

A Little Piece of History:
Finch Hill Corners: "The 4 Corners of Life"
by Bob Jadwin, Corresponding Writer

If you journey west from Carbondale or East from Clifford, North from Heart Lake or South from Dundaff you will pass through Finch Hill Corners, as it is locally known now. It seems at first to be like any of other of thousands of country crossroads, just an intersection of 2 highways; but for people like me who have been traveling through it since the late 1940's and those before that, this place is known to us as "The four Corners of Life." That nickname came from the uses that occupied each one of the corners.

On what is today's vacant corner once stood a tavern. When I was a boy it was run by Marty Conners, after Marty passed away it was bought by the Petinatto family from Carbondale. It was just a white house, sitting close to the road, with neon lighting that announced its presence to travelers or just seekers of good food, refreshment and entertainment, provided by Marty himself.

People say he could tell a good story, and was smart enough to get his crowd caught up in passing good natured joking across the bar to him, after which he would pass it back to them or someone else. While Marty was the entertainment, so was everybody else that came in, most just didn't realize it, he was that accomplished.

Marty Conner's Tavern was supposed to be the first stop in "The 4 Corners of Life." According to legend you would go to Marty's for a beer or a few drinks, enjoy some good food, and leave only to return again and again. It is said that when you finally went to Marty's enough times you could "drink your money away" and end up in the poor house. The poor house was just across the road, the poor house was on the 2nd Corner of Life.

You have to look hard for it today, the trees are much bigger and that makes it more tucked away and hidden. But it is still there and you can see it if you look from the corners toward Clifford, across the old John Booth farm. It's a long deep red brick building with white windows. It was an actual working farm and was built to house the ones of us who were poor and had lost everything or had nothing; the victims of the Stock Market crash and the depression. The story of the corners says that after you spent all of your money at Marty's you went across the street to live at the poor farm until you died, and when that happened you were taken to the 3rd Corner of Life.

Diagonally from the Poor Farm, and just across 247 from Marty's corner, still sits Finch Hill Church. Its a friendly looking white country church, and like all churches, visitors are welcome. It is here that legend says that you were taken from the Poor Farm for your funeral service, here to the 3rd Corner of Life. From here was a short journey to the 4th and final corner just on the other side of Route 106, diagonal to where Marty's Tavern was.

The Cemetery of our Mother of Sorrows still remains the occupant of the 4th corner of life, as it did in the "old days" and will always continue to. And as legend tells it, this was your final resting place; the fourth of "The 4 Corners of Life"; a man could stumble across them and stay forever.

Oh what a great people were these forefathers of ours. With no TV or video games for entertainment, they sat back and relaxed, pondered, and made up a story about a simple country crossroads that not only made sense, but was a story that could be passed down for all time to recant and enjoy. Ah yes, those old timers; the ones that had nothing much to do but look around and ponder. I don't seem to see anyone doing anything like that now, but maybe that's because nowadays we are too much in a hurry to get on the other side of the crossroads, we're just too busy to stop and see what's there.

Finch Hill Corners, "The 4 Corners of Life," one of the same place, but one name conjures up a story that legends are made of, a story that identifies this spot as a particular place in the world, and in time.