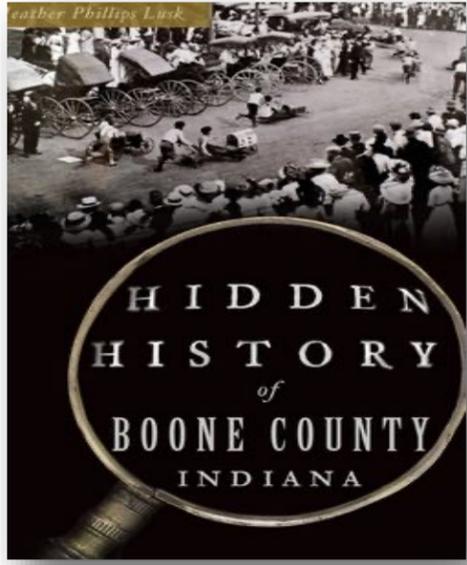


The book *Hidden History of Boone County Indiana* featured on the front page is available for purchase on our website.
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Hidden History of Boone County Indiana book cover



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HIDDEN HISTORY of BOONE COUNTY INDIANA

Excerpt—Chapter 34 Campbell, Smith and Ritchie

Many are familiar with Hoosier cabinets, the stand-alone cabinet that could be custom-made for any kitchen. "Hoosier cabinet" has become a generic term for these uber-customizable baking cabinets manufactured by roughly three dozen companies, most located in Indiana. One of the most popular versions was the Boone cabinet, made in Lebanon.

Campbell-Smith-Ritchie Company manufactured Boone cabinets for at least three decades. The business first began as a mill and lumberyard established in 1867. George Campbell purchased the mill along with partner Frank Coombs around 1892. Son Coombs sold his share to James P Smith, who had previously owned a lumberyard in northwest Indiana. In 1900 Morris Ritchie sold his Lebanon grocery business and joined Campbell and Smith in the endeavor. While their primary business was milling and lumber, they also made door and window frames and decorative trim.

The men had recently begun to dabble in creating kitchen cabinet when a fire in 1905 completely destroyed the mill and all their materials. The rebuilt on West South Street, adjacent to the Big Four Railroad. By 1907 they had incorporated the business and added furniture and cabinets to their collection. Within a few years, they decided to discontinue their lumber manufacturing and center all resources completely on the rapidly growing cabinet industry. In the 1920's, Boone Cabinets



could be purchased for as little as twenty-five dollars or up to more than one hundred dollars for versions with two electrical outlets, a clock and an ironing board.

Boone cabinets were similar to other Hoosier cabinets, with dozens of customizable features. These included a retractable metal top, a coffee mill, a knife sharpener, spice tins, a recipe holder, a flour mill and a pegboard. Cabinets could be ordered with glass or covered windows and would store utensils, dishes and kitchen staples. (continued to page 2)



Boone Kitchen Cabinet

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Become a **new member** or **renew** your current membership. Or you may want to consider a separate donation to the Cragun House Restoration and Maintenance Fund to help preserve this county treasure.

Volunteer – We are always happy to have help at our events. May we add your information to our volunteer contact list? No obligation – just an occasional e-mail, asking if you're available.

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 Visit our website for upcoming events and stories: boonecountyhistorical.org

And you can always reach us by phone: 765-483-9414 or
 Email: cragunhouse@mymetronet.net

HIDDEN HISTORY of BOONE COUNTY INDIANA (continued from page 1)

What made the Boone cabinets stand out began with a simple marketing idea. An advertising campaign invited women to send letters suggesting needed improvements to kitchen cabinets. The Campbell-Smith-Ritchie Company placed an ad in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, hoping to generate ideas for their new cabinets. The company received suggestions from 369 women. The idea that the cabinets were designed by women for women was turned into an inventive and successful campaign.

1923 Saturday Evening Post ad



A few innovations made the Boone cabinets cutting edge for their time. Many of these features came standard with the top sellers, such as a built-in alarm clock, built-in desk, disappearing ironing board and electric light at the top. Others were extra, like a double electric socket and an Arcade Crystal coffee mill. The cabinets played upon women's vanity as well, with a hidden mirror tucked into the cabinet for a quick touchup "when the doorbell rings".

Different styles could fit different styles could fit different home configurations. One version with a utility closet at the end could be built into a wall. Another was only thirty-five inches high so that it could be placed below a kitchen window. Cabinets even came with a stool what could be tucked back into the cabinet quickly without taking up additional space.

The cabinets also came in a variety of finishes: white

white enamel with green decoration, golden oak gray oak or gray enamel with multiple colors of decorative designs at the top.

Campbell-Smith-Ritchie Company then named these cabinets for women: Mary, Helen and Dorothy were some of the best-selling models.

Advertisements ran across the country in local newspapers and were most prevalent in the late 1920s. Many also boasted that the company was the oldest manufacturer of kitchen cabinets in the world. While not substantiated, the claim was very possibly true. The Hoosier Manufacturing Company in New Castle, Indiana, was on the heels of Campbell-Smith-Ritchie in creating storage options for kitchens. While the Hoosier Manufacturing Company was the first to create the Hoosier-style cabinet, both companies began manufacturing their separate built-in cabinets around the same time.

At its peak about 150 people worked for Campbell-Smith-Ritchie Company. Employees could receive a custom cabinet for free. Like most other kitchen cabinet manufacturers, the company's sales began to decline during the Great Depression. The company closed many manufacturing lines and focused on simply building built-in cabinets and oak breakfast tables and chairs.

Campbell and Ritchie were longtime Lebanon residents, but Smith never lived in Boone County. Campbell and Smith died in the 1910s. Ritchie worked for the company until it was sold to Eugene Burford Rhodes, an inventor of another cabinetmaking company, in 1940. The business was bankrupt within a year.

Campbell-Smith-Ritchie Company was located just a few blocks from the enter of Lebanon. Three Boone cabinets are on display at the Strange Cragun House, not far from where they were manufactured in the 1920s. Two were in the home when it was donated to the Boone County Historical Society. Another found it's way to Lebanon via an antique dealer hoping to find a home for the Boone cabinet she'd purchased but didn't know how to refurbish. She discovered the cabinet's manufacturer, which led her to the county historical society and she generously donated the item back to the community where it was first built.

The Cragun House has three of the Boone Kitchen Cabinets mentioned in the book. Make an appointment to see them today!

Lincoln's Lebanon Civil War Reenactment & Military Encampment is coming!!

Join us September 24th & 25th at Lebanon Memorial Park



Share your history with us!

Have an idea for an article you'd like to see in the Boone County Historical Society Newsletter, on our Website, or on our Facebook page? Maybe a topic you would like covered at a presentation to the public? **Contact us via:**

PO Box 141, Lebanon, IN 46052; cragunhouse@mymetronet.net; Or through our website: www.boonecountyhistorical.org/contact-us

Tour the Cragun House Today!

Take a step back to the late 19th century with a tour of the Cragun House. Built in 1893 by newspaper publisher and Lebanon school superintendent Strange Cragun. This amazing piece of history was gifted to the historical society by the Cragun family in 1988.

Call: 765-483-9414
Email: cragunhouse@mymetronet.net
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Have you considered becoming a sponsor?
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