

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part LI

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

The yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Highland County Historical Society is winding down. It has certainly been a fast-paced and quickly moving year and original founder Robert A. 'Bob' Hodson and his wife, Dorothy, have been with us all the way – mentoring, laboring, advising and financially supporting.



Pictured at the Highland House Museum are: Diane Jolitz, John Glaze, Jean Wallis, Carolyn Hastings, Steve Holland, Jim Rooney, Avery Applegate, Mary Jo Copeland, Kati Burwinkel, Rosemary Ryan, Nancy Wisecup, Vicki Knauff, Paulette Donley, Arlene Huffman, Dorothy Hodson, Denny Kirk, Justin Harsha and Bob Hodson. Not pictured: John Kellis, Tim Koehl and Mike Shanahan.

The Board of Trustees, with the help and the support of the membership, have done the society proud if an old phrase might be paraphrased.

The current Board of Trustees consists of: Avery Applegate, Kati Burwinkel, Justin Harsha, Steve Holland, John Kellis, Denny Kirk, Tim Koehl, Jim Rooney, Rosemary Ryan, Mike Shanahan, Jean Wallis and Pamela Nickell.

Previous board members since the restructuring of the HCHS in October 2013 are Kay Ayres, Lana Daniels, Larry Dukes, Vicki Knauff (who is now director of the Highland House), Caroyl Reid, and Shelly Stratton.

Incoming board members are Carolyn Hastings and Diane Jolitz.

The critical support team of John Glaze, webmaster, newsletter editor, and museum shop manager, and appointed secretary Paulette Donley have been invaluable.

The membership, to whom the Board of Trustees reports, was led from October 2013 through 2014 by President Mike McCarty and VP Arlene Huffman; in 2015, by President Arlene Huffman and VP Mary Jo Copeland, and this next year, 2016, by President Mary Jo Copeland and VP Nancy Wisecup.

During 2015, the bowing part of the back wall and seven windows on the west side of the building have been replaced by the dynamic duo Brad Tira and Wayne Dance along with their excellent crews of Kenny Parsons, Randy Parsons, Mike Hasman, Dustin Dance, Bob Enfield, Denny Wagner and Todd Brinley. HCHS Board Finance Chair John Kellis put together a capital campaign to fund this work, some of which was actually gifted by Tira and Dance.

In addition, specific donors supported a west wall window project.

Membership, other records, and the contents of the Highland House are being computerized with technology used by many museums including the Smithsonian. The program was another wonderful gift and John Glaze is instituting it. Storage is a problem, only to be very recently addressed by a wonderful gift from Louise Hapner who deeded to the HCHS a large garage with parking spaces located on the alley behind the HH and just steps away.

Events during this special anniversary year included the St. Paddy's Day Brunch, the 50th Anniversary Celebration, an Evening with Caspar Collins, the Ghost Walk in collaboration with SOGS (Southern Ohio Genealogical Society), the Log Cabin Cookout, Ross County bus tour, House Tour, Christmas Open House and expanded Holiday Craft Show and Sale.

Temporary exhibits were Hat Pins and Fashion Accessories, Girl Scouts, Shaving Mugs, and Sheriffs which included research of the entire history of Highland County Elected Sheriffs. Even now research is being done on two major topics to be presented in 2016. Even though we were closed during the heaviest part of the reconstruction, numbers prove that membership, visitors, and volunteer hours all increased.

And, so, we've had a great time and will be transitioning from the 50th Anniversary of the Highland County Historical Society to the 50th Anniversary of the purchase of the Highland House by ringing the bell in front of the HH at midnight New Year's Eve.

Hope many, many of you will join the fun. It is open to all. And Justin Harsha will do the honors!

Note: After last week's article about Dr. Leighton was printed, I learned that Vicki Knauff, HH director, grew up in the house that he had built, her parents having purchased it, and that she now owns the property. The house is gone, but she said that her childhood in the 12-room home was an adventure. What a connection!