

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part XIX

**By Pamela Nickell
H.C. Historical Society**

This is our own Hercules moving a pillar before the wall comes tumbling down. Actually, pictured is the Highland County Board of Trustees member and Building and Grounds chair Steve Holland moving the pillar (you can be sure Director Vicki Knauff is doing her job directing from nearby) from the back corner of the conference room to safety before Brad Tira and Wayne Dance and crews began their work repairing the back wall of the Highland House.



But a pillar? Clearly one which is originally for outside use? Inside the Highland House? Why do we have such a thing, and from where did it come?

My first connection with this pillar, though tenuous, came in 1979 just after Bob and I moved to Highland County. One day we were on a drive east into Hillsboro, turned right on S.R. 138 into Greenfield and right again onto S.R. 28.

As we drove past this phenomenal looking campus on the left, I literally gasped with wonder. Just past it, in amazement, we turned around and went back. It was simply gorgeous. I really still cannot figure out which is more impressive to me: the architecture or the landscaping.

By now, you know the building I am talking about is McClain High School. The campus includes the lovely landscaping and beautiful colonnade. The rest of the buildings are of more simple architecture but add significantly to the overall effect. And, so does the fountain, of course.

The high school was a gift to the people of Greenfield from industrialist Edward Lee McClain, and the people of Greenfield have always supported their jewel with great pride. The students are kept aware of their prize – and the entire 10 years I was with the system, I never saw any graffiti or abuse.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of McClain High School. A Centennial Committee has worked for many months to plan the approaching Sept. 4-6 celebration on Labor Day weekend. Greenfield Historical Society President Harold Schmidt has announced that they are publishing a book about the history of the School. City Manager Ron Coffey is writing articles about the school. Their website is www.mcclain100.org.

Fast-forward to the 1990s, I had the opportunity to join the Greenfield Exempted Village Schools' staff. Longtime principal Dr. Dan Strain seemed to never tire of teaching me and others the traditions and history of this remarkable place. In keeping with my good fortune, I got to be there when the Ohio Building Facility Commission granted the district

the permission and financial assistance to renovate the existing buildings on the main campus rather than to tear down and rebuild as was standard procedure at the time. I believe Greenfield was the first in the state to receive that privilege. Superintendent Phil Cornett and Principal Dan Strain led a strong board through negotiating this achievement.

The column in the Highland House is, you have guessed, from the McClain campus when it was replaced by one identical in appearance but of newer and more durable materials.

And the HCHS has it because of the generosity and wisdom of those who knew this was yet another way for a piece of McClain history to be preserved.