



## Centerville- Washington History

# The Curator

The newsletter of Centerville-Washington History

### Director's Thoughts

By Cheryl Meyer

Hi Friends,

I have had the unique opportunity to expose our readers to our museums. I recently highlighted the Walton House and the Walton House gardens. For this edition of *The Curator*, I am going to share with you the historical charm of the Asahel Wright house located at 26 N. Main Street.



This stone house was already on the property when Asahel, the great-uncle of Orville and Wilbur Wright, purchased it in 1816. The Asahel Wright house was built for Aaron Nutt around 1806. The house has several unique features among houses in Centerville, such as the solid trapezoidal stone lintels above the windows and door, and the corner fireplace. Asahel Wright ran a still-house, distilling liquors and oil of peppermint, near Alex-Bell Road and had a store, either at this building or on the southwest corner of Main and Franklin. The two-story frame addition and the small frame building that faces Main Street were on the property by the 1860s. Among the many owners during these years were Leonard Ream, a hat maker, and James Harris, a storekeeper.

In 1977, the home was

purchased by the City of Centerville. From 1995 to 1998 it was the home of the International Women's Air and Space Museum. Since 1999, Centerville-Washington History has operated the Asahel Wright House. The small building adjacent to the house is used as a one-room schoolhouse museum for educational purposes.

I invite you to visit the Asahel Wright museum and learn more about the house and the surrounding area. Come see our most recent exhibit titled, "A Sense of Strength: Incredible Local Ladies from History." HAPPY SPRING, and always remember it takes a village!

### Presidents Letter

By Ed Ross, President

The winter is almost over, and we've survived the snow and hopefully, the Pandemic. We are planning for our many annual programs to go on as scheduled.

Many changes are going on in Centerville with the Uptown initiatives. The push to improve parking in the city will be a welcome improvement, but not without some sacrifices. Cheryl and I are working with city leaders to minimize the impact on our museums while still supporting the plan for the good of the community. We agree that the result, in a few years, will be a stronger and more vibrant center city.

Supporting our three facilities, all our programs, and a professional staff requires sufficient funds. The City and Township have been generous in their contributions, but we must do our share. Thankfully, we have had a robust season at the Antiques Village Mall for the last few months. We sell donated items to benefit CWH from our booth at the end of "3rd Avenue" inside the store. Since November, we've brought in around \$400/month which represents selling about 50 items a month.



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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.

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Because of this trend, our stock of donated items is beginning to shrink. If you know of anyone downsizing, we accept a variety of items. If we deem items not to be saleable, we donate them to Goodwill. If items are appropriate for our archives, we will ask to keep them. Call us and we can answer your questions.



The final phase of the old cemetery restoration is scheduled for June. This will include some repairing of broken headstones and up-righting fallen or leaning stones. Thanks to the many volunteers over the last year or so, and to grants from Washington Township and Centerville Washington Foundation, this historical resting place of our city founders will regain its rightful appearance.

Stay safe and enjoy the Spring.

## Curator's Corner

By Joellen Ulliman, Curator

### The Legacy of the Quarry Lake

Johnathan Edwards built the first home, probably a log cabin, at 80 Glencroft Place circa 1805-1815. He was a farmer with a very special asset on his property: a large limestone quarry.

Edwards's granddaughter Frances M. Silver married Lawson Allen in 1825. They became owners of the farm. In 1838, they extended the home into a one-story stone house. In 1850, the second floor was added.

Their son John assumed ownership in 1856. He developed a successful quarry operation by 1879.

Quarrying proved quite lucrative. Limestone was needed far and wide to accommodate Ohio's building and development during the 1800's and beyond.

By the 1880's, as the community grew, the Toledo, Delphos, and Burlington Railroad built a narrow-gauge track about a mile away from the quarry. It was a perfect partnership: plenty of rock with nearby transportation.

By the 1920's, the quarry was in full production. About 200-300 men were employed. The rock became known as *Dayton or Centerville Limestone*.

In March 1932, as the men gathered gravel for a Waynesville road, a tragic rock slide occurred. Between hard blasting, wet weather, and an unusual cold snap,

dangerous conditions claimed the lives of four men, including the owner and a young chap who had just started work that very morning.

The quarry suddenly sat silent, a testament to the horrific catastrophe. Water from underground springs immediately filled the vast cavity. Water always had to be pumped out in order to excavate, but without the efforts of the quarrymen, it gushed quickly.

A lone hero, Sam Frye, worked the quarry by himself during the 1940's. The springs eventually reigned victorious, however, and the quarry was under 20 feet of water.

The Village of Centerville added a pumping station; the quarry lake was the sole provider of water for all residents until 1958. With population growth, officials switched to Montgomery County water services.

The extremely cold, deep lake once again sat silent, a probable grave for old quarry cars and railway equipment. Local residents used the lake for revelry and swimming. Rescue services were often called.

In 1960, fate intervened again. The Centerville Quarry Land Company purchased 56 acres of the original farm for \$60,000. The group previously attempted to buy the acreage in 1951; the deal fell through. This time, the sale was successful. The company leased the land to the Rod and Reel Club, a group of 25 professional men. They established a private leisure club. Dr. James A. Shaffer was the first president, later followed by Dr. WC Madden.

Local authorities were relieved and citizens were happy to know this "attractive nuisance" was now monitored. Police patrolled to maintain its status as a private club, and a full-time caretaker lived on site.

Dr. Madden was president in 1963 when membership swelled to 83; it was capped at 100 with a waiting list. Total cost: \$1000 with \$15 monthly dues.

The club got to work. They allotted \$20,000--\$30,000 for improvements. Evergreens and hard wood trees were planted, a rustic clubhouse built, and docks and picnic areas created. The lake was stocked full of cold-water fish such as walleye, pike, rainbow trout . . . and still is.

But . . . don't grab your rod and tackle box just yet. It remains a private club.



## Education Corner

By Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator

### Build & Learn with

### Centerville-Washington History



In partnership with the Centerville-Washington Park District, CWH presented "Build & Learn with Centerville-Washington History." Pre-school children enjoyed learning about the homes of our

early pioneers. Through storytelling, they set out on an imaginary journey to find the best location to build their new home. Children took home two-dimensional homes constructed from crafts sticks and rocks. Before setting out on a short hike, they created log homes with Lincoln Logs. Most of the children had never seen or played with Lincoln Logs before this event. If you have any Lincoln Logs gathering dust in your attic, please consider donating them to our organization. With more playsets, we can introduce hand-on building fun in our summer workshops and local school presentations.



## Winter Curator Correction

In reference to an article printed in the Winter Curator about Centerville Town Hall, we received additional clarifying information from Judith Weller-Henry, granddaughter of Arthur and Ida Weller. She writes:

*The Town Hall [that was] moved to the Weller farm was torn down due to development of Forest Walk. Deterioration was not the issue. I used that barn for livestock and hay storage and [it] was in good shape.*

We appreciate the correction and the contributions of the Weller family in our community.

## Volunteer Opportunities

In our community, Centerville-Washington History is known to provide quality programming for all ages. To continue offering our existing programs and to create additional learning experiences, please consider sharing your time and talents with those eager to learn more about history. CWH Education Coordinator, Melissa Wagner, extends an invitation to all members interested in these volunteer opportunities.

- **Spring School Tours**-CWH will spend 11 days this Spring hosting local schools for historical tours. We would appreciate volunteers to welcome, lead and present information to students.

- **Spring In-School Presentations**-Volunteers would assist in giving presentations and demonstrations to students at their school. Volunteers can also help with the creation and development of such programs.

- **Summer Youth Program**-This year's program will be structured as individual workshops allowing for volunteer flexibility. Helpers can assist with planning or just as an extra set of hands during the event date.

- **Speaker Presentations**-Do you have a talent or historical topic that you would like to share with others? Local colleges, church groups, and senior care communities seek out speakers from our organization to learn about historical topics. CWH requests a donation in exchange for the speaker's time and knowledge. We can provide guidance to volunteers looking for help on developing a new presentation.

- **Centerville-Washington Parks Collaborations**-Volunteers can assist with planning or work only the day of the event. CWPDP requires all volunteers to complete a background check.

- **May 7th Homesteading Ohio Trail**-Read about this event in this issue of the Curator. We need volunteers for planning, set up, registration, presentations, character re-enactments, and tear down for this large event.

- **August 10th Old Fashioned Picnic**-Families bring their picnic to Bill Yeck Park. After eating, families may enjoy old-fashioned games provided by Centerville-Washington History among other activities. Volunteers are needed to help set up games and interact with participants. For more details please contact Melissa Wagner at 937-291-2223 or [melissacwh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:melissacwh@sbcglobal.net).

## Centerville-Washington History

### MONTHLY SPEAKER SERIES

2021-2022

Third Tuesday of the month  
Free and open to the public!

Enjoy refreshments and historical education.  
Donations welcome and appreciated.

RecPlex West Theater (Rec West)  
965 Miamisburg Centerville Rd.  
Reception 6:30 p.m. Program 7:00 p.m.

**March 15, 2022**

TBD

**April 19, 2022**

Andrew Walsh  
*Lost Dayton*

**May 17, 2022**

General John Allen  
*The Future of Afghanistan,  
Women's Rights and Role of Civil Society*

## In Memoriam

Gifts are sometimes given to Centerville-Washington History in memory of people dear to our members. In the last year, the following were remembered in this special way:

Ralph Bender  
Celia Himes Elliott  
Harvey Reilich

James Reppert  
Sue Pirie

## In Sympathy

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of those recently lost. They will be missed.

**Erma Gebhart**, a life-long resident of Centerville and a founding member of the Historical Society, passed away in February at the age of 98.

**Pauline Rabold Silver**, died at age 103 in November 2021. She was a long-time resident of Washington Township.

**Sharma Stone** passed away in December 2021 at the age of 72. She was an active member of the community.

**Ron Thie**, a member since 1988, passed away in October at the age of 89.

## 1950 Census

By Susan Melville-CWH Staff

I love to do genealogical research and discover more about my relatives through census records. In April 2022 images of the 1950 Census will be released to the public. However, the information isn't immediately searchable. Fortunately, with technical innovations such as machine learning and handwriting recognition, a searchable index will be published more quickly than ever before. Previously, volunteers would type names and dates into a database which would then allow researchers to find the names they were interested in. With the soon-to-be-released 1950 Census, volunteers will be needed to review and correct the automatic index. This is important work as my grandfather's name was incorrectly indexed several times in past census records and his records were very hard to find.

Each census asks slightly different questions about its population. Some of the topics that might be interesting from a historical perspective about the 1950 census include:



- Is this house on a farm or ranch?
- Occupation status (if over the age of 14) including the number of hours worked in the last week.
- State or country of birth.

It will be exciting to have this information for Centerville and Washington Township from 72 years ago. I have personally enjoyed seeing the occupations of my relatives when I have looked in older census records.

If you are interested in project updates or contributing to the volunteer effort, you can sign up on FamilySearch for updates. <https://www.familysearch.org/en/info/us-census/1950-census/>

## Welcome New Members!

Ethel Moore  
Jolene Walker

# The Life of a Painting

By Jerry Strange



Centerville Washington History recently received a gift of a watercolor of the Maplvale general store, painted by Paul Zidek, a local entrepreneur and amateur artist. The building, which was located on the northeast corner of State Rt. 48 and Whipp Road was torn down in the late 1980s. Maplvale was owned and operated by Earl "Monkey" Miller, the same guy that owned the Monkey House, which was originally located across Rt. 48 from the store and is now located in Stubbs Park.

If you were living in the area prior to 1985 you are probably familiar with Maplvale and the Monkey House; otherwise, maybe not. In either case, the Society now has a nice painting of the store to exhibit as a reminder of our past. Raise your hand if you were ever in Maplvale general store – I think you'll agree with me when I say it was one of this area's most unique and interesting retail outlets.

The painting is undated but, as near as I can tell, it was painted sometime in the mid to late 1970s. So, you might ask, "How did the painting get from the artist Paul Zidek to CWH?" It turns out that Mr. Zidek was a patient of Dr. Richard Hoback, who in the late 1980s was moving his practice into new offices and was looking to decorate with paintings of the local area. He subsequently bought the Maplvale painting from Mr. Zidek, and it hung in his office until he retired in 1999. At that time, Dr. Hoback gave the painting to Dr. John McCarthy, a physician in the office who enjoyed having artwork in his exam room. Now, as luck would have it, one of Dr. McCarthy's patients was Phil Kern, a proud and vocal member of the CWH Board of Trustees. So, when Dr. McCarthy decided it was time to find a long-term home for the painting he contacted Phil about donating it to the historical society. Our Curator, Joellen Ulliman, said,

"Yes." And that is how the painting got from then to now.

Note 1: Maplvale is not a misprint.

Note 2: Paul Zidek died in 2004. He was a resident of Washington Township, the owner and President of Spectra Research, and a member of the American Society of Artists.

Note 3: You can find information on Maplvale and the Monkey House in the CWH publications, A Sense of Community and A History of Blacks in Centerville and Washington Township

## Centerville-Washington History offering Scholarship for Centerville Seniors

Centerville-Washington History will be awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a Centerville High School senior who is majoring in education at an Ohio college or university. The student must have a 3.0 GPA and be active in school and community clubs and/or organizations. Interested students should request additional information and a scholarship application from his or her Unit Counselor.

## Homesteading Ohio

In partnership with the Centerville-Washington Park District, CWH will present "Homesteading Ohio." Join us to experience a simulation of Centerville's founders. Meet some of Washington Township's early citizens and learn about the hardships they faced traveling to the area. Pack your wagons, encounter challenges and hunt for food. The trail is approximately one mile in length on a crushed limestone path. Register for this event on the park district's website or contact Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator, at 937-291-2223 for more information.

**Saturday, May 7th**

Bill Yeck Park, Smith House

1:00-4:00 PM with staggered start times

\$11 for residents, \$15 for non-residents  
Registration deadline is Thursday, May 5th

Ages 5 and up

## The Gardener's Optimism

We spade and dig  
Prepare the soil  
Plant our seeds  
And toil and toil  
To rid the ground  
Of hateful weeds,  
That wait to choke  
Our precious seeds,  
Then we wait and watch  
And yearn and yearn  
While winters kill  
And summers burn.  
In hopes, that some  
At least, will bring  
A few choice blossoms  
In the spring,  
That others may, through  
Heat and sun  
And scanty rain  
Come into bloom.  
It's strange to say  
We soon forget  
Our disappointment  
And regrets.  
For when it's time  
To plant, the same  
Resolve once more  
To try again.

Della Pine Himes, "The Gardener's Optimism," in *Rhythmic Meditations*.

Note: You can read more about Della Pine Himes in the publication *A Centerville Memoir: 1933* by Celia H. Elliott, the poet's daughter.



## Centerville-Washington History 2022 Important Dates

### January – February - March

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, March 15

### April – May - June

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, April 19

Homesteading Ohio (with CWPD) ..... Saturday, May 7

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, May 17

### July – August - September

Americana Parade & Festival ..... Monday, July 4

Old Fashioned Picnic (with CWPD) ..... Wednesday, Aug. 10

Membership Picnic ..... Thursday, Aug. 18

A Sense of Taste (5-8 pm) ..... Thursday, Sept. 8

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, Sept. 20

### October – November - December

Ghost Walk on Main ..... Thursday, Oct. 13

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, Oct. 18

Speaker Series at RecWest (7 pm) ..... Tuesday, Nov. 15

Hometown Holiday Walk ..... Sunday, Nov. 20

## Membership Renewal Season Around the Corner - NEW Directory process

Start checking your mailbox in late April for your annual membership renewal package. Please return membership forms and dues promptly or feel free to renew your membership online at [CentervilleWashingtonHistory.org/membership](http://CentervilleWashingtonHistory.org/membership)

Your annual dues and donations make it possible to collect, preserve, and promote the history of our local area!

NEW for 2022 will be our annual membership directory mailed separately to members only. In the past, the directory was included once a year as a part of the Curator. However, we want to give members the option to opt into the directory and let everyone know that names, addresses, and phone numbers will only be shared with fellow society members. Look for the directory option on your membership renewal form.

If you have any questions about your membership, or including your information in the directory, please feel free to contact Karen King at [karencwth@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karencwth@sbcglobal.net) or call 937.433.0123

## BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW!

A Columbus, Ohio Housewife Was The First Woman to Fly Around The World.

By Phil Kern, CWH



On March 19, 1964, a 38-year-old Columbus, OH housewife departed in her single-engine Cessna, Spirit of Columbus, for an attempt to fly around the world. As she was departing, she heard the tower controller's voice on a loudspeaker, "Well, I guess that's the last we'll hear from her!"

In an aircraft not much larger than a cargo van, surrounded by gasoline tanks, Jerri Mock, now completely alone, headed toward the east coast. Upon switching on her airplane's long-range radio, she only heard silence, nothing, not even static. Unable to report her position or call for help, she may have become another Amelia Earhart lost at sea and never found. Mock considered turning back, but she persisted. She wasn't going to fly around the world to become rich or famous, she was doing this because she was 'bored'.

Jerri Mock, a full-time mother of three, only had her pilot's licenses for seven years and had never ever flown farther than the Bahamas. As she headed toward Bermuda, she experienced her first of many major troubles. Weather conditions over the ocean were so poor that she ended up stranded in Bermuda for a week; her unreliable airplane brakes were not replaced prior to leaving Columbus, which caused her to stand on one brake to keep the plane from spinning in circles on landing. The mechanics also found that the wires on the long-range radio were disconnected.

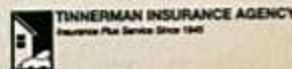
Finally, after the weather cleared and maintenance work completed in the Bahamas, she flew to Casablanca, Morocco, and on to Algeria. At each stop, it generally took five hours to clear the red tape, refuel, repair, check weather reports, and fill out customs and law enforcement paperwork. At these airports, they were not used to seeing private pilots, let alone an American housewife aviator.

To help finance Mock's trip, her husband persuaded The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch to pay \$10,000 towards the trip in exchange for exclusive news reports that she would send. This was challenging due to her long hours of flying, once logging 17 hours straight. Upon landing, she would hastily put together a report, find the nearest Western Union office, only to find they were either closed or nonoperational. If none were sent, her husband would then write 'stories' under her name.

As she continued her journey she made stops in the following countries: Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, and then on to Honolulu, and Oakland, CA. Finally, on April 17, 1964, twenty-nine days after departing, she landed in Columbus, OH, and the local newspaper reported: "...this 5-foot brunette had stepped out of her plane in a blue skirt and sweater set and said demurely, 'I just wanted to have a little fun in my airplane'.....!"

Fifty-five years ago, Jerri Mock became the very first woman to fly solo around the world. Not even the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, OH, the birthplace of aviation, included her accomplishments. It was not until 2007, that Jerri Mock's airplane, 'Spirit of Columbus' was finally put on display at the Udvar-Hazy Center in Washington, DC. Hopefully, history will realize her historical accomplishment and include her story in future textbooks and museums.

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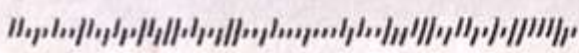
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E-mail: [cwths@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cwths@sbcglobal.net)

#### Staff/Title & Email

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**Karen King**  
Communications & Marketing Manager  
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#### Facilities/Phone & Hours

**CW History Headquarters  
Walton House Museum**

89 West Franklin Street  
Centerville, Ohio 45459  
(937) 433-0123  
Tuesday-Friday Noon-4 PM

#### Joellen Ulliman

Curator  
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#### Nutt Cottage Research Center

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#### Melissa Wagner

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**Susan Melville**  
Finance Manager, Newsletter Ed.  
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#### Asahel Wright Museum School Museum

26 North Main Street  
Centerville, Ohio 45459  
(937) 291-2223  
Tuesday-Friday Noon-4 PM

[CentervilleWashingtonHistory.org](http://CentervilleWashingtonHistory.org)

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