



The Curator

The newsletter of Centerville-Washington History

Director's Thoughts

By Cheryl Meyer

It is such an exciting time to be involved with Centerville-Washington History! It is a time of new ideas, programs, events, and, of course, progress. Progress brings change which allows us to grow and with that, I believe exciting times are ahead for us.

The City of Centerville is making progress on Uptown Centerville which is changing the blueprint of the north side of the Walton House. The process is rather challenging as it requires us to think differently, become adaptive, and, most importantly, pull together for the good of the organization. While, and I admit, that it is hard for me to see all the construction equipment, I know that the final outcome will be amazing for Centerville-Washington History.

As a result, Centerville-Washington History is able to begin a project that will allow us to reach more people and share the historic heritage of the local area. Our goal is to create a new exhibit on the northwest side of the property. We have titled this exhibit, "The Outdoor Rural Education Center." This center will highlight how farming and our railway system impacted the growth of the area. It will help tell the story of the economic growth and the perseverance of the people of earlier times. With the Chicken House relocated (see article on page 2) and a new exhibit structure built right next to the Chicken House, we will be able to display artifacts and provide information to the public during our hours of operation as well as when our offices are closed. The Outdoor Rural Education Center will align with our mission statement by sharing who we are, what we stand for, and where we are going in a manner that we have never done before.

Centerville-Washington History is in a very good place right now. We have a voice in the community . . . people care what we think and they care about preserving what we have. Let's work together and unite in what we believe in . . . the importance of sharing the history of the local area.

Thank you for your continued support.
 "It Takes a Village," my friends, and you are my village!



The Outdoor Rural Education Center project and CWH members and friends who have helped to support the effort.

The Mission of Centerville-Washington History is to connect the community to its heritage by collecting, preserving, interpreting and promoting the history of our local area. Centerville-Washington History is partially funded by the city of Centerville and Washington Township.

Presidents Letter

By Ed Ross, President



There has been an ongoing show behind the Walton House Museum with all the construction of the new Uptown public parking lot. Our chicken house which is used for student education presentations was

right in the way of the lot excavations.

Centerville-Washington History and the City of Centerville had many discussions on the best location for the chicken house as well as the best way to move the building. Cheryl and Karen had front row seats to watch the clearing of trees and brush, excavating and leveling the area, and preparing to move the chicken house.

First, a foundation had to be poured; this time with the ability for electricity to be added later. Then, the contractor installed massive reinforcements to the inside of the structure to insure the house wouldn't fall apart during the move.

A few days went by . . . we all were waiting to watch whatever huge equipment would show up to lift and move the house to its new location. We thought we knew the day of the move, so Cheryl and I rushed over after some early morning obligations to watch the show. We arrived at 9:30 am and to our chagrin the chicken house had been completely moved and settled into its new home which is not far from the original location. We were happy that it made it in one piece and was done but disappointed that we missed the show. What huge equipment did it take to pick that thing up?

A couple of days later, Jim Brinegar, city engineer, sent us an email. The email contained an aerial drone video of the actual move. The "equipment" used to lift and move the chicken house was about two dozen men inside and outside the house who moved in synchronized steps to lift, turn and set the house onto its new foundation. The video was amazing.

We had joked earlier about getting the CHS football team to do the same but never imagined it could work. Sometimes the simplest solution is the best.

Welcome New Members!

Rachel Abshear
Douglas & Elaine Coatney
Kathy Hodges
George & Anita Zengel

In Sympathy

Tom Bartol passed away on September 6, 2021 at age 90. He was a member since 1983. Sympathies to wife, Mary Ann.

Marge O'Neil passed away on March 8, 2022 at age 90. She was a member since 1999; Sympathies to husband, Jim.

Randall Staley passed away on June 30, 2023 at age 83. He served as the Fire Chief of Washington Township from 1970 – 1996.

He was a CWH Member since 2010.
Sympathies to his wife, Melanie.

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Curator's Corner

By Joellen Ulliman, Curator

A Worthy Life: Clarence W. Magsig



According to the zodiac, the classic Leo is ambitious, stubborn, passionate, courageous, devoted . . . a leader. Clarence William Magsig is just such a Leo, born under this sign on July 26, 1901. His family lives on a farm, and when his parents die young, he stays; it is expected he will become a farmer himself. However, he has very big dreams. He wants to go to college. He is kicked off of the farm and

then moves to Findley to live with an uncle.

He attends Miami University in Oxford. He plays football and after graduating, earns a law degree from Ohio State. Clarence joins the bar in 1927. He becomes an assistant county prosecutor in charge of trial work.

In 1933, he marries Jane Hufford. They eventually have 3 children: William, Jarrett, and Martha. They build an 8-room home on Centerville Station Rd. and settle there in 1937, ready to raise their family and become part of the community. They enjoy collecting antiques and soon have a house full of them.

Prior to the Magsigs' arrival, the 9 one-room school-houses and high school are consolidated into Washington Township School at 192 West Franklin. In 1923, students in grades 1-12 are welcomed to the new building.

Clarence gets involved as a school board member starting in January 1940. He serves for about 15 years through some of the most rapid growth this district has ever seen.

By the time Clarence joins the board, Centerville and Washington Township are growing exponentially. After World War II, the classrooms are crowded. Some have over 50 children! The schools are exploding with students due to families moving into new housing developments.

Clarence pushes for improvements to be done, and fast. During the war, construction has been halted everywhere for 5 years. Immediately after the war, he campaigns for additional wings on the existing structure.

The only bid for an east wing comes from Knowlton Construction and is \$14,000 over the \$200,000 raised by a bond issue. It is quietly known that there is 2 feet of stone under the school building, and the contractor realizes he does not really want to get involved in an expensive, long project. The bid expires in 30 days; the school board has no time to have the plans redrawn.

Clarence announces at a board meeting, "We'll just go out into the community and raise the cash." Educator C. L. Stingley notes the determined glint in his eye.

Clarence leads the door-to-door campaign talking to citizens, asking for cash only. Within 2 weeks, all funds are

raised. The contractor begrudgingly takes on the momentous task . . . under the watchful eyes of Clarence and other board members.

The challenges in Clarence's life do not end there. While working with his family at a school carnival in 1952, they hear on the radio that their home is struck by lightning and on fire. There is excessive damage done.

It takes 1 ½ years to completely renovate and make repairs. The Magsigs live in a re-purposed 2-story barn on their property while the work is being completed. In fact, after the renovations, 3 rooms are added and the "barn house" remains. By then, Clarence struggles to get up and down stairs; a bedroom and bathroom are located on the first floor.

However, the fire that burns so brightly within him is dimming. In December 1956, he resigns from the school board and in 1959, he retires completely from work. His health is declining. He dies in 1960 at only 58 years old. Jane continues to live in the house and start a business from home selling antiques. She dies in the summer of 1995 at age 88.

In 1963, Dr. A.V. Black suggests the name of Washington Township School be changed to Magsig Junior High. Clarence's spirit will always live on through a grateful community and thousands of students.

"If our meager worth lives in others, what matters then our destiny."

(Inscription from Clarence's tombstone)



CW Magsig with wife Jane in 1933



Grace Davis on chain Circa 1936

Education Corner

By Carrie Burns, Education Coordinator

Welcome New Education Coordinator



Hello! My name is Carrie Burns and I am excited to join the Centerville-Washington History team as the new Education Coordinator. I joined the staff in mid-June and have already gained so much new-to-me Centerville knowledge. I love learning about local history and how it has impacted our community. I am excited to share our history with our

students and residents through our school tours, On the Road *Chats* and more.

A little about me... My husband and I love living in "warm and cheerful Centerville." We moved here in 2002, attracted by the great schools and small-town charm. My husband, Bill, is the music teacher at Cline Elementary and shares my love of local history. I am happy to say I have worn many hats since graduating from the University of Dayton. Immediately after college I was a caseworker with Warren County Children Services and was fortunate to be a stay-at-home mom for both of our daughters. Our eldest daughter is now attending Ohio University and our youngest daughter is a Junior at Centerville High School. Over the years I have volunteered in the schools, with the Centerville Jazz Band (marching band), was a Girl Scout leader, worked in a Dayton yarn shop teaching knitting and crochet, and played flute in several different local ensembles. I am also the owner/maker of a small business where I make project bags for knitters and crocheters on Etsy called "Stolen Minutes".

When I am home and relaxing, you will likely find me knitting with one of our four cats by my side. I also enjoy reading, camping, listening to live music and spending time with family. I feel lucky to be working in one of Centerville's historic limestone buildings and I look forward to engaging with local schools and organizations as well the Centerville-Washington History staff, volunteers and board to help spread the history of our great community. I look forward to meeting you in our museums or at one of our fall events!

Membership Dinner Highlights

By Susan Melville, Staff

Its always fun to get together with friends. Thanks to those of you who were able to join us at our June Membership Dinner at the RecPlex. We had a great time reminiscing and eating great food. We said good-bye to Melissa our previous education coordinator and honored our scholarship winner, Anna Weller. We also prepared questions for our members to contribute answers to be published in upcoming curators. Here is one question and a few answers:

What is your favorite historical building in the area?

What is special about it?

- Normandy Church – It is well maintained while keeping the history and yet serving a modern activity
- Northwest Corner (Salon One) – It is beautiful and has had so many previous lives – You can see thresholds that have been bricked up and lots more. – Dave Brooker
- 39 South Main Street. It's my favorite because I lived there for 20 years and I ran Yesterday Bed and Breakfast. I met many people. – Judy Haun
- I have 2 favorites, the Normandy estate, because of its architecture, and the Aaron Nutt Jr cottage, because I live there with my beautiful, amazing wife. – J. Strange

Thanks for these contributions and look for more questions and answers in upcoming editions!



Americana

By Susan Melville, Staff

We always love sharing history and with the parade and street fair of July 4th we get a great opportunity to welcome many people. This year we received:

- 268 people at the Asahel Wright Museum
- 190 people at the School Museum
- 197 people at the Walton House Museum
- 233 people stopped to take a picture with Abe Lincoln (Our wonderful volunteer Bob Koogler)

Thank you to the many volunteers who helped to welcome guests. We had 12 adult volunteers, 2 youth volunteers and 5 dedicated staff who worked to contribute to the success of the event.



Bet You Didn't Know! 'Presidential' Grandpa's

By Phil Kern, Trustee

President Joe Biden, 46th President - 7 grandchildren

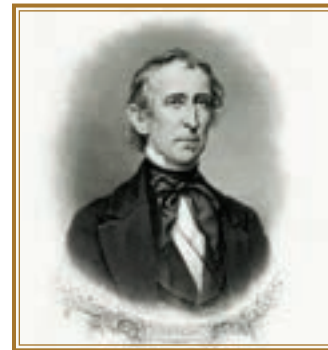
Donald Trump, 45th President - 10 grandchildren

G.H.W. Bush, 41st President - 10 grandchildren

William Henry Harrison, 9th President - had 25 grandchildren

President John Tyler, 10th President - in 2020 had two living grandchildren

- Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Jr. was 95 years old (died September 2020)
- Harrison Ruffin Tyler is 94 years old and still living



Bureau of Engraving and Printing portrait of John Tyler

Born: March 29, 1790

Died: January 18, 1862



Ghostwalk on Main

Save the date Tuesday, October 10, 2023 for the exceptionally popular Ghostwalk on Main!

Tickets available Tuesday, September 12 on the library website (wclibrary.info/ghostwalk). Space is limited to 25 people per group so sign up promptly if you are interested!

Refreshments, drinks and tour included in the ticket price of \$35.



Thursday, September 7 5-8 pm

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BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW! ELECTIONS IN COLONIAL AMERICA

By: Phil Kern, CWH

In colonial America, on Election Day, everyone gathered for food, booze and rowdy parades. During the 1758 election for the Virginia House of Burgesses, the voters had their choice of candidates. One of the candidates, was a wealthy planter, who was famous for the French & Indian War and for the election, he also gave them their choice of alcohol as well. Candidate George Washington plied the voters with the following inducements: 47 gallons of beer; 35 gallons of wine; 2 gallons of cider; 3 ½ pints of brandy; and a whopping 70 gallons of rum punch. Understandably, he carried the election by 310 votes.

In those days, political campaigns and voting were all done in person. The voters who voted, were the wealthy, landholding Protestant men and they traveled from near and far to participate in the elections. Prospective officeholders were expected to be at the polls on Election Day and made a point to greet all voters. Failure to appear or to be civil to all could be disastrous. Also, all voting was done by 'voice vote' as there were usually no ballots.

In New York, candidates and their supporters rented taverns and had huge boozy parties. Sometimes the candidates would even take care of transportation for the voters, including bringing their families, on the trips to the polling places. Often, rowdy parades, complete with brawls, taunts and delighted onlookers moved on toward the election green. Candidates and their supporters, coaxed and bullied each voter as he strode to the poll. These parades became spirited affairs that were egged on by onlookers, eager to greet their far-flung friends, get the latest news and watch the election.

Once the election was over, the celebrations continued, as it was customary for everyone to adjourn to the nearest tavern where the winning candidate was expected to treat ALL the electors (regardless of how they voted) to more drink and food. Elections were so festive that they even called for a special food, called the Election Cake, a massive loaf of sweet bread with raisins, figs and spices that was common throughout the colonies from the 1660's on.

Today, there has been some thoughts on making the Election Day more festive, or at least a national holiday, on which more people can exercise their civic duty and vote. Election Day may never again be soaked in rum and filled with brawling, drunken parades like colonial America, but revisiting some of the elements of colonial election day traditions, could boost voter turnout. What's your opinion?

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