

# MUSEUM MUSES

Telling Highland County's story for over 50 years!

COVID HAS MADE A MESS OF OUR MUSEUM LIFE!

## BELL'S OPERA HOUSE POSTERS

Tara Beery

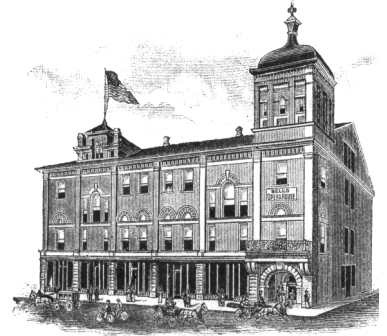
One never knows what awaits discovery in an old attic. Some attics contain only worthless piles of long forgotten junk. Some are haunted by spiders, bats, or squirrels who have chosen it for their own home. But sometimes, attics contain treasure. An exciting treasure was recently discovered when Anthony and Chassity Matyuka explored the attic of their newly acquired 1900 era Leesburg home. During their investigation, the Matyukas were surprised to find a large stack of old movie advertisements from Bell's Theater.

They were very generous with their find. Instead of throwing them out or selling them on eBay, they brought the posters to the Highland House Museum and donated the entire lot. The Highland County Historical Society is grateful to Anthony

and Chassity and is very happy to be able to preserve these items for future generations. It is not known how the 101 posters came to be in the Leesburg attic. The posters donated to the museum are examples of theater window cards, a type of advertising that hung in windows of stores, barber shops, bakeries, etc. or on telephone poles around the community. They were printed and released by Bell's Theater to advertise their movies in 1934, 1935, and 1936.

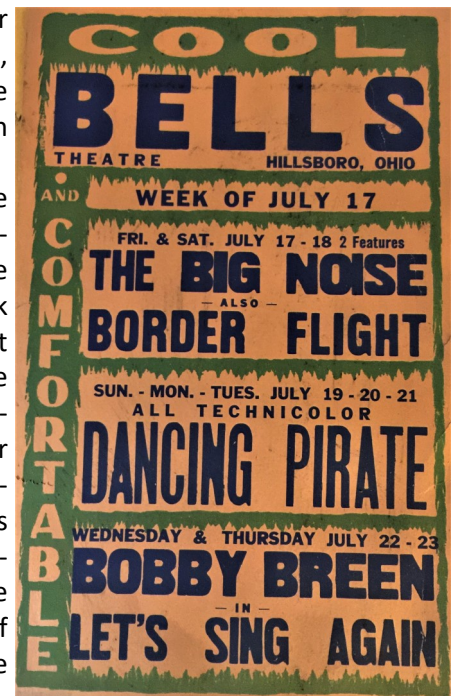
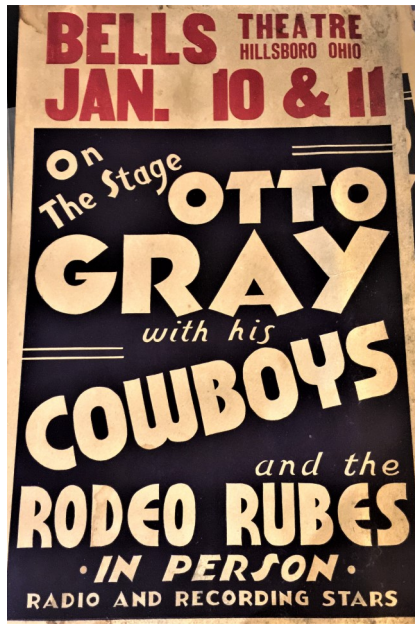
They consist of thin cardstock and measure 22 inches tall and 14 inches wide. The posters from 1934 and 1935 are printed simply, but attractively, using only a single color of ink. The window cards from 1936 are much showier than those of the preceding years. They have multiple ink colors along with different eye-catching designs. Each poster lists all the movies the theater being shown that week, usually three or four, along with the days each movie would play. If a picture included an es-

pecially popular actor or actress, his or her name is included with the title. Many of the movies are serials starring the likes of Buck Jones and Hoot Gibson. While there are advertisements for some classic motion pictures such as "It Happened One Night", many of the films the



Bell's posters tout are less well known today, such as "Dinky" or "The Dancing Pirate". Reading the implausible and convoluted story lines of these lesser known movies at IMDB.com is an amusing way to spend an afternoon.

In addition to the movie advertisements, there are a small number of window cards that announce live (continued on page 3)



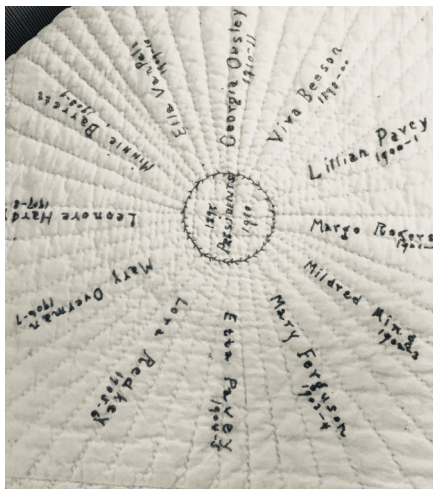
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QUAKER QUILT STUDY UNDERWAY

Earlier this year, the Historical Society received a visit from Roberta Gellner, from West Virginia, who is currently studying the connection between historic quilts made by Quakers in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and quilts brought to Ohio or made by families who migrated to Southwest Ohio. Ms. Gellner originally became interested in the migration of Quaker families (and their quilts) after a visit to the Virginia Quilt Museum in Harrisonburg, VA.



ject that she hopes will capture the spirit of the people and the quilts.

She will be focusing on Ohio quilts and quilt makers prior to the early 20th century. Ms. Gellner hopes to document previously undocumented Quaker quilts and research their place in Ohio history.

As part of her visit, Ms. Gellner took photographs and obtained available docu-

mentation on several quilts at Highland House. Inspecting HCHS held quilts, she assisted volunteers in determining the approximate age of the fabrics and in what era specific quilt designs may have been popular. She is interested in connecting with anyone who has information or antique quilts related to her research.

and Clinton County areas. She is very interested in connecting with individuals in Highland County who may have inherited family quilts or those who may be able to share antique quilts and/or their history.

Ms. Gellner believes that there is a connection between the quilts of southwest Ohio and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, as shown through the migration of members of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers). This association is part of American history that she believes could be seen in the quilts of these two areas. Her quilt study titled "*Peaceable Labors: Quaker Quilt Connections from Virginia to Ohio*" is a pro-

ject that she hopes will capture the spirit of the people and the quilts.

Ms. Gellner has graciously agreed to share additional information regarding her "grant journey" and the discoveries she makes. If you would like to share any information about antique quilts or quilt history you may have, please contact Highland House at (937) 393-3392. We will be certain to promptly forward this information to Ms. Gellner.

*Sue Honeycutt*

WHO AM I?

If you guessed **HELEN FORD** for last issue's mystery child, you were correct!



This issue, Who is this sweet little girl? (Answer next issue)

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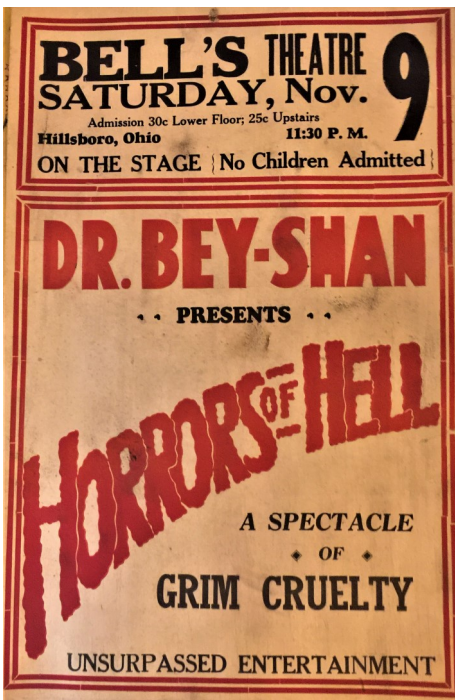
## Bell's Opera House Posters (continued)

stage shows from the same era. One of these posters wholesomely announces a show of "Pep Golden Stars" that includes "Hillsboro's Singing & Dancing Kiddies". The poster for "Mardi Gras Nights" is considerably racier, featuring a drawing of a nearly topless young lady gyrating to the music of "Glen Dale and his Masqueraders". The ad for "Dr. Bey-Shan's Horrors of Hell" starkly announces "No Children Admitted" to the 11:30 pm show.

attic, all of the posters had accumulated a good deal of black debris. After consulting with Avery Applegate, the posters were wiped down with microfiber cloths to uncover their hidden beauty. Any repairable tears were corrected with archival tape. The posters were then placed in acid-free bags for safer handling, as some of the paper has turned brittle from spending decades in the less than ideal attic environment.

These posters will be on display for a limited time at

the Highland House Museum this summer. Several of the best will be framed and remain as exhibits long term near the Colony Theater display. The bulk of the collection will either remain at the Museum or find a home at the Scott House. There are a few posters for which there are multiple copies. The Society is entertaining the possibility of selling



While the condition of the posters varies from pristine, drop-dead gorgeous to not so great, all have vivid, clearly readable ink. After spending almost 85 years in the

the doubles at some point in the future. The Highland County Historical Society invites everyone to come to the Highland House and enjoy these wonderful finds!

## Don't Forget Your Local Cemeteries!

When you're reading about local history, usually the closing statement on a specific person is when and where they passed away as well as the location of interment. Cemeteries go hand in hand with the expansion of the country. As people migrated from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, growing communities were established and as people decided to settle, the establishment of cemeteries followed.

Whether these cemeteries were established by churches, fraternal groups associations, and or private families, they were started with a common purpose.

Like all things with age, maintenance becomes a necessity and, for some cemeteries in the county, the controlling sexton lacks the resources, whether financially

or equipment wise, to care for and maintain the grounds, repair monuments, remove dead trees, and or just mow the grass.

Some cemeteries have more capacity than others to generate revenue to cover such costs, and some don't have any capacity at all. The only real sources of revenue are lot sales and donations. Local townships, which operate some cemeteries in Highland County, run a levy to help cover basic maintenance cost. (One of these failed at the most recent election.) In other cases, cemeteries are structured as an association which are board-controlled by local people. The revenue to care for them is based solely on lot sales and donations. It all comes back to the same thing: it takes resources and good  
(continued on page 7)



THE MUSEUM SHOP  
AT HIGHLAND HOUSE  
151 E. MAIN ST.  
HILLSBORO, OH 45133



**Kirk Law Office, LLC**  
Denny Kirk, Attorney at Law



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## HIGHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL MARKERS

The project to install markers of historical sites has been kind to Highland County. Just as a reminder, we wanted to remind you of each of these in hope that you will choose to visit each one and want to learn more about the event or person represented.

First is marker #1-36—**Smith Tannery**, located at 103 Lafayette Street in Greenfield. The text of this marker:

The Smith Tannery is the oldest original structure remaining in Greenfield. Built in 1821 by Revolutionary War veteran William Smith and his son Samuel, the tannery became a noted station on the fabled "Underground Railroad." The structure, which also served as the family residence, was the birthplace of Dr. Samuel M. Smith, Surgeon General of Ohio during the Civil War, and Dr. William R. Smith, who personally notified Abraham Lincoln of his nomination to the presidency in

1864. The Smiths were active members of the Abolition Society of Paint Valley, which was established in 1833 in Greenfield and reorganized in 1836 as the Greenfield Anti-Slavery Society. In 1844, the Society assisted the efforts of Frederick Douglass, one of the nation's leading abolitionists. The Society provided an important junction on the Underground Railroad, assisting many fugitive slaves to gain freedom, including, it is said, Eliza Jane Harris of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame. The Smith Tannery was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Marker #2-36 is also found in Greenfield. It is at **Edward Lee McClain High School**, located on Jefferson St, between N 5th and N 6th. Here is the text:

A focal point of community pride for generations, McClain High School was the gift of textile manufacturer Edward Lee McClain to his hometown, "as promising the greatest good to the

## Highland County Historical Society

# HALL of FAME

A reminder to get your nominations into the Highland County Hall of Fame 2020. This year's inductees will join 62 other notable Highland Countians in the Hall of Fame. Nomination forms can be downloaded from the Highland County Historical Society website, [www.hchistoricalociety.weebly.com](http://www.hchistoricalociety.weebly.com). The deadline for returning completed applications is Monday, June 1, 2020. Applications should be returned to Highland House, 151 E. Main Street, Hillsboro, Ohio 45133 by 4:00 p.m. on

June 1. This year's inductees will be recognized on Sunday, August 16, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. at the Presbyterian Church, Hillsboro, with a reception to follow at Highland House. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like a nomination form mailed to you. Nancy Wisecup, Chair, Highland County Hall of Fame chair 5886 State Route 247 Hillsboro, Ohio 45133 [njwise-cup@gmail.com](mailto:njwise-cup@gmail.com) 937-402-1527

*Nancy Wisecup*

greatest number for the longest time." Designed by nationally prominent school architect William B. Ittner, the school was dedicated in September 1915. Lauded as one of the most complete and state-of-the-art school plants of its time, McClain High School embodied the ideals of the progressive education movement in the early 20th century. A fully equipped gymnasium, mo-

tion-picture equipment, and a pipe organ were rare luxuries for any school during this era. Additional gifts by McClain also furnished a vocational training center and an athletic field. Numerous sculptures, paintings, and other works of art displayed throughout the school continue to enhance the atmosphere of Greenfield's acclaimed halls of learning.

*(continued next page)*



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## Historical Markers (continued)

Found at the New Market Community House on US 62 is a marker noting the life of **Oliver Harris**, who lived from 1780 to 1845. Here is that text:

In 1798, Henry Massie, brother of General Nathaniel Massie, platted a town, the earliest permanent settlement in Highland County, covering 400 acres and named it New Market after a town in his native Virginia. New Market served as the unofficial county seat until Hillsboro assumed that title in 1807. Despite being traversed by the Cincinnati-Chillicothe Post Road with seven other roads (including one from Manchester) leading in, New Market ceased being an active trade and civic center. It is now a small hamlet with a cluster of dwellings, a church, and a few businesses.

In 1810, Oliver Harris migrated here from New Jersey with his wife, Amy Bereman Harris. A journal that he kept for 35 years until his death tells of a man with diverse skills, staunch character, deep faith, and patriotism. He served as a Lieutenant during the War of 1812 and organized a church, originally known as the Little Rocky Fork Church, at his home in 1838. His treasured legacy, excerpts of which have been published, has been carefully preserved locally by 6 generations. Harris and his great, great grandson, namesake Oliver Harris, are interred in Baptist Cemetery.

To learn more about **Milton Caniff**, you can visit the marker located at Highland County District Library at 10 Willettsville Pike in Hillsboro. Mr.

Caniff was born at the house located at 149 E. North Street, but as this is a private home, the marker was placed at a more public location. Here is the text of that marker:

Creator of some of America's favorite cartoon characters, Milton Caniff was born in Hillsboro in 1907 and graduated from Ohio State University in 1930. He created his first comic strip in 1932 for the Associated Press Syndicate, and in 1934 introduced "Terry and the Pirates," an innovative serial adventure featuring believable characters drawn with unprecedented realism. Enormously popular through the World War II years for both "Terry" and the comic strip "Male Call," which he created for the U.S. military's Camp Newspaper Service, Caniff subsequently introduced "Steve Canyon" in 1947. "Steve Canyon" ran for forty-one years until Caniff's death in 1988. Credited with influencing generations of successful cartoonists, Caniff brought adventure, suspense, and sensuality to what had been largely a medium for humor and melodrama.

Familiar to most HCHS members will be **Lincoln School**. Marker #6-36 commemorates the history of Lincoln:

The Lincoln School, which stood on this site from 1869 to 1956, was a segregated elementary school intended for the city's African American students, grades one through eight. Hillsboro was the site of the first Northern desegregation suit following

## HCHS News

Thanks to these members who renewed their commitments to HCHS:

Jeff & Tara Beery

**Leafee Beery Heritage**

Lowell & Carolyn Chambers

Loretta Dean

**Linda Johnson Heritage**

Denny & Alexis Kirk

Sarah Rogers - Heritage

Tamara Ann Rogers

Jim Spurlock

Susan Thompson

**Thomas E. Wilson Heritage**

Monetary donations were received from these members:

Lowell & Carolyn Chambers

George Foltz

Bob & Dorothy Hodson

Jennifer West made a contribution in Memory of Ralph Holt and Doug Applegate.

Wendell & Freda Harewood in Memory of Carol Barrera and Ann Hern Williams.

N. David Chaney made an Honorarium donation recognizing Jack Hope.

HCHS extends their condolences to the families of

**Kathryn Davis**

and

**Zella Cumberland.**

Kate was involved in many civic and community activities. Zella was one of the Lincoln School Marching Mothers.

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the May 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, a decision that abolished the nation's long standing "separate but equal" doctrine.

Following a two year legal struggle, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) and a group of parents, and assisted by Thurgood Marshall, who would later become the first black Supreme Court Justice, the Hillsboro school system was desegregated in 1956. The lawsuit hastened integration in other parts of Ohio, and the north due to national media coverage.

*(Watch for more next issue!)*

## DOC ROBERDS

The job of County Coroner is not pleasant even with the advantages of the modern era. The hours are unpredictable and every case is a tragedy. For old-time coroners, the job was even worse. They lacked much of the medical knowledge and almost all the testing and equipment needed to determine why someone had died. They also lacked refrigeration. Before the advent of modern transportation, the victim had often been dead for a day or more before the coroner could get to the scene. The job was likely seen by early Highland County doctors as a civic duty that each one had to perform at some point, because during the late 1800s and early 1900s, doctors did not tend to run for re-election after serving their two year term.



The case journal of Dr. Thomas Wesley Roberds, one of these coroners, has been preserved. From 1897 until 1951, Dr. T. W. Roberds served the Belfast community's medical needs. He was so beloved in the area that a monument was erected in front of Belfast School in his honor. From 1900 to 1901, Dr. Roberds served as County Coroner. During his two years in office, he investigated eight different cases of individuals dying under unusual or suspicious circumstances in Highland County.

Though the caseload may seem light, Dr. Roberds did not have it easy. The deaths cover

a wide variety of situations including infanticide, work accidents, a drug overdose, and (as far as can be determined) a still unsolved ambush murder. Reading through the cases is a bit sad, but it is also illuminating. Life and death 120 years ago is more similar to today than one might think.

A study is being made of the people involved in these cases to learn who they were, what their lives were like before their deaths, and what happened to their survivors. Thanks to the Corona quarantine, work on the project is advancing more quickly than expected. A booklet detailing the findings of these cases should be available for purchase in the Highland House Museum during the Christmas season. If anyone has any information on the following people that they are willing to share, please contact me by email at:



beery\_tara@yahoo.com

*Dr. Roberds (1863-1952)  
Fairfax and Belfast*

*James "Wylie" Gibson  
(1893-1900) Carmel*

*C. C. Tharr  
aka William C. Tharr*



Need A  
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*aka Columbus Tharr  
(1861-1901)*

*Anna Bell McCoy  
Stodgel Cunningham  
(1874-1937)*

*Pike County, Greenfield,  
New Petersburg*

*John Edward Teter  
(1866-1901) Leesburg*

*Dr. H. A. Beeson  
Leesburg*

*John Henry Hart  
(1880-?) Belfast*

*George Vinson Storer  
(1873-1931) Belfast*

*William Van Storer  
(1875-1962) Belfast*

### More info about Dr. Roberds

He was born on 9 Sep 1863 near Fairfax, OH. Early in life, he earned a teaching certificate, but then went to Western Reserve University and received his medical degree in 1889. He died 18 Dec 1952.



One of HCHS projects now underway, is "Voices from Lincoln". This is an attempt to contact the students and others who had some kind of connection to Lincoln School and receive his or her input on their connection with the school. So far, it has provided fascinating stories. These will be interspersed with photographs and documents relating to the struggle for integration of elementary schools in Hillsboro. If you would like to participate, feel free to contact, Kati Burwinkel (937-763-2802), Myra Phillips (937-402-1589) or John Glaze (937-708-0470). We welcome your input!!!



**Susan E Vaher**  
Financial Advisor

301 N High Street Suite 101  
Hillsboro, OH 45133  
937-393-5751

**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

**LYNCHBURG ORCHESTRA 1930-31**



Who knew Lynchburg had an orchestra in 1930? Herman Rosselott, later one of Lynchburg's bankers, directed. Woodrow McLaughlin of Pricetown is in the back row holding his trombone, wearing his letter sweater. Recognize any others? Please let us know.

We are in need of volunteers to place flags on veteran's graves at the Hillsboro Cemetery on May 15th starting at 5:30pm. (May 22th if bad weather on the 15th.)

Anyone interested can send me a message for more information.

**JOHN T. WILLIS**  
937-205-8751

**Cemeteries** (continued from p.3)

people to maintain and operate them.

While doing genealogical research, if you come to find a cemetery not well maintained, don't ask why it's not being cared for, but try asking what can you do to help make it better.

*John T. Willis*

**NEW BOOKS COMING TO THE MUSEUM SHOP!**

In our last issue, you read Tara Beery's article about Civil War Store Cards used in Hillsboro. Now you can read the entire story in Tara's new book, **"CIVIL WAR STORE CARDS OF HILLSBORO, OHIO"**.

This book should be available in the Museum Shop when we are able to open. In addition, we will be arranging an author signing as soon as we can!

By our Christmas Open House, we hope to have available the book which Tara is working on now. It will be on the subject of Doc Roberds' Coroner Records. (see article on page 6) Hopefully, some of you will

be able to contribute to information as mentioned in Tara's article!

Watch for our opening date and come to the Museum Shop to see the many new items.

Civil War Store Cards of Hillsboro, Ohio



Compiled by Tara Beery for the Highland County Historical Society

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Check the date found on your mailing label. This is your membership renewal date. If it falls within the period of this newsletter, your renewal statement is enclosed. Please make any corrections or additions on the form and return it with your payment. Please consider increasing your membership to the next level.

## OPENING FOR THE SEASON?

**Watch our website  
and Facebook.**

## OLD PHOTOS

When you need more info for a newsletter, Tara Beery is the person to call! Here are some items you might find interesting!



1874 or 75. Unknown fellows.  
This is 1/2 of a stereoscope



Lynchburg Business District—1940s



Whisler Wood Mill—1907 Centennial



*Thanks to Tara!*

*More photos  
will be in the  
next issue.*