



The Curator

The newsletter of Centerville-Washington History

Director's Thoughts

By Cheryl Meyer

Finally, summer days are upon us! I hope this issue of The Curator finds all of you well.

Centerville-Washington History offers so many wonderful and exciting events and programs. From educational programs like "On the Road *Chats*" and "A Sense of Centerville & Washington Township" podcasts to a new event called "School House Pop!" ... we are excited to share our local history.

I would like to highlight one long-standing program ... our Monthly Speaker Series. On the third Tuesday of the month, excluding June, July, August, and December, you will find a gathering of people eagerly seeking historical information about our community, surrounding communities, our nation, and even the world. Topics for the next season will include *Cincinnati's Railroad*, *Pioneers in Ohio*, *Ida Weller*, *Adventures of an American Red Cross Donut Dolly*, and more! Our speakers are experts who have either experienced what they are sharing or have spent countless hours researching their topic. Their stories are well told and you will gain a real *sense of community as you learn*. Phil Kern, our Board of Trustees Vice President, organizes the Monthly Speaker Series and is constantly looking for new and interesting topics to bring your way. Thank you, Phil, for your hard work and dedication.

Take a look at the 2023-2024 Monthly Speaker Series lineup right on our website and plan to join us for these evenings of *community and history*.



Centerville-Washington History

MONTHLY SPEAKER SERIES

2023-2024

Free and open to the public!

Select TUESDAYS at RecPlex West Theater
965 Miamisburg Centerville Rd.
Reception 6:30 pm Program 7:00 pm

September 19, 2023

TIM RIORDAN

Cincinnati's Chattanooga Choo Choo Railroad

October 17, 2023

Andy Hite

A Canal for the West: The Miami & Erie Canal

November 14, 2023

Bill Albers

Christmas Truce on the Western Front - WWI

January 16, 2024

Paul Cooper

Frontier Between the Miamis: Pioneers in Ohio 1783-1800

February 20, 2024

Ed Ross

Ida Weller - A Woman Ahead of Her Time

March 19, 2024

Ed Roach - National Park Service

Post-1908 Trip into the Wright Brothers' 'Clunky' Business Affairs

April 16, 2024

Rosemary Thunder Schwoebel

A Vietnam Memoir - Adventures of an American Red Cross 'Donut Dolly' 1968-1969

May 21, 2024

Billy Ring, Miamisburg Fire Dept. Capt. (Ret.)

July 1986 - Miamisburg Railroad Chemical Tank Car Fire

CentervilleWashingtonHistory.org

Donations welcome and appreciated.

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 eventually comes a time when most people downsize and move to a smaller home, retirement community or assisted living. Some of our community pillars and longtime Historical Society members have recently moved on to new homes and this next phase.

Martha Boice is the person most responsible for creating the Architectural Preservation District in the center of town that ensures the preservation of the city's history. She has earned numerous awards for her decades of volunteer service in pursuing historic research and preservation. Her son, Tom Boice, has been tirelessly working to find homes for Martha's lifetime collection of antiques, Shaker artifacts, and research materials. He saved family mementos, sent Shaker items to museums, and donated countless items to Centerville Washington History per Martha's wishes. The treasure trove we have received will go to our museums, our research files and some will be sold to benefit CWH.



Sue and Roy Turton, lifetime Centerville residents, have supported the community and its history for their entire lives. They have held leadership positions in the Historical Society and passed on

their extensive knowledge of local history to schoolchildren, members, and everyone interested. They have donated precious possessions recently and over the years to benefit our organization, for which we are very grateful.

We sincerely thank Martha, Sue and Roy, and their families for these generous donations. But, more than that, we thank them for the unmatched years of talent, knowledge, and volunteer time they have so unselfishly given to Centerville-Washington History. The Centerville community is a much richer hometown because of them.

Prepare to Be Amazed!

By Joellen Ulliman, Curator

Excitement always surrounds a new exhibit . . . and our newest exhibit *A Sense of the Oddly Fascinating* is particularly thrilling! Come and experience interesting artifacts and local stories that will have you traveling down memory lane . . . and finding the fascinating in gadgets from the past.

This unique exhibit began as one of those ordinary yet somehow extraordinary finds in our collection. I had started working as your curator in May of 2017. It wasn't long before I came across a strange but mesmerizing artifact casually hidden on an upstairs shelf, no number or record in our files. There was a small handwritten note taped to the box that housed the peculiar item: *hair wreath 1840's*.

Hair wreath??? I was intrigued. I investigated and found making hair wreaths was one of many Victorian traditions surrounding death, typically created by using human hair from deceased loved ones. Every time I gave an archives tour at the Nutt Cottage Research Center, I shared this gem of an artifact. No one could resist staring at it.

And I couldn't resist keeping a list, starting with that artifact, of all of the oddly fascinating things I found while curating during the past six years. This new exhibit features many of the items I discovered. It is whimsical, nostalgic, and educational all at once.

*Find the fascinating in everyday life!
Even the simplest things paint a picture of life
in the past . . . explain the present . . .
and help us prepare for the future.*

NOW OPEN at the Asahel Wright House, 84 N. Main St.
12-4 PM Tuesday-Friday and by appointment.
Totally FREE and totally FASCINATING!
We will also be open during special Uptown events
this summer!

Check centervillewashingtonhistory.org or
our Facebook page for details.



Curator's Corner

By Joellen Ulliman, Curator

Tale of Two Houses

Once there stood two houses, side by side, on West Franklin. They remained neighbors for almost 200 years. Unbeknownst to them, the street they occupied played like a strange game of Monopoly, for many enterprising businessmen in the 1800's dabbled in real estate investments there.

One such businessman was Dr. Nathaniel Strong, an early physician who served in the War of 1812. He owned a lot of property in the area. He built a one room cottage on lot 25 at 63 W. Franklin in the early 1830's. It had a stone basement and braced framing. In the 1840's, the east side was added and eventually a back portion.

In 1844, William Archer, a tanner, owned the house; it had only two rooms at that time. William died at age 34 in 1851. His widow Eliza Miskelly and 2 sons stayed in the house. Eliza married John Norris; they had 2 daughters. Until 1870, all of them resided cozily in the little home. At the beginning of the 1900's, siding was added.

Directly to the east, at 57-59, was lot 24. City co-founder Benjamin Robbins sold that lot to Thomas Davis in 1832 . . . for a mere \$30. Thomas built a brick building, the core of an eventual larger Victorian-style house. The basement had freshly quarried, pinkish stone.

In 1837, Dr. Strong carried the mortgage for Thomas when the property was sold at public auction as directed by Montgomery Co. A year later, Sarah (Archer) Davis, Thomas's wife, sold the lot to Elisha Jones for \$100.

From 1850-1901, the prized lot changed hands many times. Among the recognizable names of title owners for lot 24 were Mary Miskelly (sister of Eliza), Henry Miller, Robert Anderson, Benjamin/Delia Wilkinson, Edward/Sarah Solomon, Ida J. Tucker, Isaac Harvey, John McMahon, James/Mary Havens, Joseph P. Benham, Henry/Ester Ward, Jeremiah Stansell, and Heber Watkins.

The quick changes in ownership abruptly came to a halt in 1901 when Heber Watkins sold lot 24, excluding the 30 ft. side lot containing a stable, to Emory Manuel for \$750. Later that year, the 30 ft. side lot was sold to Emory for \$135 by its owner. Emory sold the stable and side lot to his own father for storage in 1903.

Even more interesting than the story of lot 24 is the story of Emory, a hardworking, ordinary man. He was the oldest child of James and Lucinda "Cinderella" Manuel. James ran the stone quarry across W. Franklin on lot 34, 74 Westerfield Dr. In 1903 at age 26, Emory married Margaret "Maggie" Ricky. Their only child, a daughter Cleo Fayne, was born in 1908. During his lifetime, Emory worked as a teamster, did odd jobs, and drove a truck. He signed up for the World War I draft but never served. He bought schoolhouse #8, on the northwest corner of 725 and McEwen, in 1924 from the school board.

A year later, Emory had surgery for chronic osteomyelitis, a very painful condition caused by bacteria or fungus in an open

wound. Symptoms included fever and inflammation. On Feb. 5, 1936, he died at age 59. Maggie never remarried.

Emory left lot 24 to Maggie and Fayne, age 28 and married with a daughter herself. Fayne sold her portion to her mother, but in 1952, Maggie sold it back to Fayne for "one dollar, love, and affection."

In the end, the two houses were conjoined into one. About 2022, they began a new life together as Manna, a restaurant, holding the history of so many lives within the walls.



63 W. Franklin with 57-59 to the right
c late 1900's



Manna joins 57-59 (right) and 63 (left)
W. Franklin into one restaurant
c 2022

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Education Corner

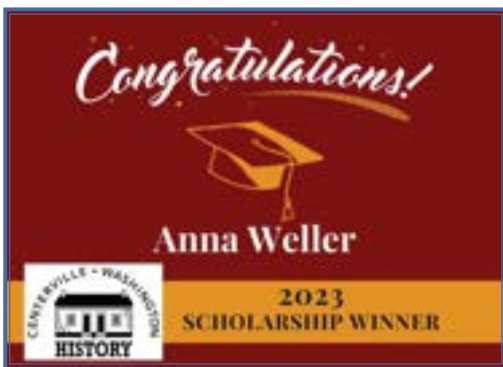
By Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator

Centerville-Washington History scholarship winner, Anna Weller!

For the sixth consecutive year, Centerville-Washington History is awarding a scholarship, in the amount of \$1,000, to a deserving Centerville High School graduate. Requirements for CWH Scholarship applicants include: a graduating senior residing in Centerville-Washington Township who is planning to attend an Ohio four-year (public or private) college or university as a full-time student majoring in education or history. Thank you to our Scholarship Committee members Peggy Brooker, Bill Gaul, Dave Meyer, and Karen King, for selecting this year's scholarship winner.

This amazing young lady has demonstrated her athletic talents and abilities as Captain of Centerville High School's Junior Varsity Soccer Team, Track and Field Team and Swim and Dive Team. Her other activities include Elk Connectors, Lunch Buddies and National Honor Society. Anna was recently recognized by the Centerville Noon Optimist Club, receiving one of their Youth Appreciation Awards.

Anna participates in the Early Childhood Education Program at Centerville High School. After graduation, she is looking forward to attending the University of Dayton where she plans to study to become an Elementary school teacher. She has a special interest in certification for dyslexia and licensure as an Intervention Specialist. Centerville-Washington History congratulates Anna, along with her parents Arno and Amy Weller, for her high school achievements. Best wishes for continued success at the University of Dayton!



Society's First Education Coordinator

By Peggy Brooker

Jean Simpson was a retired Centerville City Schools teacher and the historical society's first education coordinator. She enthusiastically collaborated with the board, staff and volunteers to reach her goals of creating exhibits, guiding tours and coordinating summer youth programs.



A true visionary, Jean persevered through years of organizational changes by agreeing to disagree, having a good laugh and moving on to the next project. Jean knew that obtaining computers for the staff would enable better communication. With generous donations, the computers came, which helped Jean create brochures to promote the society, summer youth programs, Centerville limestone and more.

Many of Jean's objectives were challenging to execute. It was her idea to move the chicken house along West Franklin Street to rest behind the Walton House Museum. This provided a space to educate children on the rural aspects of Centerville and Washington Township's history. The combination of Jean's enthusiasm and the generous talents of volunteers made this happen.

In 2006, as the 200th anniversary of the Asahel Wright House approached, Jean had a vision of seeing a great big red bow around the two-story structure and chaired a committee to throw a birthday party. Her passion for the area's rich history was infectious, resulting in a major event complete with a cake, an art show and some visitors who came dressed in period clothing.

Speaking of dressing for the occasion, Jean was the first to don a bonnet, long skirt and apron while sharing history with youth. She would provide hats and other props for the interactive skit she wrote "Moving West." The story details the obstacles the early settlers faced and the tools used to overcome them.

Clearly, Jean's influence remains today at Centerville Washington History, not only in the paperwork, programs, and practices but also in the minds of her many students, and in the hearts of all who learned from her.

Education Corner

By Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator

Believe it or not, I can still remember the day, about 10 years ago, that my daughter brought home a flyer for the Summer Youth Program. My “Mom Friends” and I liked to coordinate our kids’ summer schedules, so I let them know all about this good deal. Summer days of FUN AND LEARNING, sign us up! It was such a good time that both my children returned in the years to follow. Their soup can lanterns, writing samples and birdhouses still testify to their good time with Centerville-Washington History.

My own love of history began early with an obsession for the TV show, “Little House on the Prairie.” In my Kindergarten photo, I am proudly wearing my floral prairie dress with a pinafore. When I was younger, we would attend the Heritage Festival in Piqua, which I looked forward to every year until it ended in 2014. Several years after that, I heard about an event at Countryside Park promising to deliver a whole lot of history. My family spent that day having FUN AND LEARNING. A hand-crafted, red wooden folding table and two bamboo fishing poles still testify to our good time with Centerville-Washington History.

After her third-grade tour at the Walton House, my daughter reported that she had been chosen to go up the stairs to the attic. Because of this, she felt pretty much like a superstar the rest of the day. It was a day of FUN AND LEARNING. A packet entitled, “Learning about the History of Centerville, Ohio” containing her 8-year-old scribbles still testifies to her good time with Centerville-Washington History.

We visited Santa at the Holiday Walk. I still have the Centerville-Washington Historical Society green mug. I spent the afternoon laughing with my friends at the Downtown Abbey Tea Party. I still have all the pictures I took of the exhibits that day. Both events were FUN AND yes, cleverly disguised.... there was LEARNING. I had good times with Centerville-Washington History.

By now, you are probably thinking three things. First, does that woman keeps everything! Second, CWH really does a fabulous job pairing fun with learning the local history. Third, you are picking up on the fact that I had many a good time with CWH long before I even worked for the organization.

As CWH Education Coordinator, I’ve been able to experience the Summer Youth Program, Homesteading Ohio, school tours, the Holiday Walk and special exhibits from a different perspective. The focus of my job is to

help people of all ages have fun while learning history. At the same time, I’ve continued to have my own fun and learning along the way.

It has been a difficult decision, but for personal reasons, I’ve decided to transition from a staff member position into a volunteer role with Centerville-Washington History. I’m looking forward to continued work on some of my favorite history projects with the additional flexibility of schedule. So, this isn’t goodbye, rather see you later.

For three and a half years, a small, flat rock has sat upon my desk. It says “Welcome” with a sunshine painted next to it. I felt the warm embrace of my co-workers from the first moment I walked into the Asahel Wright Museum. It has been my good fortune to work with a most dedicated and intelligent team. Cheryl, Karen, Joellen, Susan and Peggy. What a pleasure it has been to work by your side. Thank you, to our committed group of trustees, generous volunteers, and kind members of the organization for your support and friendship. I’ve had a good time with Centerville-Washington History.



Extra Summer Hours at the Asahel Wright Museum

26 N. Main Street

Every other Friday evening May 5th through June 30th and July 7th through September 29th the Asahel Wright Museum will be open from 6:00 - 8:00 pm during the **Uptown Music Series**. See our new exhibit, “A Sense of the . . . Oddly Fascinating!” Stop by and learn a little bit of local history this summer. For more information go to the city website: centervilleohio.gov.

In Sympathy

- **Virginia Hess**
Member since 2001 passed away May 9, 2023. She was a talented artist and sculptor with sculptures located across the community including at Stubbs Park. She was the featured artist in the CWH cookbook "A Sense of Taste".
- **Gene Paff**
Member since 1994 passed away September 9, 2022 at the age of 83. Sympathies to his wife of 57 years, Patricia, and their family.
- **Jean Simpson**
Member since 1995 passed away February 6, 2023 at the age of 82. Jean was a former Education Coordinator for CWH. Sympathies to her husband, George.
- **Jean Thie**
Member since 1988 passed away February 23, 2023 at the age of 88. Preceded in death by her husband of 67 years, Ron. Sympathies to the family.
- **William G. Uhl Sr.**
Member since 1979 passed away December 24, 2022 at the age of 89. Sympathies to his wife of 65 years, Cynthia, and their family.

Welcome New Members!

Wesley Calloway
Dave & Marty Cottrill
Stephen Grismer
Richard and Marilyn Hoback
Debra Swigart

A Sad Fact

The following is from The History of Montgomery County, Ohio, W. H. Beers & Co., 1882.
"The last porcupine was killed one Sunday morning in the summer of 1830, while crossing the street in Centerville, just below the present residence of Dr. Lamme."
(Dr. W. H. Lamme lived at 60 N. Main Street.)



BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW! DAYTON, OHIO WAS THE THIRD LARGEST CAR MANUFACTURER IN THE U.S.

By: Phil Kern

Between 1904 & 1909 automobile manufacturing began with over 290 different types of cars being produced. During this period of time, Ohio ranked third behind Michigan and Indiana. Ohio manufactured 39 different models with Dayton turning out dozens of cars in 10 different factories. Some of the names of these cars were the Maxwell, the Speedwell, the Courier and the Dayton-Stoddard.

John W. Stoddard, an agricultural implement manufacturer in the Dayton area, decided to form a new company called The J. W. Stoddard Company, which he later changed to Dayton Motor Car Co. and then began the production of automobiles in 1905. The Dayton Motor Car Co. had two subsidiaries: The Courier Car Co. and the Maxwell Motor Co.

Certainly, the best-known of all, the Dayton-Stoddard was the most majestic of all the early cars manufactured in Dayton. It developed a reputation for being a solid, reliable and technologically advanced car at an average cost of around \$3,200 (\$98,300 in today's dollars). It had a 35 hp. motor, and for extra cost, you could get a front windshield, a speedometer, or even a 'mohair' top. In 1909, in a race at the Indianapolis Speedway, a Stoddard racecar flew around the track at an incredible speed of 58 mph.

In 1912, the Dayton Motor Car Co. was purchased by the U.S. Motor Car Co. which combined these two car companies under its banner with 130 other independent carmakers. The following year, the company, attributed to bad management, failed and went into receivership, taking the Stoddard-Dayton and the Courier automobiles into oblivion.

In 1907, Peter Schenck formed the Speedwell Motor Car Co. and produced 25 cars that year and only 100 the following year. It is believed that the company used the first rotary engine, better known as the 'Mead Rotary Valve Engine', which was developed by Daytonian Cyrus Mead. The Speedwell Co. almost went out of business in 1913, when the Dayton flood destroyed almost an entire year's worth of production. Soon after that, the company was not able to compete in the automotive market and closed its doors forever.

The Maxwell continued to remain in production until 1925 when Walter P. Chrysler absorbed the company and changed the name to The Chrysler Corporation and at that time the Maxwell automobile brand was discontinued.

During this period of time, another invention that was very beneficial to the automotive industry, was the development of the 'electric ignition system' or better known as the 'self-starter' by Charles Kettering. This system first appeared on the 1912 Cadillac and made starting cars easier.

From 1925 to 1981, automobile production died in Dayton, when General Motors resurrected the old Moraine Frigidaire Appliance plant and started the manufacturing of the Chevrolet S-10 pick-up trucks. Later on it produced the Grumman LLV delivery truck for the U.S. Post Office. It continued production of other car models like the GMC Envoy SUV until 2008 when it closed its doors forever. This was the last of Dayton's automobile manufacturing.



Pictures of some of the early Dayton Automobiles.

Centerville-Washington History
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