

MUSEUM MUSES

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Hillsboro Fires

So Many Activities this summer and early Autumn!



1875 Smith Corner Fire

Hillsboro has been extremely fortunate to not suffer a major natural or man-made disaster through its history. It has, however, seen its share of large, dramatic fires that, while they caused great excitement and misfortune, only single buildings were affected. For example, when the Hillsboro Academy building burned in 1858, it was so large the flames cast shadows for six miles. The massive 1894 fire at the Hillsboro Female College, which dominated the view to the west of town, must have made for a terrifying sight. The Geyler Furniture Factory fire in 1933 briefly threatened homes on Elm and Main Streets, but only the factory sustained damage. This fire started when a worker (who will go unnamed to avoid embarrassing any descendants) rinsed his hands in varnish cleaner then closed a large electrical “knife switch”. A spark from the switch ignited the flammable liquid on his hands. This man thought it would be a good idea to plunge his burning hands back into the container of varnish cleaner to extinguish the fire. Amazingly, he survived the resulting explosion, but the factory was not as fortunate. The worst aspect of this fire was that about 100 employees were subsequently thrown out of work during the worst of the Great Depression. The fire at the City Building in 1949 was the most embarrassing large fire, as the fire department, equipment, and trucks were located in the building. While these and many other fires were damaging to the lives and finances of those affected, for the most part they were extinguished quickly and with little collateral damage. There were, however, three major fires that, due to their location, lack of proper firefighting equipment, and/or unfavorable weather conditions, could easily have spread to consume a large section of Hillsboro.

The first of these major fires took place on Sunday May 4, 1875, at about 1:00 AM. Ringing bells and repeated cries of “Fire!” startled citizens from their beds. The fire was at the “Smith Corner”, the southwest corner of Main and High Streets (the former Farmers and Traders/US Bank location). This was in the very heart of the business district. By the time of its discovery the fire was already well-established in the old building and an unusually high wind was blowing the tower of fire across the road, threatening the businesses on the east side of High Street.

The town’s volunteer fire fighting force arrived quickly and set up their single, 20-year-old engine to

combat the spreading flames. The water used to fight the fire was stored in emergency wells near the public water pumps by the courthouse. The gathered citizens instantly recognized the serious danger of the situation. The Highland Weekly News reported that “there was an instant and simultaneous movement on the part of all to do something towards saving the town”. Men, women, and children rushed into the burning stores and those nearby to salvage as much of the contents as possible and to reduce the fuel for the flames. Hundreds of others formed bucket brigades, passing water to those on ladders and house tops fighting the inferno. Others took the place of firemen as they fell aside, exhausted. “For two long hours,” the Weekly News reported, “the fearful battle was fought between the devouring flames on one side and human courage, resolution, and endurance on the other, until the latter won the victory, as they always will when there is the slightest chance in their favor.”

Due to the exceptional efforts of the town, the aggressive fire’s spread was halted. The major damage was confined to the buildings at the corner, which were total losses. These included Walker & Evans’ shoe store, J.J. Brown’s drug store, Dr. Callahan’s dental office, and G.B. Gardner’s law office. In addition, five other businesses sustained damage from the fire and from the water used to fight it. The owners of these properties had differing amounts of insurance, but all those affected managed to recover from the financial hit and continued in business for many more years. No cause was ever found for the fire, but it was believed to have been an accident.

The second major Hillsboro fire occurred just after midnight May 28, 1908. It started in the back of the livery barn of N.R. Barrett on the east side of South High



(left) Stabler's Store after the fire of 1908.



(right) 1908 Barrett Livery Fire. The empty, smoking lot is where the livery was located. Note the telephone repairmen working at the top of the utility pole.

(below) Back view of the 1908 Barrett Livery Fire



Street, just north of the alley (the present site of Hillsboro Pawn & Jewelry). The livery stable and all its contents were completely destroyed and 14 horses that were boarded there were killed. The large

building just to the north of the stable was gutted by the flames, though its brick front and side walls survived, and, indeed, still stand today. This building most notably

(continued on page 9)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

2022-23 TRUSTEES

- Tara Beery
- Sue Boatman
- Sue Honeycutt
- John Levo
- Jean McKenzie
- Leslie Ramsey
- Steve Roush
- Earl Smith
- Brenda Thompson
- Debbie Williams
- John Willis
- Dale Zornes

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 Newsletter Editor: John Glaze

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

- Derek & Anne Fraley
- Ed & Phyllis Hiestand
- Jim Lukens
- Chad Randolph
- Jake Vollmar

OUR RENEWING MEMBERS!

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- Melissa Beyerlein - Heritage**
- Leafee Beery – Pioneer**
- Patricia Cooper
- Susan Cooper
- Mary Jo Copeland
- John & Joanie Grimes
- John & Connie Hanna
- Tony & Mary Hermes - Heritage**
- Linda Johnson – Heritage**
- Tina Zink Minty
- Max Petzold

MEMORIALS RECEIVED

Sue Boatman & Judith Hamilton remembers their friend, Helen Ford.

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CONDOLENCES

to these members who lost loved ones recently:
 Condolences to the family of Helen Ford who passed away in July.

Mission

The mission of Highland County Historical Society is to encourage community involvement in the preservation, education and promotion of Highland County history and genealogy for the benefit of all people for present and future generations.

LOG CABIN COOKOUT



SAVE THE DATE!!!
 Saturday, 16 September
 Log Cabin Cookout
 Backyard of
 Highland House!

WHO AM I?



If you guessed **PHIL BURWINKEL** for last issue's mystery child, you were correct!

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



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 and
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The CLIFTON HOUSE



From "The News-Herald," of June 18, 1914

Obituary of Clifton House Excellent Article on Old Landmark of Hillsboro by Mrs. C. Roads

Life of Our Ancestors in Early Days is Entirely Described and Humorously Compared With That of Present Time

The editor is indebted to Mrs. Conard Roads for the following entertaining and instructive article on the Old Clifton House which will be thoroughly appreciated by our readers:

Ebeu Fugaces...

*O Clifton House, the wreck of thee
Inspires diverse apostrophe.*

*Thy passing calls faint tear or sigh
From those who've watched
thy glory die;*

*A monument to time is gone--
Script down to one poor
corner stone;*

*No more Olympic savor soars
Adown thy phantom corridors.*

*No more is heard the laughter free
Of old time flower and chivalry
In vanished rooms of
late consigned*

*To night hawks and to tiger blind,
That made thy ruin seem to us
Some ghost besieged sarcophagus;
And so thy walls to dust return*

*From which they sprung
and slight concern*

*It gives those thoughtless
hordes who are*

*Disposed to christen thee
bete noire,*

Thy day is done -

*Fate rings thy knell
Ha! then, Old Nuisance,
and Farewell.*

The razing of the old Woodrow House is a matter of congratulation to the populace at large, but there are a few sentimentalists as yet unstung by the materialistic bug, ready to organize a sob fest over the destruction of a historic landmark. Time has a peculiar way of hiking over the stepping stones of its dead self to higher things, and it remains the province of Memory to strew a primrose or two along the course of its relentless Marathon. Some day a boiler foundry may rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of El Karnak and a brewery or soap factory flourish on the wreck of Stonehenge. It is the business of Progress to accomplish such commercial miracles.

Ol' Josh Woodrow little guessed that his substantial homestead would one day give place to a modern armory. Neither did he visualize one of his kinsmen in the Presidential chair. But even if his prophetic soul had grasped these two developments, he probably wouldn't have cared a tinker's cuss. He was the man of the hour in his own bailiwick, and the issues of that hour sufficed him. He wasn't exercised over what the coming century might bring forth. Travelers who came to his house, came by coach or on horseback, and took time to enjoy his hospitality. Supplies, other than what the soil yielded, came overland in ox-carts from the Ohio river port at Ripley. Guests gathered around the big fireplace in winter or out under the trees in summer and talked about affairs almost as vital to the public weal as those that are

being settled on the Highland House stoop or in the Parker House lobby today. Canal tolls, ABC mediation, The River of Doubt and Mellen's malodorous mélange were matters undreamt of in their pioneer philosophy. They discussed Perry's Victory, Waterloo, President Monroe and his as yet undoctored doctrine. Hard cider, rather than grape-juice policies engaged their interest. Birds, chickens and frogs gave orchestral accompaniment to their deliberations, with an occasional wild cat obligato from the surrounding wilderness. Stars and pike bowls afforded the nightly illumination. No screaming motor siren, locomotive or factory whistle fractured the Arcadian solitude. The women in Hillsboro in that day seemed to have enjoyed life with all of its limitations. The burning issue of equal suffrage never disturbed their gentle dreams. They never knew the ecstasy attendant upon a dansant or a bridge breakfast. They quilted cooperatively for fun and pared apples for the communistic billin'. In winter they went to singing school and learned to trill moss grown lyrics like Ben Bolt and Barbary Allen. Or to spelling school and rattled off words that would put the skids under any modern club dame and send her spinning into the ditch of orthographic despond.

The Woodrow ladies of a hundred years ago were the proud owners of the first ingrain carpet and horse-hair furniture in town, and perhaps the first melodeon and lard oil lamp. Judged by modern standards, their state parlor must have looked about as cheerful as a morgue with its stiff upholstery, its deluxe hair-wreath under a glass globe, its what-not laden with daguerreotype case, conch shells, bisque shepherdesses and such vitu, and its marble topped center table bearing up the home library which likely included Fox's Martyrs, Pilgrim's Progress, Josephus and current copies of

Littel's Living Age. That was before the day when Art revived and demanded "Looney Kanz", mahogany from Grand Rapids magical automatic pianos that play everything from the "Sonato Pathetique" to "Too Much Mustard", gilt cabinets stuffed with objects d'art culled from the treasuries of the Orient via Vantine's and priceless tapestries direct from looms subsidized by Montgomery Ward.

The Woodrow dining room, however, would tax the descriptive genius of Lucullus or Fra Elbertus, both gentlemen being some bear-cats when it comes to the subject of dietetics. Roycroftie boards underfoot, windows darkened to keep out the flies, cool sweat beads on the silver water pitcher, old fashioned roses in a blue vase on the white deal table and a bare legged Hebe ready to serve everything delectable from mugs of frothy milk and rosaries of home-grown sausage to flaky hunks of mulberry pie.

A century from now. a crumbling armory will be replaced by an air-ship depot like as not, and some necro logic post will wax tearful over the good old pioneer days of 1914. But of the two extremes, the first picture seems most beautiful, away back a hundred years ago when the Woodrow House was new and Highland County had as yet no moral or political need of contact with the Gold Dust Twins.

Helen P. Roads


 PAST
PERFECT
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GREAT COUNCIL STATE PARK



“This is an exciting step toward preserving an important piece of Ohio’s history. This project gives us the unique opportunity to connect future generations with the past, while protecting the legacy of the Shawnee and inviting them to share their story.”

– Governor Mike DeWine

Great Council State Park in the Oldtown area of Xenia Township, Greene County, is scheduled to open in 2023.

In February 2021, the state of Ohio agreed to purchase a 0.7-acre site along U.S. Route 68, south of Brush Row Road, in Oldtown, north of Xenia, housing the Tecumseh Motel, for \$260,000. The state planned to redevelop the property as a state park in honor of Tecumseh (c. 1768 – October 5, 1813), the Shawnee leader who was killed in the War of 1812 and became an iconic folk hero

in American, Indigenous, and Canadian history. The park would educate the public about Tecumseh and the Shawnee people, and its focal point would be a 2,000-to-3,000-square-foot interpretive center.

The park’s location was chosen due to the Shawnee history in the area: Oldtown is on the former site of the large Shawnee settlement commonly referred to as Old Chillicothe, which had a population of 1000 between 1777 and 1780, and Old Chillicothe’s council house is believed to have been located on a high ridge behind the motel; the park’s location is also due to the earlier mistaken belief that Tecumseh had been born in Old Chillicothe. The park is to be developed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in coordination with the Ohio History Connection, the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, the Shawnee Tribe and the Absentee Shawnee, and run by ODNR.

In January 2022, it was reported that the size of the

interpretive center would be increased to 6,000 to 7,000 sq ft and its design would be inspired by the traditional council house form used by the Shawnee; it was also reported that ODNR hoped to secure more land for the park.

Ground was broken for the park on June 27, 2022. During the ceremony, it was announced that the interpretive center was now planned to be 12,000 sq ft and would include three floors of exhibits, a theater, a living stream, and a gallery. Displays will honor the history of the Shawnee people and allow present-day Shawnee to share their stories. Also highlighted will be historic settlers like Daniel Boone, who was held captive in Old Chillicothe for several months in 1778.

The website for Indian Country Today (www.ictnews.org) follows news concerning indigenous people. Sarah Liese, Native American Journalism Fellowship, 2021, wrote an article concerning the new park. Here are some of her

thoughts:

“Native American representation in Ohio has been rocky, and most often than not, one-sided.

“There are no federally recognized tribal nations in the state. However, Native Americans and Alaska Natives make up 2 percent of the state’s population and 2.9 percent in the country, according to the 2020 Census.

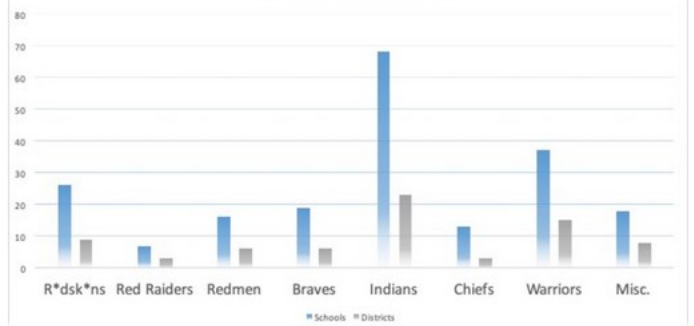
“Ohio resident and member of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, Cynthia Connolly, has taken note of the invisibility of the Native population in the Buckeye state, since moving to Ohio in 2007. She believes the representation in the state is sorely lacking.

“I think every school district should take a step back and audit their schools and schools’ curriculum, and see if they are only talking about Native Americans before the year 1900. And if they are one of those schools, then they need to remedy that.”

“Ohio also has the largest number of K-12 schools in the country that employ Native-themed mascots, totaling 204 schools and 72 school districts, according to the National Congress of American Indians. Out of the 204 schools, 26 schools use the R-word, and 16 schools use the mascot ‘Redmen.’ (see chart below)

“Following the Cleveland Indians’ decision in 2020 to change the name to the Cleveland Guardians — fueled (continued next page)

K-12 OHIO SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS WITH NATIVE-THEMED MASCOTS



Need A RUUUG?

TISSOT'S HOME CENTER

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HILLSBORO

by pressure from Indigenous activists and organizations for decades — 10 K-12 schools in Ohio stopped using their Native-themed mascots.

“Staying true to that promise, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has partnered with the Shawnee Tribe Cultural and Historical Preservation Committee, Shawnee tribal leaders, and the Ohio History Connection to discuss the fate of the lodging destination. Currently, the property is owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and spans about half an acre; however, the department hopes to secure more land.”

We hope you will want to read this entire article. If you access the ICT website and then click on the magnifying glass “search” icon, then type Sarah Liese into the box and enter, you will find the list of her articles. It is well worth your time so to do.

Once we get moved into Hodson House, we have plans to also move the second floor School Room and then use that space for a new display on indigenous peoples of Highland County and surrounding areas.

We want this area to be thoughtfully and intentionally created and will be seeking experts in the field to assist us. Should you have artifacts you might wish to donate or loan, please contact Vicki now so that we can include these items in our planning.

Similarly, if you have knowledge you would like to share, or are interested in being involved in this important display project, please step forward!

Meanwhile, start planning a visit to the newest Ohio State Park just outside Xenia. Take your children or grandchildren so that they may have this chance to learn about not only the native Ohioans, but also those who still live in and around Ohio.

Additional source: Wikipedia

HALL of FAME

The Highland County Historical Society will induct six honorees into its Hall of Fame this August.

Those to be enshrined in the 2023 class are Albert “Uncle Al” Lewis and Wanda Lou “Captain Windy” Lewis, Ted and Eileen Salter, Admiral John Jennings Ballentine and Maynard Roberts Surber.

Al Lewis (1924-2009) and his wife, Wanda (1926-2020), were hosts of one of the longest running children’s television shows, “The Uncle Al Show,” from 1950 to 1985.

“Uncle Al” holds the unofficial record for the longest -running regularly scheduled series with the same host for the show’s entire run. The iconic show had a 35-year run on Cincinnati WCPO-TV, and Al and Wanda Lewis made their home in Highland County in 1979, where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

Ted (1914-2001) and Eileen (1924-2012) Salter performed variety act shows of puppetry, music and British pantomime for audiences, paying or not. The Salters appeared on “Truth of Consequences” and “The Steve Allen Show.” The Salters made Highland County their home, and Ted even wrote a song for Hillsboro entitled “Hillsboro, O-HI-O.”

Admiral John Jennings Ballentine (1896-1970) was Highland County’s highest ranking naval officer. Admiral Ballentine was best known for his contribution to the U.S. Naval carrier activities during World War II. He was born in

Hillsboro Oct. 4, 1896, and after graduating from Hillsboro High School at age 17, he entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, where he graduated in 1918. He retired from the military in May of 1954, but was recalled to active duty in November of 1956 and served in the Pentagon in Washington with the joint chiefs of staff, finally retiring in full in 1958.

Maynard Roberts Surber (1920-2012) was actively engaged in dairy, livestock and crop farming in Highland County for more than 70 years, beginning in 1936. The family farm was first established in 1820 and is one of the 15 oldest active farms in Ohio today.

He was a veteran of World War II, 1943-1945, Battalion Commander, drafted in 1943, commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Calvary, and ultimately attained the rank of Lt. Colonel. Mr. Surber was also a founding participant in creating the current Highland County Fair and was a founding board member in 1946.

The Highland County Historical Society created the Highland County Hall of Fame to recognize, honor and celebrate those who have made invaluable contributions to the county and/or the world beyond. By honoring and recognizing these people, the Hall of Fame serves to stimulate an interest in – and appreciation for – the value of the history of this county and its citizens. Further,

the Hall reinforces to our youth that they can, and should, strive for excellence in any endeavor they may undertake.

The Hall of Fame ceremony will be held Aug. 20 at 2 p.m. at the Hillsboro Presbyterian Church with a reception and social hour immediately following at the Highland House Museum. We hope you will attend and bring someone with you!

Steve Roush

Merry
Mercantile
News

Guess what? It soon will be time for the **Merry Mercantile!** The vendor spots are all FULL and we’re excited about this shopping season! We open the first Friday of November with our open house! Make plans to shop early and shop often!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 20 Aug - Hall of Fame Induction 2pm-Presbyterian Church
- 16 Sep - Log Cabin Cookout
- 24 Sep - Tour of Homes & Historic Buildings 12-6p
- 26 Sep - Ghost Walk
- 13 Oct - Haunted Hillsboro
- 17 Oct - JEOPARDY!
- 3-4 Nov - Christmas Open House Weekend
- 10 Nov - Veterans Appreciation
- 11 Nov - Veterans Day Ceremony at HH - 10:30a
- 25 Nov - Small Business Sat.
- 26 Nov - Museum Shop Sun.
- 16 Dec - Wreaths Across America
- 24 Dec - HH closes for winter

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Highland House



Unknown date - sometime in late 1800s

As you well know, the two-story brick house at 151 East Main Street is the home of Highland County Historical Society. How much do you know about the history of the structure?

Its history began in 1840 when Henry and Ann Maria Boyd Turner of Warren County sold the east half of In-lot 10 in Hillsborough to Peter Leake Ayres. During the years 1842-45, Peter Ayres erected the two-story brick house. The bricks for the home were burned on the back end of the lot and the walls of the original part of the building are supported by stone pillars embedded in the ground of the basement. The foundation is of quarried limestone, undoubtedly sourced locally.

The original building contained nine rooms and a large entrance hall. It was a typical Virginia I beam house similar to many of the homes found in Highland County during that time.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ayres lived only four years following the completion of his new home. He passed in December of 1849. His sons, Robert H. and James S. were executors of the estate. He was also survived by his wife, Clarissa, and several other children.

Fairly rapid turnover of the property took place in the succeeding years. On 14 February 1852, the Ayres brothers sold the east half the lot 10 to James and Mary Rosa. In less than a year, the Rosas conveyed the property to John and Sallie Johnson. It is believed that it was he who built the porches located on the upstairs and downstairs in the rear.

Next, on 2 May 1866, the Johnsons sold the property to William Scott and Robert Lilley in trust for the purpose of using the premise as a boarding house for the young ladies enrolled at The Highland Institute. Apparently, this

did not work out as planned and the property was once again sold on 11 April 1870 to Jeremiah and Sallie Black.

Just less than ten years later, on 10 March 1880, the Blacks conveyed the property to Fred and Emma Steinman. Only two years later, on 3 May 1882, the east half was sold to Joseph Gaskill.

During the years Gaskill owned the property many changes occurred. He added more rooms to the building, enclosing the two porches and making it a first class hotel. That may have been the time when The Highland House was named.

Advertisements following the renovations read, "Newly remodeled and first class in every respect."



Next, 13 February 1889, Samuel Parsons Scott and his sister, Jane, purchased the property as an investment. At that time Cary T. Pope, former sheriff of Highland County, took over the management of Highland House.

In 1905 the property was purchased by Eugene Zimmerman and for many years it was operated by his daughter Kate Doorley as a resident hotel. Later, her daughter, June Doorley, operated the hotel. Under her management Highland House became an East Main Street tradition. It became famous for the food and on Sundays attracted the townspeople, county residents and those traveling through Hillsboro. Clubs and organizations used the facility for luncheons and dinner meetings.



Kate Doorley

On 28 March 1964, Helen Boyd purchased Highland House from June Doorley. The historical society, chartered in 1965, was seeking a location and felt Highland House would be perfect.

A problem was that the Pure Oil Company also wanted to purchase the site for their new service station. With encouragement, insistence and a sizable donation from Virginia Bell Thompson, couple with a bank mortgage, Highland House was purchased by the society in 1966.

Today, Highland House, with its long history, is now the home of HCHS. Its fourteen rooms and four hallways are filled with Highland County history preserved for future generations.

Information provided by Bob Hodson and much was taken from Highland Guideposts, 18 March 1996 as written by Jean Wallis, HCHS Historian.



Unknown year-possibly late 30s or early 40s

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What about Peter Leake Ayres?

Peter Leake Ayres (1789-1849) was the ninth child of Nathan Ayres and Mary Christian Leake. Nathan was a Colonel who fought in the Revolutionary War and apparently worked with George Washington. Nathan and Mary were the parents of eleven children.

Peter married Elinor Tandy Holman and they moved from their home in Virginia to Highland County in 1832. Locating on Anderson Road, he and several freed slaves who came with him, built a home as well as log homes for the freed slaves. Elinor and one of their daughters died of cholera while they were living on Anderson Road. Their farm was a stop on the Underground Railroad, harboring runaways on their farm or hiding them in plain sight amongst his farm hands. Peter's second wife was Clarissa Dorsey who had come from Pennsylvania.

Bringing the family on down, Peter Leake Ayres was the father of Thomas Burge Ayres. Thomas' son was Edwin Burett Ayres, who was the father of Edwin Billingham Ayres (Ed Ayres whose 2nd wife was Elsie). Their daughter, Clara Elizabeth Ayres married Winston Howard Duckworth, who is the father of Christopher Duckworth, one of our members.

Happy Birthday, Frieda Redkey!

Our long-time member, Frieda Redkey recently celebrated her 100th birthday! Frieda has lived in Hillsboro over 60 years and



been a mainstay in many organizations beside HCHS. Pictured is Justin Harsha, Hillsboro's Mayor, presenting a Proclamation to Frieda. Happy Birthday, Frieda! We wish you many more!



TRAVELLERS REST INN

The year was 1812 the deconstruction of the and Noble Crawford built an inn in Greenfield to serve the traveling public. It served later as the first Post Office and became the oldest building in the town. Many know the name, Frank Raymond Harris as the author of books about Greenfield, but did you know that in his will, Mr. Harris, who served as a teacher, a principal and a superintendent of Greenfield Schools and passed in 1965, left \$20,000 to acquire the property of Travellers Rest. As it turned out, the company which had purchased the property to build a service station, donated the building and Texaco promised to grant extra land as needed.

By October of 1965, the building began. Then, in the spring of 1967, the location of the old Presbyterian Church was to be the new home of Travellers Rest, rebuilt with a basement and modern conveniences such as air conditioning. Much of the original building was reused in the reconstruction and by the early 1970s, the property was open. It now serves multiple uses for GHS and is a beautiful addition to the Old Burying Ground.

If you have never visited the holdings of GHS, put that on your "to do" list. The annual History Day will be coming in early October. Watch the newspaper or GHS's website and spend a day filled with history in Greenfield!



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Volunteers Needed

"You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give."

We need **YOU** to help us continue our mission of preserving and promoting Highland County history. Please join us in making a difference!

HCHS LIFEBLOOD - VOLUNTEERS!

Recently, I've been spending some enjoyable time looking at a notebook put together by the late Pam Nickell when the Historical Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2015. The Highland County Press published weekly articles in 2015 to "remember and acknowledge the past and the present of the Historical Society on its 50th anniversary." This notebook contains valuable information about the antiques and items housed in Highland House Museum in addition to sharing history of the birth and growth of the Historical Society. I always respected Pam as a work colleague and friend, but admire her even more for the amount of Highland County history she penned to celebrate the HCHS 50th anniversary. I'm amazed by the sheer numbers of individuals mentioned in the notebook who have volunteered their time and energy to help the Historical Society grow and succeed as a viable asset in our Highland County community. Sadly, some have passed but eight years later, many still volunteer today. These are folks who have willingly devoted their time and attention to sharing our history, maintaining our properties, planning and implementing the many events that are held each year. And the volunteering continues! Demand for volunteers far exceeds the number of volunteers we have. Currently, volunteers are scheduled for Highland House Museum

when we are open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays, May through December. Volunteer manpower is always needed to greet visitors and staff the Museum Shop. When you do the math (4 volunteers per week x 3 hours per shift), this computes to significant volunteer hours over the course of a year just for this function. Add to that, all the volunteer hours needed to plan and complete the many events that are held throughout the year, the upkeep and maintenance of the properties held by the Historical Society, financial management and administrative oversight, maintaining the historical library, responding to requests for information

and assistance from the community.....the list of volunteer time and energy goes on and on. I've been fortunate to meet and get to know many folks as a result of time spent scheduling volunteers for the museum and some other activities. A common denominator among all volunteers is our love of history and the importance of assuring that current and future generations of Highland Countians are given the opportunity to know Highland County history. Many times I've witnessed the enthusiasm young visitors bring to the museum when they see items they have never seen before. It's refresh-

ing to see visitors whose eyes stray from their phones to look at objects that are representative of everyday life in historic Highland County. A few years ago, some decades-old newspapers were offered to visitors during a rummage sale being held at the museum. I was intrigued (and thrilled) by the number of children who were fascinated by the newspapers and their desire to choose a newspaper as something to possess for their own. I have to admit, as a volunteer I was rather generous in my "negotiations" with these kids. Who can deny someone who

wants to spend time looking at written history and not social media!

Something else that lifts my

mood when I volunteer are the visitors who stop by the museum to seek a tidbit of information. These folks are on the hunt to find out anything they can about their family history..... or the history of the house they have recently purchased....or information about the Lincoln School Story.....or if anybody knows where a certain diner was located back in the 1950s. The neat thing is, I know I can always "phone a friend," another volunteer who knows much more about Highland County then I will ever know! As many know, time is precious these days. As a retiree I haven't run into many other retirees who aren't amazed at how they got everything done in one day before retiring! Choosing to volunteer is a deliberate commitment to set aside time in your busy schedule to benefit others. But, as I have found, the rewards greatly outweigh the negatives. I am a big believer in life-long learning. Volunteering at the historical society certainly fulfills this desire. I volunteer in a place

and with people surrounded by history that never ceases to share. I enjoy people but have a tendency to remain homebound, avoiding interaction with others. Volunteering regularly takes me into the community, giving me the opportunity to meet new people and spend valuable time with friends and acquaintances. Socializing... it's a good and healthy thing! I think we all move through life sometimes wondering if, as a person we are doing enough to contribute to our community, and if we are serving a productive role to help others. Spending time as a volunteer certainly checks this box! With all of the above being said, please use this information as a promotion to encourage you to devote a regular part of your life to being a volunteer. We are always in need of volunteers to help with our historical society.

If you have a Friday or Saturday afternoon, once a month please consider volunteering at Highland House Museum. If you have been to one of our events and enjoyed yourself, please give us a call and offer to help out with a special event! We have firmly established committees in the following areas: membership committee, education committee, media committee, collections & exhibits committee. If you like serving on committees, please think about volunteering to serve. Please consider giving us a call to discuss your interest in volunteering. You will not be volunteering alone, someone will always be there to provide support. To best reach someone, call (937) 393-3392. Please leave a message if no one answers. You can also reach out by messaging the Highland County Historical Society on our email: hchistoryalsociety@gmail.com or by messaging the Highland County Historical Society Facebook page.

Sue Honeycutt



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Hillsboro Fires *(continued)*


 MUSEUM MUSES

housed Joseph Stabler's 5&10¢ store, Dr. Charles Wright's dentist office, and Will Hiestand's grocery warehouse. The nearby businesses of H.J. Schweinsberger, the Hill City Grocery, and the Central Lumber Company all received fire or water damage of varying degrees because of the blaze. The extreme heat from the fire also cracked every window in the front of Bell's Opera House, which was directly across the street.

There were two telephone companies servicing Hillsboro at the time, the local Home Telephone Company and the national Bell Telephone. Both of these utilities were greatly affected by the fire as both had important cables running along the alley by Barrett's Livery. Over 1,000 customers lost service for up to four days until the lines could be repaired. This loss of communication panicked out-of-town friends and relatives and gave rise to exaggerated reports in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Springfield newspapers of Hillsboro being completely engulfed in flames.

While the big city papers engaged in speculation and hyperbole, there really was a terrifying point when the entire business district could have been lost. Hillsboro had put in a water system in the 1890s, with a water source and pump station near the Clear Creek basin north of town. It was able to deliver at least one million gallons per day to the old rocket shaped water tower near Collins Avenue. This tower was 135 feet high, 15 feet in diameter, and held 175,000 gallons of water, which should have provided more than enough to drown the flames. Unfortunately, that

night the water tower was less than half full. In a cost saving measure, the water company had shut down their equipment for the night, even extinguishing the fires in the furnaces that powered the pump that filled the tower. This meant that there was not enough pressure in the town's fire hydrants to throw a proper stream of water onto the fire or reach the tops of the buildings. It was as if they were aiming a garden hose at the fire instead of a fire hose. It took hours for the water company to restart their equipment and build up enough pressure to get a stream of water strong enough to be any use fighting the fire.

Fortunately, the firemen adjusted quickly, and once again the town was saved by a single fire engine, a few resolute volunteer firemen, and many engaged citizens with buckets. Though Barrett's livery and Stabler's store were both a total loss, the flames were vanquished before any more buildings were engulfed.

Two interesting stories were relayed in the News Herald about this fire. A large decorative vase was the only object in Dr. Wright's office to survive. This delicate ceramic piece was found completely undamaged, but was half filled with brick and plaster rubble. Also, during the struggle two men spent the whole night fighting the blaze while standing on an empty wooden tank. The heat grew so intense the metal hoops on the tank melted and the top fell in. This was when the men discovered they had been firefighting while standing on top of 60 gallons

of gasoline. This fuel miraculously was not ignited by the inferno.

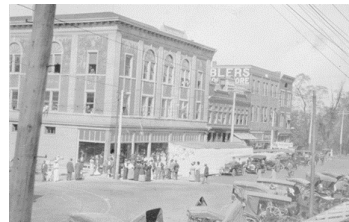
The final town-threatening fire was the Murphy-Benham fire of 1928. This was the largest and most costly fire in Hillsboro's history and resulted in the destruction of almost an entire block of the uptown business area. On Friday night, January 20, a celebration was being held in the third-floor party hall of the Murphy Benham Hardware store in the Bell Block, a large

Court Street, taking out the old C&C Traction building and two other buildings, including one that had been built by Governor Allen Trimble.

Firefighters were on



A repairman works atop a utility pole on North High Street at the northernmost reach of the fire's destruction. Interestingly, the large building at the right was built by Joseph Stabler to house his 5 and 10¢ store after losing his business to the 1908 Barrett Livery Fire. The store was under new ownership by 1928.



The Bell Block (left) and the west side of North High Street before the fire.

the scene quickly, but their efforts were severely hampered by the extremely poor weather conditions. The night was bitterly cold, around 8°, with strong, icy gusts of wind.



Court Street after the 1928 Murphy-Benham fire. Due to overspray from the firehoses (one of which can be seen at the right), there are icicles on the Soldiers' Monument and the cannon and cannonballs are covered with an icy glaze.

building erected in 1912 by J. G. Bell on the corner of Court and High Streets. About 10 PM, revelers noticed smoke billowing up the stairs. They immediately started for the exit. As they fled, the smoke quickly grew very thick and the lights suddenly winked out while they were descending the stairs. Fortunately, they were all able to feel their way out to safety.

The fire started in the basement, with the likely source being the building's furnace. Initially all that could



Court Street before the fire. The Bell Block would have been to the right of these buildings.

be seen was a thick smoke pouring out from the basement. When some windows were broken to shoot water into the building to quench the fire, the first flames appeared. Then, a sudden, never-explained explosion sent a tower of flames whipping into the air. The fire quickly spread up North High Street, engulfing the Palace Theater, Dr. McBride's medical office, and badly damaging the Elk's Hall. It also swept west along

A call for help was sent to the Washington Court House and Chillicothe fire departments who responded as promptly as they could manage, given the wintery conditions. The Chillicothe truck proved to be useless, as the fire-fighting chemicals it contained were frozen, but the WCH truck was credited with saving the surrounding buildings.

It is hard to imagine how difficult that night was for those fighting the fire. Witnesses claimed the heat from the fire "virtually seared your face a half a block away", but when the firemen moved away from the heat of the fire, their *(continued page 10)*



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Hillsboro Fires (continued)



Aftermath of the 1928 Murphy-Benham fire. North High Street is to the right.

clothing would freeze. A photo from the night shows the Soldier's Monument and other structures covered in icicles from the overspray of the fire-hoses. As parts of the buildings collapsed, showers of sparks would, for a few seconds, light up the town like it was daytime. It took six hours to get the fire under control, then another seven hours to completely extinguish the flames. The Hillsboro firetruck pumped water onto the blaze continuously for over 13 hours.

A total of five buildings and multiple business enterprises were consumed by the fire. The Murphy-Benham building had also contained the town's post office, which was completely destroyed. Windows were broken in businesses across the street and a fire started in one of these structures. This blaze was put out quickly, but in the process considerable damage was done to the building.

Murphy Benham relocated within days and continued in business until 1964. The post

office was moved to the basement of the National Guard Armory and the next day's mail delivery went out on schedule. Later, after the 1949 City Building fire, the fire department (and other city officials) relocated to the corner where the Murphy-Benham fire had raged 22 years before.

Hillsboro was exceedingly fortunate that the fires in 1875, 1908, and 1928 did not completely devastate the town. As bad as they were, without the town's brave firemen and citizen volunteers, they all could have been much worse. Amazingly, no one was killed or seriously injured in any of these blazes and it appears that the affected merchants were able to start over in new locations. Let us all hope that Hillsboro does not suffer any more massive fires, but if it does, let us also hope that a new generation of fire-fighting heroes will step up to the challenge.

Tara Beery

MNB
Merchants
National Bank

GHOST WALK

The year has come to that time when we meet a cadre of ghosts who come to greet us at Hillsboro Cemetery and tell us about their lives and what significant contributions they made to our country or at least our county. The Ghosts, listed here in no particular order, will be visiting in the safest way we can devise. Rather than have the guests walk to the Ghosts, we will have the Ghosts do the walking again this year! Therefore, attendees are invited to bring lawn chairs to the cemetery. They should be placed around the stage to the right side of the chapel. Please let folks who haven't attended in the past because of the fear of walking on the uneven ground of the cemetery, of this change!

No one can deny the huge impact brought to this country and our area by the Beecher family. Locally, we had George Buckingham and Anne Price O'Hara Beecher. As George recently visited us, this year we will be visited by Anne, or "Nannie" as she was most frequently known. Their phenomenal home, Greystone, was the center of parties and entertaining to many of our residents. Debbie Williams will be portraying Mrs. Beecher.

Back when Hillsboro put in public water and sewer,

John T Board met an untimely demise. Apparently, he overestimated his aplomb at working with dynamite. Come and hear John T Willis share Mr. Board's story.

Dr. John Callahan, portrayed by Bob Brown, will visit us and tell us just why he has a statue on the campus of Ohio State University. Your clue is that Dr. Callahan was a dentist.

Hannibal Hawk Williams was the grandson of slaves. The good news, if there is such a thing in the life of a slave, is that they were owned by Mr. Gist's plantation in Virginia and they were given land in the Gist Settlement in Brown County. Tim Hennison will tell us the family's story as he portrays Hannibal.

A veteran of World War I, Dr. John C Larkin, who will be portrayed by Jeff Beery, will not only tell us a little bit about his life, but will also tell us about the diseases which took many lives in the 19th century, many of which won't be familiar to our ears, but he will tell us what those ailments are called today.

The GHOST WALK will be held on Tuesday, 26 SEP at 6:00pm. Remember that the Ghost Walk is open to the public and we ask that you bring many folks along with you! Donations will be accepted!



Do you have a team ready for JEOPARDY-Highland County History version? We have very loose rules--you may bring any source you have to look up answers, but just remember, there's a time limit for answers or another team may steal! You may have any number of teammates, however, the generally accepted number is 2 to 4. We can accept up to 8 teams, so first come, first served! Call HCHS to reserve your team space soon! We'll post official rules on our website!

17 OCT - 7:00pm

A Tribute to HELEN FORD

I knocked on the door and this harried lady answered. Kids were running around in various states of dress...the baby in a diaper. I was the new Press-Gazette delivery boy and Helen Leone Ford was that lady. She was about 26 years old at that point and I was in the 4th grade. During the six years I delivered the news, I watched those kids grow (and Mark, the baby, moved out of those diapers) and got to know Mrs. Ford a bit better. Little did I know that 60+ years later, I would be writing a tribute to this wonderful lady whom I grew to admire and respect so very much. Few people in this town have not been touched by Helen at some point throughout the years.

Born 13 May in 1931 to Helen Leone Rogers Head and James Henry Head, she started school at Washington Elementary in 1937. She was graduated from Hillsboro High School in May of 1949 (just 2 months before my birth) and took a waitressing job at Highlander Restaurant.

I recall Helen reminiscing about growing up on East Walnut Street, right next door to the Detwiler sisters--Irene and Fanny. Apparently they were somewhat eccentric from some of the funny stories she related during the Detwiler art exhibit a few years ago.

During the next four years, Helen attended Wilmington College and worked at Randall Co and then Columbus & Southern Ohio Electric before marrying James D. Ford in November of 1953. As the Ford's four children (Mick, born in 1954, Melanie in 1955, Mark in 1957 and Bruce in 1960) went through school, Helen served as President of the PTO during those early years. With four children born within six years, Helen was around the schools a lot!

In 1966, Superintendent Harry Bennett called Helen and asked her to start a kindergarten with Imogene Shaffer. Back to Wilmington College she went, qualifying to receive a Temporary Teaching Certificate and taught with that certification for five years, attending college during the summers until December of 1971 when she was graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Education--certified to teach 1st through 8th grades. In 1977, she earned her Kindergarten Certification from Wright State University.



Helen taught Kindergarten for 26 years as well as serving as Co-Director of Hillsboro Swim Club. After her re-

tirement from Hillsboro Schools, she moved to Corinth, MS where she went back to work as an assistant teacher from 1992 to 1996.

When she moved back to Hillsboro, she began substitute teaching, serving in that capacity for fifteen years, finally retiring fully in 2012. Let's add that all up, folks and we find that Helen was connected with teaching for 49 years.

In HCHS, Helen, a long-time member, was especially known for her artistic abilities, creating arrangements to adorn the museum. In addition, Helen was somewhat addicted to polishing silver. What many would find a chore to be avoided at all costs, Helen found pleasure and peace in the effort, along with pride in a well-done job.

Back to my connection. After being around Helen at Highland House, I had her in mind for a character in the Ghost Walk. I had wanted to include Catherine Wever Collins in the **ALL GIRL SHOW** Ghost Walk in 2022 and immediately thought of Helen. At 90+ years, would she be up to the challenge? I crafted a script which included Mrs. Collins sharing much from the letters she wrote home to her daughter during the time she traveled west during the Civil



War to visit her husband, William O. Collins, and son, Caspar W. Collins. Helen jumped into the project with both feet and put together a costume. The photo here of Helen was taken as her "official ghost photo" and I loved it as soon as I saw it. The pose, holding the delicate rose, reflected one of Mrs. Collins' letters home when she mentions white roses. But that was Helen, wasn't it? Touching all the bases, using the gifts God gave her, always putting her best efforts forward. And now a word from our director:

"I never met someone who liked to polish silver until I met Helen. She would spend hours removing every blemish until the silver glistened. She created a beautiful centerpiece that could be changed with the seasons and it was especially beautiful at Christmas. Helen was a mentor to me too. While she polished, I listened to the stories of early times with the Historical Society and the people who saw the need to preserve our county's history. She could recall the history of many of the pieces in our collection and the person who made the donation.

"She knew everyone and their genealogy. There was no hiding family secrets because Helen knew them. We recalled many tales of our teaching days and how many generations of students we taught.

"Another piece of our history is gone. Thank you, dear friend for sharing your wonderful life with so many. You are greatly missed." - Vicki Knauff

For my personal tribute, I pulled out my one piece of silver and polished it up until it gleamed! Helen, that one's for you. May you rest in peace and rise in glory, dear lady!

John Glaze



Updates

Carlotta Penn has been hard at work creating a children's book about the Lincoln School Story. The book, tentatively titled, "Sekth theljer these therlrsr," is scheduled for release this fall. ***Sorry-can't let the official title out yet...you'll have to wait!***

Ohio Humanities is also hard at work on the broadcast version of the Lincoln School documentary, hoping to have it out for Black History Month, February, 2024.

(Thanks to Aaron Rován, PhD, our main dude at Ohio Humanities!)

Other Updates:

Since our last newsletter, John Glaze, Virginia Harewood and Myra Cumberland presented the documentary and a Q&A period with the district Methodist Ladies group which met at Mt. Orab.

Kati Burwinkel, Eleanor Cumberland, Joyce Kittrell, Virginia Harewood, Myra Phillips and Deb Koehl went to present the story to a group of 5th and 6th graders at Quaker Knoll Camp.



HIGHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Check the date found beneath your name on the 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. Thank you!

Pioneer Day - 2023

