhibit at the Fourteenth Annual Hoosier Art Salon in Chicago. Mrs. Rockwell Smith (nee Wilma Ale) now of Honolulu, T.H., has an oil painting at the exhibit entitled *Night Blooming Cereus*, depicting that rare plant in bloom. Mrs. Elba Penwell has two paintings, one entitled "Busy Corner" and another of a bowl of tulips. Dale Bessire of Nashville, well known here, has an exhibit at the Salon.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 3 Feb 1936: 1. Microfilm.

Elba's exhibits at Marshal Fields

### ATTEND HOOSIER SALON

Mrs. Sterling Hedges attended the 14th annual Hoosier Salon and artists luncheon Monday at Marshall Fields' in Chicago.

Two pictures "Busy Corner" and "Still Life-Flowers" by Elba Riffle Penwell and one picture "Night Blooming Cereus" by Wilma Ale Smith of Honolulu, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Ale, were on display in the salon.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 3 Feb 1938: 8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

1938-02-05 - Elba exhibited in Chicago's  
Marshall Fields - Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune  
- p8 - Trunk Baby Momma - aa

Two pictures painted by Mrs.  
Elba Riffie Penwell were on dis-  
play at the 11th annual Hoosier  
Salon and Artis' luncheon held  
Monday at the Marshall Field's  
store, Chicago. The pictures were  
called "Busy Corner" and "Still  
Life Flower."

Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune 5 Feb 1938: 8. Website  
(newspapers.com)

Art Festival, where's Elba's work?  
[The selection, under the direction of the local  
county art chairwoman and another woman,  
may appear to have excluded work by Elba for  
non-artistic reasons, it probably wasn't. Over  
the years after the dead baby in her car trunk,  
Elba continues to be honored with exhibits at  
the local library. Indiana University probably  
just didn't consider her significant. We'll  
probably never know.]

## PAINTINGS SHOWN AT ART FESTIVAL

One of the traveling art exhibits of the Indiana university extension division was a feature Wednesday at the Fine Art Festival given by the County Council of Federated Clubs at the Winamac Methodist church, which was thronged with club women. The exhibit was under the direction of Mrs. J. E. Shill, county art chairman, assisted by Mrs. Gill Gordon.

The exhibit was made up of 10 color reproductions of pictures of Indiana artists. Prints of the following painting were exhibited: Hunting in Autumn by J. Ottis Adams, The Art Jury by Wayman Adams, Woods in Winter by J. Elwood Bundy, Self Portrait by William M. Chase, Duneland by Frank Dudley, Old Market Woman by William Forsyth, Mother and Child by Ada Walter Schultz, The Indiana Trail by Otto Stark, The haymakers by Theodore C. Steele, and James Whitcomb Riley by John S. Sargent.

Additions to the state exhibit included paintings by Mrs. Neva Schlatter, Gene Huddleston, K. Ellen Philipson and Mrs. Wilma Ale Smith, local and former local artists.

Nineteen traveling art exhibits have been collected and prepared by the Indiana university extension division which may be borrowed for schools, clubs and other art groups of the state. The exhibit are especially suitable to be shown in schools and libraries and are being loaned to different state groups without cost, except for transportation. The exhibits which the university now has available for Indiana groups are made up of good prints and original works of art. The exhibit will be at the local Library until Feb. 18.

Winamac (IN) Republican 10 Feb 1938: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba exhibits at library

### **Club Art Festival Leads to Varied Exhibit at Library**

Because of the interest shown in the art exhibit held in connection with the recent fine arts festival by the county council of federated clubs, the pictures and sculpture were placed on exhibit in the Winamac public library, with addition of some work by young artists of Winamac.

The only piece of sculpture is a contribution by Miss Gene Huddleston, a negro head on which she has won much praise at the John Herron Institute in Indianapolis, where she has been studying for the past three years.

Miss Huddleston will later send a group of four paintings for exhibit at the library, which is now included in an exhibit on tour from the institute.

A charcoal drawing and three water colors, the work of Elmer Howard, are on display; four paintings by Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell; Hawaiian scenes and flowers by

Mrs. Wilma Ale Smith; figures and landscape work by Katherine Phillipson. The youngest exhibitor is Marilyn Heater, who has placed a black and white drawing of "Kittens at Play."

#### **Old Glass on Display.**

An added feature is a table set with early American pressed glass and blue Staffordshire plates, loaned by Mrs. E. C. Gorrell. The glass is of the barberry pattern showing stippled leaves, raised berries, and seashell knobs, which was made in the early '60's—one of the earliest of the foliage patterns which later became so popular among American housewives. The plates, manufactured in England, have for decoration scenes from Early American history. The table is covered with an old linen cloth of snow white, with a bouquet of mixed flowers, arranged in an old-fashioned style in an old celery vase.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 17 Feb 1938: 1. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits at library

### **LOCAL ARTISTS EXHIBIT**

In addition to the exhibit of painting from Indiana university brought here by County Art Chairman, Mrs. J. E. Shill, for the County Art Festival last week an unusual number of paintings is also on display this week at the Winamac library.

Included in the exhibit are the following:

Negro Head, in bronze, sculpture work of Miss Gene Huddleston.

Paintings by Wilma Ale Smith, "Hibiscus," "Orchard," "Scottish Rite Cathedral," "Picking Carol," "Roaring Surf"; by Miss K. Ellen Philipson, "Mirrored," "Patterned Reflection," "Rhythm," "Spring Color"; by Elba R. Penwell, "Spring Bouquet," "A Hut in the Hills," "Winter Twilight," and "Kentucky Autumn"; also "James W. Riley" loaned by Albert Yount; sketches by Elmer Howard; charcoal sketch "Kittens at Play" by Marilyn Heater.

Mrs. E. C. Gorrell has an interesting exhibit consisting of a table set with old glassware of the Barbary pattern, one of the earliest foliage patterns in glass, manufactured in the early 60's. The plates used on the table are historic Staffordshire ware.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 17 Feb 1938: 2. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba exhibited in Winamac Library

Interesting exhibits are being held this week at the local library of pictures and old dishes, sponsored by the county Federation of Clubs. Pictures are on exhibit, painted by Elmer Howard, Maralyn Heater, Kathryn Phillipson, Gene Huddleston, Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell and by Mrs. Wilma Ate Smith. A number of other pictures, collected by Mrs. J. E. Shill are also on exhibit. A table, set with glassware of ancient design, was donated for exhibit by Mrs. E. C. Gurrell, who owns the entire set of twelve. Each piece depicts some historical event of years ago. The public is invited.

*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune* 18 Feb 1938: 8. Website (newspapers.com)

Elba's momma renews her subscription to The Democrat

## Renewals and New Subscriptions

Joseph Zurn of Monterey.

G. C. Overmyer of Champaign, Ill.

Mrs. Charles Enyeart of Buchanan, Mich.

O. W. Bridenbaugh of Star City.

John H. Kruger of Menon.

E. A. Rohman of White Post township.

Ernest Kopka of Francesville.

Arthur Schwass of Chicago, by Mrs. Bennie Lange of Denham.

W. E. O'Brien of Loganspcrt.

Roy A. Lowry of Markesan, Wis.

Charles Galbreath of the Knox vicinity.

Mrs. Marietta Riffle of Winamac.

Mrs. Ida Mullins of Crown Point.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 14 Jul 1936: 7. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba awarded first prize

## **Oil Painting by Winamac Artist Wins Blue Ribbon**

An oil painting by Elba Riffle of Winamac was awarded a blue ribbon, denoting first prize in the "best landscape" class, at the recent Indiana state fair. It is a winter scene, with a body of water in the foreground and a city skyline in the background. One of the art critics describes it as "modern in atmosphere and technique."

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 15 Sep 1938: 1. Microfilm.

Elba not the only one painting while her momma's away

## **Winamac Lady Returns from Long Western Trip**

Mrs. William Riffle reached home last week after an auto trip to the Pacific coast and back, covering about 7,500 miles and touching twelve states. She accompanied her son and daughter-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Bertram Riffle of Indianapolis. Their principal objective was Seattle, Wash., where they visited Mrs. Riffle's son Orlando, who has a supervisory position in the loading of ships. The return trip was made by way of Los Angeles. On reaching home, Mrs. Riffle found that her sons Raymond and Otho, also of Indianapolis, had come here and painted her house during her absence.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 15 Sep 1938: 3. Microfilm.

Elba's momma is a new subscriber to *The Republican*..

[Now she subscribes to both local weeklies, which is unusual for the period 1924-1947.]

### **OUR SUBSCRIBERS**

Mrs. Marietta Riffle, well known local lady, is among the new subscribers to *The Republican*.

*Winamac (IN) Republican* 27 Oct 1938: 8. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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A new Student section is initiated in *The Democrat* and includes references to Elba's daughter (from KidReporter section)

**Zoe Ann Penwell's uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Riffle of Indianapolis, visited in the home of her grandmother, Mrs. William Riffle, over the week end**

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 15 Dec 1938: 8. Microfilm.

Elba's still 'got game'

## **Penwell Paintings Bring Praise by Art Critic**

A group of twelve paintings by Mrs. Elba Penwell of Winamac are on view at the Ruth Kealing "25" gallery in Indianapolis this week. The artist has named the collection "Portraits of Houses and Gardens," and had as her models for most of the paintings flower gardens and homes in this community. Lucille E. Morehouse, who conducts an "In the World of Art" department of the Indianapolis Star, spoke in complimentary terms of the exhibit in last Sunday's Star. The paintings are to be hung in the Winamac library upon their return.

Two of the Penwell paintings have been entered at the Hoosier Art Salon in Chicago for the mid-winter exhibition and two others are now being shown at the mid-western exhibit at Kansas City, Mo. The artist has also been invited to send a collection to an exhibit at Oakland, Calif.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 26 Jan 1939: 1. Microfilm.

Penwell Painting in Hoosier Salon

### **Penwell Paintings In Hoosier Salon**

Among awards given at the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of the Hoosier Art Salon at Chicago was honorable mention of an oil painting by Sister Rufina of Lafayette, Ind. The oil interpretation, "The Canadian," by Sister Rufina was exhibited at the Indianapolis Art Salon.

W. Karl Steele of Jackson, Mich., won the \$300 Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority selection prize.

The \$50 prize for the outstanding work by an artist who has never received a prize at the Hoosier Salon went to Lester W. Ladd of Kokomo. The Penwell art exhibit may be sent to Oakland, Calif. The Penwell art has been a Winamac highlight for a decade.

Two paintings by Elba Riffle

*Logansport (IN) Press* Jan 29 1939: 1. Microfilm.

Zoe Ann visits in Logan (from KidReporter section)

**Zoe Ann Penwell** visited in Logansport Saturday; Charles Spry was in Indianapolis Thursday; Billy Goble visited his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Miller of Harrison township, on Sunday.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 2 Mar 1939: 3. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba on exhibit

## Riffle Painting in State Artists' Exhibit

The work of Indiana artists is on exhibit throughout March at John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, for the thirty-second consecutive year. This is the oldest art show in Indiana and annually attracts hundreds of visitors from all parts of the state who make the trip individually or with clubs or other groups.

Among the exhibitors is Elba L. Riffle of Winamac, who has an oil painting, "Smoke and Snow."

The museum is open every week day from 9 until 5, on Sunday from 1 to 8 o'clock, with Saturday and Sunday free days. Every Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock there is a gallery talk on an art subject of interest.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 9 Mar 1939: 4. Microfilm.*

Elba has paintings in show

## Winamac Artist Has Paintings In Show

Winamac, March 11 — Elba L. Riffle, Winamac artist, has an oil painting "Smoke and Snow" in the exhibit of Indiana Artists this month at John Herron Art Museum.

*Logansport (IN) Press Mar 12 1939: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba exhibits

Mrs. Elba Penwell has a group of water colors on exhibition at the Delaware county fair at Muncie this week.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 3 Aug 1939: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba exhibits

An exhibit of water colors by Mrs. Elba Penwell will be on display at the Winamac library next week, consisting of scenes along the Tippecanoe and Winamac homes and gardens.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 Aug 1939: 1. Microfilm.*

Zoe Ann visited by cousins (from KidReporter section)

## The Kid Reporter

Billy and Mary Riffle, children of Mr. and Mrs. Otho Riffle, came from Indianapolis Sunday to visit for two weeks with **Zoa Ann Penwell**. They are her cousins, and will also visit their grandmother, **Mrs. Marietta Riffle**.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 Aug 1939: 4. Microfilm.*

Elba exhibits

An exhibit of paintings by Elba Riffle Penwell at the Winamac library during the Centennial celebration attracted so much interest that it is being held over during this week.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 24 Aug 1939: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba exhibits

**EXHIBITS PAINTINGS**

The exhibit of paintings of Elba Riffle Penwell, which was held at the Winamac library during Centennial is being continued for another week and is open to the public.

Winamac (IN) Republican 24 Aug 1939: 8. Microfilm.

Elba makes posters for PTA

[This is yet another indication that she is not ostracized by the community.]

**MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**

In observance of National PTA week, Mrs. Clarence Galbreath, chairman of the membership committee of the local organization has been leading in a drive, assisted by other members of her committee, Mrs. A. C. Needham, Mrs. Karl Applegate and Mrs. Carl Somers. Attractive posters, made by Elba Riffle Penwell have been placed in windows of local business houses.

Winamac (IN) Republican 5 Oct 1939: 8. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits

Mrs. Elba Penwell is exhibiting an oil painting entitled "Muck Country," at L. S. Ayres' in Indianapolis, beginning on Saturday. The exhibition is sponsored by the Indiana Federation of Women's clubs.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 16 Nov 1939: 1. Microfilm.

Elba's brother visits

Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Riffle of Indianapolis were guests Sunday of his mother, Mrs. Marietta Riffle.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 16 Nov 1939: 2. Microfilm.

Zoe Ann burned (from KidReporter section)

Zoe Ann Penwell burned her left forearm painfully Monday morning when she spilled some hot coffee.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 14 Dec 1939: 3. Microfilm.

Elba subscribes for her brother

**Renewals and  
New Subscriptions**

Mrs. Gertrude Roth of Indianapolis, by son William.

Charles C. Parker of Medaryville.

Charles Leslin of Rich Grove township.

O. J. Shaw of Montpelier, Ohio, by Bryan Powers.

Mrs. Orla Long of Plymouth, by her mother, Mrs. J. M. McClure.

Mr. and Mrs. William J. Smith of Medaryville.

Herbert Foust of Munster, Ind., by Mr. and Mrs. William J. Smith.

Mrs. Marietta Riffle of Winamac.

Otho Riffle of Indianapolis, by his sister, Mrs. Elba Penwell.

Jay Reinholt of the Kewanna

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 4 Jan 1940: 7. Microfilm.

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Zoe Ann, et al., playin' 'Doctor' (from  
KidReporter section)

**Grade Five.**

The health race is over, with nine pupils completing all weekly requirements for the first semester. The winners are Betty Boulden, Annabelle Fox, Dixie King, Carolyn Kroft, Lawrence McKinley, Jimmy Minter, **Zoe Ann Penwell**, Alice Rans, Patty Russell. The runners up were Juanita Bender, Herbert Billerbeck, Dick Dyer, Phyllis Powers, Joann Stepp and Jim Tuley, and those receiving honorable mention were Betty Beaver and Ross Frazier. The winners were awarded gold stars and the runners up silver stars. Those in the winning classes were entertained at a bingo party Friday afternoon after recess by the other pupils. Daily inspection was made by a "doctor" and a "nurse" for the following health habits:

1. Brushed teeth;
2. Washed hands, face, neck and ears;
3. clean fingernails;
4. Combed hair;
5. clean handkerchief.

At the end of each week those who had remembered to do all of the habits were permitted to progress 100 miles on the health chart.

Carolyn Kroft is monitor for the week; **Zoe Ann Penwell** and Ronald Foust, leaders; Harry Poor, doctor, and Virginia Bryan, nurse.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 18 Jan 1940: 8. Microfilm.*

# Stalking My Hometown 1924-1947

## Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

In 1940, Elba living at home her momma.

U.S. Decennial Census 1940. Website ([ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com))

## Elba wins with portrait of Zoe Ann!

**Q**Mrs. Elba Penwell has been notified that a water color portrait which she had entered in the "Opportunity Gallery" at New York City had been awarded a first prize. The picture, in the child portrait class by women artists, is entitled "The Birthday Present," the artist using her daughter Zoe Ann as a model.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 20 Jun 1940: 1. Microfilm.

## Elba and Zoe Ann go to Indy

Mrs. Elba Penwell and daughter  
Zoe Ann are spending the week  
at Indianapolis.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat* 22 Aug 1940: 5. Microfilm.

## Elba blows back into town

Mrs. Elba Penwell returned home Monday from a pleasure trip to Toronto and Quebec, Canada, and the New England states.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 19 Sep 1940: 2. Microfilm.

## Elba blows back into town (from KidReporter section)

Zoe Ann Penwell's mother, Mrs. Elba Penwell, came home the first of the week after several weeks in Canada.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 19 Sep 1940: 7. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba active

## Work of Artists Here Is Shown at Club Meeting

An exhibit of the work of Winamac artists, arranged by Mrs. Michael Garigan, art chairman of the County Federation of Women's clubs, was a feature of the meeting Tuesday evening of the County Council at the library auditorium. A number of guests attended in addition to members of the County Home Economics chorus, which presented several selections under the direction of Mrs. Herschel Henry.

D. L. Crise, superintendent of schools, spoke on Art Appreciation from a Layman's Standpoint, and **Mrs. Elba Penwell** on Art Appreciation from an Artist's Standpoint, while Miss Peggy Garigan talked on Relation of Art to Music. During the business meeting of the club, plans were discussed for the annual card and bingo party to be held in the American Legion hall on October 16.

The exhibits, which were attractively arranged, included articles in stone art by J. Lon McKinley; wood carving by Virgil Zellers; a large assortment of cartoons and paintings by Elmer Howard; exhibits by the parochial and public schools, Francis Murray, Mrs. Thomas Murray, Mrs. W. R. McClaflin, Mrs. Rockwell Smith, Miss Katherine Philipson, R. J. Gifford, Mrs. K. Stuart Gast, Chant Miller, Mrs. Joseph Ale, Mrs. R. N. Curtiss, Indian works of art displayed by Mrs. Garigan and Edward Reutebuch. Included in the hangings by **Mrs. Elba Penwell** were the paintings which won a prize in a New York contest and a new group of pictures she made this summer while vacationing in Canada and Maine.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 Oct 1940: 2. Microfilm.

Elba exhibits

## FINE ART EXHIBIT AT LOCAL LIBRARY

Mrs. Mary Garigan, art chairman of the Federated Clubs of the county, has collected a fine exhibit now showing in the basement of the library. The exhibit began Tuesday evening with the meeting of the County Council of Federated Clubs and will continue the rest of the week. It may be seen during the noon hour, from 3:30 to 5, and from 7 to 8:30 every evening.

The exhibit includes specimens of art work of all grades of the public and parochial schools, as well as artwork in stone by Lon McKinley Jr., art in wood by Virgil Zellers, and some of the pictures by Elmer Howard. Oil paintings are exhibited by Elba Riffle Penwell and K. Ellen Philipson; oil and pastel by Mrs. Thomas Murray; modeling and scrapbook by Mrs. Stuart Gast; a scrapbook, Mrs. Ralph Curtis; brass work, Chant Miller; paintings, Wilma Ale Smith; miscellaneous art works, Edward Reutebuch; oil, water colors, weaving and woodcraft, Mrs. W. R. McClaflin; hand-made Mexican serape, Mrs. J. F. Ale.

Winamac (IN) Republican 10 Oct 1940: 1. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba honored

## Art Critic Praises Mrs. Penwell's Work

In the art column of last Sunday's Indianapolis Star, Lucille E. Morehouse had this to say of Mrs. Elba Riffle Penwell, well known Winamac artist:

"Elba Riffle of Winamac returned home late in September from a painting excursion that took her up to Montreal, Canada, and through the New England states. One of the most talented of Indiana's women artists, Miss Riffle was trained in the Herron Art School when William Forsyth headed the painting classes. It is hoped that one of the Indianapolis galleries will arrange to show this new series of Elba Riffle's landscapes at an early date."

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 Oct 1940: 8. Microfilm.

Elba honored

## ELBA RIFFLE HONORED

The Sunday Indianapolis Star of October 6th had a paragraph telling of the return late in September of Elba Riffle from a painting excursion that took her to Montreal, Can., and through the New England states, and said:

"One of the most talented of Indiana's women artists, Miss Riffle was trained in the Herron Art School, when William Forsyth headed the painting classes. It is hoped that one of the Indianapolis galleries will arrange to show this new series of Elba Riffle's landscapes at an early date."

Winamac (IN) Republican 10 Oct 1940: 1. Microfilm.

Elba hosts

Mr. and Mrs. William Speeker, artists of Dolton, Ill., were guests Sunday of Mrs. Elba Penwell.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 10 Oct 1940: 5. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba supports Red Cross

**RED CROSS ROLL CALL**

**Monroe**

Mrs. C. W. McFadridge, Bess Reidelbach, Frank Kopkey, Joe Hepp, Mrs. J. O. Somers, L. V. Robinson, Henry Strong, **Elba R. Penwell**, Dan Kelly, William T. Hood, Mrs. Delvie Masterson and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Korrekt.

Anna Metz, Frieda Nimz, Kenneth James, Harry Freeman, Dr. H. J. Halleck, Myrtle Mitchell and Miss A. B. Diggs.

Frank H. King, Harry Smith, William J. Koehler, C. G. Long, Frank Barnett, G. Shank, George C. Sabel, Mildred Herd, Mrs. Lee Servies, Fergus Parrott, Ralph E. Horner, Marilyn Heater, Ed Masterson and John C. Hodge.

Harry Von Tobel, Buddy Frain, Charles Duggleby, Al Fritz, Cecil Allen, Co-Operative Elevator Co., Karl Applegate, Arthur Koehler, McConnell Family, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Gast and Dan Little.

John Delaney, Chauncey Felker, Kiwanis Club, Rev. John J. Meyer, Mrs. Emma Jackson, Mrs. Jennie Keller, C. C. Messerly, Mrs. Amanda Dilts, Mrs. J. J. Gorrell, Mrs. L. A. Smith and Mrs. William Perleberg.

Mrs. W. J. Baker, T. W. Howe, Dr. Warwick, Mrs. John C. Saidla, Mrs. John Shill, Maurice Greulach, Mrs. Lucy Shorter, Mrs. L. A. Reidelbach, Mrs. Verna Wagner, Mrs. R. J. Haley, Vernal Lebo and Winamac Fire Dept.

Anna Shill, Reidelbach & Spangler, Eunice Emmett, Illo Gerace, Bernard Conner, Virginia Martin, Luella Kinney, W. Overholser, Elvira Jackson, William Webb, Frank Budd, Thomas Manders and Mrs. Thomas Manders.

Winamac (IN) Republican 12 Dec 1940: 8. Microfilm.

Elba's brother visits

Dr. Raymond Riffle of Indianapolis and Mr. and Mrs. Davidson and sons of Logansport visited Sunday in the home of Mrs. Marietta Riffle.

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 19 Dec 1940: 2. Microfilm.

Zoe Ann's uncle visits (from KidReporter section)

**Zoe Ann Penwell had company from Indianapolis;**

Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 19 Dec 1940: 7. Microfilm.

Miss Nina Dalton, Mrs. H. J. Halleck, J. F. Ale, Earl Heater, Lamoin Nice, Mrs. John Starr, Nell Davis, Agnes Grabner, Dr. John Shill, Harold Zanger, Paul J. Zellers, Calvin McKinley, Loyd Agnew, H. C. Billerbeck and Carl Somers.

Laura E. Gross, E. G. Fry, Anne Murray, Russell F. Fry, Walter G. Lange, Miller's Dept. Store, H. H. Meyer, Gamble Store, S. R. Hedges, Boyles & Hair, D. W. Barr, Russell's Store, Ray McClure, Robert B. Kelly, Ed Haag, Ab Freeman, Holdermann Grocery, Charles Lebo, Earl D. Roudebush and Richard R. Dodd.

Hoch Hardware, E. W. Smith, A. E. Koehler, Charles Ginther, Fred Borders, Dr. G. H. McCaskey, Mrs. Ed Masterson, Paul C. Davis, E. A. Kirby, Golda Chapman, Carpers Drug Store and Joe Russell.

Elgie Zellers, Mrs. Emma Brown, Mrs. Clay Zellers, Perry Jenkins, Rev. J. J. Becker, Mrs. G. H. McCaskey, Mrs. Belle Haas.

Mrs. O. H. Keller, Mrs. Anna M. Metz, Mrs. Pauline Gorrell, Urban Kennedy, Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Polstra, Mrs. J. R. Keller, Eldon Campbell, Mrs. Fred Borders, Mrs. J. J. Hoffman, Mrs. E. C. Gorrell, Mrs. Harold Martin, Mrs. John Metz, Mrs. H. Strong, Charles Olson and Mrs. Robert E. Thompson.

Eula K. Hoover, Clarence H. Barnett, Addison J. Daugherty, C. E. Olson, W. M. Day, I. E. Bird, Katharine S. Benner, Mrs. Arden Rearick, The Winamac Republican, George Collins, W. G. Wendt, Mrs. Bertha Wendl, Monroe H. E. Club No. 1, Joseph and Edward Reutebuch and Mrs. Katherine Huddleston.

Zoe Ann had company

**Grade Six**

Joan Stepp was in Star City on Sunday.

Zoe Ann Penwell had company from Indianapolis.

Dollie Bender had company from Chicago Sunday.

Row 2 won the spelling star.

The scrap book on the unit dealing with the Romans were due on Wednesday.

Jim Tuley, Jaunita Bender, Lawrence McKinley and Don Franks had their spelling papers put on the bulletin board.

Last week Jim Tuley's side beat Patty Russell's once but the score was tied the second day of gym.

Winamac (IN) Republican 6 Feb 1941: 3. Microfilm.

Zoe Ann had company (from KidReporter section)

**Grade Six**

Patty Russell went to Logansport.

Dick Dyer was out of town, Joan Stepp went mushrooming and got 1,565.

Ross Frazier had company from Logansport.

Girls are ahead of the boys in spelling.

Zoe Ann Penwell had company from Indianapolis.

Lorraine Spicer had company from Logansport.

Herbert Billerbeck had company from South Bend and Peru.

Betty Boulden went to Francesville.

Betty Russell had company from Crown Point.

Winamac (IN) Republican 8 May 1941: 3. Microfilm.

Stalking My Hometown  
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Zoe's goin' to church conference at Battle Ground

**The following will attend the children's division of the Methodist church conference for junior intermediates at Battle Ground next week, as delegates from the Winamac Methodist church:**

Bob Pearson, Billy Goble, Bob Smith, Dick Smith, Harry Poor Jr., Bob Lebo, Jerry Polstra, Keith Collier, Annabelle Fox, Patty Russell, **Zoeann Penwell**, Sally Harris, Deloris Deeds, Georgiann Yount, Norma Collier, Letitia Harris, Betty Russell. They will be accompanied by Rev. and Mrs. Otis L. Collier and son George.

*Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune Jul 17 1941: 11. Microfilm.*

Zoe visiting from Indy, so Elba's likely living in Indy

**Miss Zoe Ann Penwell of Indianapolis spent several days last week with her grandmother, Mrs. Marietta Riffle.**

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat 26 Sep 1946: 8. Microfilm.*

Elba's sister dies

**ESTHER RIFFLE.**

**Esther Riffle died Saturday at Indianapolis, where she and her mother, Mrs. Marietta Riffle, were cared for in an apartment in the**

**home of Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Riffle... Esther, forty years of age, had been ill for a few weeks from pneumonia. Mrs. Riffle, eighty-six years of age, is also dangerously ill. Esther was a life-long invalid.**

**The remains were brought to Winamac, where graveside services were held Tuesday morning.**

**Mrs. Riffle and Esther left here to live in Indianapolis about seven years ago. Four brothers and a sister survive. Dr. Raymond, Dr. Bertram and Otho Riffle of Indianapolis and Orlando of Bothell, Wash., and Mrs. Elba Vernon of Indianapolis.**

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat Nov 18 1948: 1. Microfilm.*

Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art

Elba's momma dies

**MRS. MARIETTA RIFFLE.**

The death of Mrs. Marietta Riffle, a resident of Pulaski county nearly all of her eighty-six years, occurred Tuesday at the home of her son Dr. Bertram Riffle in Indianapolis. She had been seriously ill for some time.

Funeral services were set for this (Thursday) afternoon at 2:00 o'clock at the Winamac Methodist church, of which she was a member. Burial in the Winamac cemetery will follow rites conducted by the Rev. O. P. Manker.

Mrs. Riffle was born in Indian Creek township on Nov. 21, 1862, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Felker. Her husband, William Riffle, has been dead for many years. Four sons and a daughter survive. Dr. Raymond Riffle, Dr. Bertram, Otho and Mrs. Elba Vernon live at Indianapolis; Orlando in the state of Washington. She also leaves a sister, Mrs. William Berg of Logansport; half-brothers Jonas and Henry Wolfe of this community; eighteen grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

*Pulaski County (IN) Democrat Feb 10 1949: 1. Microfilm.*

Elba's momma dies

**Mrs. Marietta Riffle**

The body of Mrs. Marietta Riffle, 86, former Pulaski county resident, who died Tuesday morning at her home in Indianapolis, has been returned to the Fry and Lange funeral home here. Funeral rites will be conducted Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the Winamac Methodist church by the Rev. O. P. Manker and burial will be in the Winamac cemetery.

Mrs. Riffle, who died after a long illness, was born November 21, 1862, in Pulaski county, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson

Felker. She spent most of her life in this county, but moved to the home of a son in Indianapolis several years ago. She was a member of the Winamac Methodist church

Surviving are four sons, Drs. Raymond and Bert Riffle, and Otho Riffle, all of Indianapolis, and Orlando Riffle residing in the state of Washington, two daughters, Mrs. Nora Webster and Mrs. Elba Vernon, both of Logansport; a sister, Mrs. William Berg, Logansport; two brothers, Jonas and Henry Felker, both of Pulaski county; 18 grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

*Winamac (IN) Republican Feb 10 1936: 8. Microfilm.*

**Stalking My Hometown**  
**1924-1947**  
**Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art**

The **Hoosier Salon** began in 1925 at the Marshall Field Department Store in downtown Chicago. Elba participated in the exhibits in **1932** and **1938**, as well as **1965**, after the event moved to Indianapolis.

A **Hoosier Salon** notice appeared in the Indianapolis (IN) News between November 2, 1965 and November 14, 1965. It was a two-man show by **Elba Riffle Vernon** and Oliff Pegg at 610 State Life Building.

**Stalking My Hometown  
1924-1947  
Elba's Men, her Scandal, and her Art**

*The stifling heat may have factor in the death yesterday elderly Indianapolis woman. Police were called at 1 p.m. to 859 N. Broadway where Elba Vernon, 75, was found dead in her home. Lyman Vernon said his wife had been hanging clothes outside and came inside to lie down. Vernon summoned a fire rescue unit when his wife appeared unconscious. She had a history of medical problems, he said.*

*The Marion County coroner's office listed cause of death as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and a representative of the coroner's office said that the condition could have been aggravated by the heat.*

The Indianapolis (IN) News 9 Jul 1980: 1.

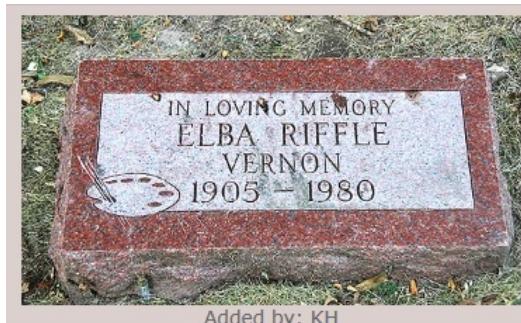
*Services for Mrs. Lyman (Elba Riffle) Vernon, an artist and teacher for senior citizens, will be Friday at 10 a.m. in Flanner & Buchanan Fall Creek Mortuary.*

*Mrs. Vernon, 75, died yesterday at her home, 859 N. Broadway. She was a renovation artist at Lyman Brothers and taught art classes for senior citizens at Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center, Christamore House and Hawthorne Community Center.*

*She was a frequent exhibitor in the State Fair art show, first entering in 1929 as a John Herron School of Art student. Her entry that year was a sculpted head "filled with rocks because the price of plastalene was so high and it took so much of it to around," she recalled in a 1978 interview.*

The Indianapolis (IN) News 9 Jul 1980: 46.

**Elba Riffle Vernon at Crown Hill (Indianapolis IN)**



Added by: KH

<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=46038978>

8 Jul 1980. Website (findagrave.com).

1986 Interview with Daughter, Zoe, about Elba's marriage to Harold Penwell

**Marriage to Harold Penwell**

Posted 17 Nov 2012 by Deborah Gearhart

Taken from an interview of Zoe Ann Jones in 1986 for a history and genealogy project.

Elba married Harold Penwell shortly after his wife passed. He had several children and was looking for a mother to raise his children. Elba had just had a daughter out of wedlock, (Zoe Ann Jones). Zoe's father wasn't in the area anymore. Elba was pressured into marriage to Harold Penwell by her parents. Harold insisted that Zoe Ann take his last name. Shortly after their marriage, Harold took a job with the railroad. After a few months, Elba knew that Harold had abandoned her and his children. She returned with Zoe to her parent's home. Elba took the rest of the children to the orphanage. She was not going to raise someone else's children.

**Marriage to Harold Penwell**

Dec 1929

Logansport, Cass, IN, USA

Interview of Zoe Ann Penwell took place in her home on W. Walton St, Indianapolis, IN. in 1986 with a tape recorder.

 Deborah Gearhart originally shared this on 17 Nov 2012

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