

History

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EARLY YEARS OF DUPLICATE BRIDGE IN FORT WAYNE

The merger of competing organizations in 1936 was the birth of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL). This merger brought order and structure to the world of duplicate bridge and fomented the steady growth of local clubs across the country. Anecdotal tales of duplicate bridge in Fort Wayne prior to WW II exist, but no written records of where, when and whom have been found. In 1946-47 Donald and Gertrude Currie started a sanctioned game on Friday evenings in the old Indiana Hotel. In 1951 the Curries changed their game to Monday evenings and moved their location to Manochios Restaurant. In the early 50's Jeanne Kovats started a sanctioned game on Thursday evenings. In late 1956 and early 1957 these two sanctioned games merged into a nonprofit corporation which was formally called the Fort Wayne Duplicate Bridge Association (FWDBA). The games continued to be held on Monday and Thursday evenings. During the next half-dozen years or so the location of the games moved around Fort Wayne seeking better accommodations and playing conditions. Some of the locations include Manochios Restaurant, Millers Cafeteria, Charkees Restaurant, and finally Frank Yoders building at 802 Van Buren Street. There the building became known as the Bridge Center. Numerous other sanctioned games were started throughout the city. Donna Haefling started a beginners game on Tuesday evenings. Jim Kavanaugh started a game on Friday evenings. Lorene Houk held a game on Saturday afternoons. Jeanne Kovats had a Tuesday afternoon game. Adair Cummins started a Sunday afternoon game. All of these games eventually became proprietary games at the Bridge Center. The Bridge Center moved to the Fairfield Manor for several years and then to Jefferson Street in 1979. The first regional was held in October of 1958 at the VanOrman Hotel. A second regional was held at the same location in September of 1960. Regular regionals in Fort Wayne started with the building of the convention center and accompanying hotels. The pioneers of the early years of Fort Wayne duplicate bridge include Don and Gertrude Currie, Jeanne Kovats, Everett Bish,

Kurt Muller, James Kavanaugh, Lorene (Leiter) Houk, Adair Cummins, Bob Swindell, and Catherine Sherbody. Yes, there are many others, but this is a BRIEF history.