

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part XXIX

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

Perhaps you were one of the hundred or so who joined the Historical Society for the "Evening with Caspar Collins" on the Scott House lawn Sunday evening, July 26 for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his heroic death in battle in 1865.



Steve Roush as Caspar orated a first-person account of his life from birth in 1844 through growing up in Hillsboro, following his father into war, his death and his return for burial in the Hillsboro Cemetery.

Listening to this presentation provided a real connection with the boy and young man whom we still honor today.

Bob Brown answered our call to present Caspar's father, William Oliver Collins, without whom our story of Caspar, either his birth, childhood or military exploits would not exist.

From Elsie Johnson Ayres' "Hills of Highland" we read: "Col. W.O. Collins, like his ancestors, was a great soldier and a leader of men. Born in Somers, Conn. on Aug. 23, 1809, he was the son of Col. Oliver Collins, who fought in the War of 1812, and the grandson of a soldier who fought in the Revolution.

He was a direct descendant of Edward Collins, who arrived in Boston from England in 1630."

From this and other sources, we know that William was a graduate of Amherst College and the University of Cincinnati Law School. He married and came to Hillsboro to practice law. His wife died a short two years into their marriage. He later married Catharine Wever, daughter of Hillsboro doctor Philip Wever and they became the parents of three children. William Collins became a prosecuting attorney, president of the Hillsboro and Cincinnati Railroad Company, and state senator of Ohio. When the Civil War broke out, he resigned his position as senator to form a volunteer regiment which was ordered west in 1862 for the purpose of protecting postal and telegraph communication lines.

He survived to live out his life in Hillsboro, passing away Aug. 25, 1880.

Catharine was born in Maryland in 1818 and died in Hillsboro in 1911.

Much less is written about her, but she was obviously significant in the lives of her family and in her own right. She influenced Caspar in his interest in artistry and attention to detail which resulted in the illustrating and mapmaking which benefitted the Western campaign.

Catharine traveled west with her husband and son and lived in a fort for a year, and she authored the material which the State Historical Society of Colorado published in 1954 entitled "An Army Wife Comes West: Letters of Catharine Wever Collins 1863-64."

In order to travel West and live in a Fort she left the comfort of a lovely home with elaborate furnishings. The Highland House is fortunate to have this bed from the home. It is located in the Caspar Collins Room and is a unique half-canopy bed with elaborate carving and satin tucking lining the canopy, a gift from Hillsboro resident Joe Rockhold.

Immersed in the Collins history as the HCHS has been these last couple of weeks, we feel we almost know the Collins family.

We are reminded that remembering, honoring and preserving are gifts to the future. And we are grateful to all who have so gifted us.