



The Curator

The newsletter of Centerville-Washington History

Director's Thoughts

By Cheryl Meyer

I hope this issue of the *Curator* finds you safe and well. The staff is constantly developing new programs, events, and ideas to help continue with our mission of connecting the community to the history of the local area. The Board of Trustees continues to meet monthly to discuss the state of our organization and our members are always willing to lend a helping hand. I could not ask for a more supportive group of people to help me lead Centerville-Washington History.

Benham's Grove is going to be taking on a new look ... still historical by nature but more conducive to social gatherings. I thought I would take the liberty of sharing the history of Benham's Grove.



Benham's Grove (Gerber House) was part of a 50-acre farm given to Aaron Nutt, Jr. by his father in 1814. Later, Joseph P. Benham, a local merchant, bought the 10 acres that had been separated from the original farm. He built the present house in 1885. The land continued to support an active farm for years. In 1937, the property was purchased by Edward and Bessie Schmieding. Their daughter Dorothy and her husband Robert Gerber bought the house in 1949 and lived there until 1988. Reportedly the deep depression at the south end of the pond was once a limestone quarry.

In 1991, the City of Centerville purchased the land from Dorothy Gerber and her daughter, Amy Gerber Trowman. After many renovations, Benham's Grove opened to the public in 1992 as a place of social gatherings. However, I believe it has become more than that. It is a reminder of times long ago, a place of beauty and peace, a place people gather to share joyous moments, and a place where memories are made.

I love this community and I am proud to call it my home. I could not think of a better place to have raised my family or a better place to make memories.

Presidents Letter

By Ed Ross, President

When **Antiques Village** opened behind Sam's Club off SR 725, we were one of the first organizations to join them. For nine years, we have sold all kinds of antiques, collectibles, decorative items, and household goods from our booth, located near the end of "3rd Avenue" inside the store.

When people donate things to our museums, we ask if it is OK for us to sell the items to benefit CWH if we don't have the space in our archives to keep or display them. Many items are from people downsizing or clearing an estate when "the kids just don't want these things." We're an alternative to discarding pieces that were once important to families. If it is something we cannot sell, we will pass it along to Goodwill or an equivalent. Receipts provided.

We have sold everything from rusty tools, old books, paintings, wall hangings, dolls, dishes, picture frames, small furniture items, and we also sell some of our CWH books. Unfortunately, we don't have the space for large furniture.

Over the years, the income from these sales have supported our educational and historic preservation programs.

If you haven't visited Antiques Village, it is a fun place to walk the aisles and see all the treasures. The entire walk up and down the aisles measures a mile! So, it is also a great place to exercise in nasty weather. And they always play good "oldies" music.

If you have small items to donate for CWH to sell at Antiques Village, please contact any of our museums so an arrangement can be made.



For those who have donated in the past, we thank you for your generosity.

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.

Curator's Corner

By Joellen Ulliman, Curator

30 N. Main: A Centerville Treasure

What you see is not always what you get...like with nesting dolls. You see a wooden doll, but when you open it, you see another doll...and another doll...and yet another doll, until you reach the treasure: the original doll nestled inside.

History is like this. Peel back the layers of time, and you eventually find the treasure. Many of our buildings Uptown are like this too. What you see on the outside is not what you get on the inside.

Craig's Barber Shop at 30 N. Main is a perfect example. Sitting directly to the north of the Asahel Wright House, as you "peel back" layers, you find a 26' X 26' home constructed circa 1812. You are at the heart of the building.

This building is one of the very first frame houses in Centerville. It was constructed of wood, which is unusual for the time. Most of our early settlers built in limestone or brick. It is thought the builder was an amateur and did not have much money. There is a strong possibility it was used as William Buckle's Smith Shop. The 1816 deed for the Asahel Wright House (lot 3) indicated that William's shop sat near the lot's north half. As customary at the time, the beams were hand-hewn. No nails were used; notches on the beams fit together. It had 2 gables and a center door flanked by 2 windows. Sometime in the 1830's, an addition was put on the back.

The building eventually became a series of businesses through the years. Owners added their own special touches and made wonderful discoveries as they peeled back the layers.

Circa 1930-40's brought major changes. Big glass windows, and the steps and elevated front doorway were added in the popular style of the period. During those decades stores and businesses had expansive glass fronts.

In 1938, a hardware store resided there. Later, Kleckner's Ice Cream Shop became the hangout for high school students. They served Gem City ice cream, a real treat. By 1947, Metropolitan Cleaners called 30 N. Main St. home. Before and after, other businesses probably occupied the building.

One of the many was Turnkey Business Systems. In 1987, after purchase, they began renovations. They found the original home inside of the existing home along with many changes. In March 1990, newer siding was pulled off the north side revealing a treasure...a mural for Kleckner's Ice Cream!

At its core was the original structure nestled underneath many previous renovations. The owners were ecstatic! They decided to represent the different eras in which the building stood by adding specific details to the outside. The flat roof credits the 1830's. The high-pitched gable with a stained glass insert represents the 1880's. Overall, they created a 1930's hardware store vibe.

In 1999, Kelly Art and Antique Store operated from the building. Oakwood residents Mark and Sandy Kelly bought the property because it had a laundromat located in the back. It was a perfect place for their daughter to work.

Many may remember the internet business that sat there in the early-mid 2000's. From 2006 to now, it has remained Craig's Barber Shop. Seeing Craig clipping hair in the big front window adds a touch of nostalgic charm for all who pass by.

As you drive past 30 N. Main and other buildings Uptown, think about those nesting dolls. Who knows what treasures hide deep within each?



Our 3rd Annual Homesteading Ohio Event

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.

Ages 5 and up
Saturday, May 20th
1:00-4:00 PM with staggered start times

Bill Yeck Park, Smith House,
2230 E. Centerville Station Road

\$11 for residents, \$15 for non-residents
Registration deadline is Thursday, May 18th
Register for this event on the park district's website.
We are **requesting volunteer help** for this event from our members. Please contact Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator, at 937-291-2223 for more information.

Education Corner

By Melissa Wagner, Education Coordinator

Telling History's Toy Stories

"Being there for a child is the most noble thing a toy can do."
– Woody, Toy Story 4

You may be familiar with the computer animated Disney Toy Story franchise. The films follow Andy's favorite toys as they question their significance to a boy who is growing up and exploring new interests. To be valued, loved and played with by children gives meaning to their existence.

Most of us can remember a toy or two that held special meaning or was particularly treasured in childhood. Some favorite toys are classics, withstanding the test of time, like Teddy Bears and building blocks. Other toys are generational, evolving with pop culture, such as Mr. Potato Head, Chatty Cathy and the Viewmaster. Revisiting our childhood through toys can stimulate memories and provide reassurance, especially during times of personal change, like moving to a new home.

CWH visits retirement communities for presentations. An audience at St. Leonard was given the opportunity to play with Jacob's Ladder toys. These wooden folk toys, held together by ribbons, offer a cascading visual effect as the top square is flipped back and forth. Residents of all abilities were cheering for one another as they became comfortable with the wrist movement required to create the click clack noises associated with the toy. Next, I produced a yo-yo for the crowd. This was a real conversation starter. Several yo-yo users shared their knowledge of tricks and techniques with the group. One champion even demonstrated his talent for "walking the dog". Revisiting familiar toys later in life can produce both mental and physical stimulation, along with a feelings of comfort and happiness.

Although all ages can benefit from play with toys, the above quote reminds us that toys are by definition, objects for children. Driscoll Elementary School celebrates "Pioneer Day" every December. With help from volunteer, Jan Mazza, our organization brings a tote of old-fashioned games including Quoits, spinning tops, cup and ball games, checkers, Jacks and more. Another popular Pioneer Day amusement has come in the form of building with Lincoln Logs. The students have a terrific time and discover that fun can be had without screens and multi-button gadgets.

Perhaps, the greatest nostalgic benefit from toys involves their ability to connect each generation to the next. In an interview, Krystine Batcho, PhD. stated, "In that sort of bond, you pass down to the next generation, the best of the past. Just because we are oriented toward progress, doesn't mean that there isn't something of value that we might have forgotten from the past."

I'd like to ask our membership to contemplate breathing new life into any toys on shelves, in boxes and closets, and up in the attic. Consider sharing your childhood experiences with a younger member of your family or social circle. Make

some new memories while sharing the old ones.

Maybe your family is all grown up or younger friends have moved away. In that case, please consider donating your toy(s) to Centerville-Washington History. Let these questions help guide you with toy donations:

- Is this toy safe and free from toxic elements (like lead paint) and sharp edges?
- Is this toy clean and in working condition?
Example-A toy car should have all of its wheels.
- How do I want this toy to be used after donation?

CWH is looking for toy donations which can be handled (albeit gently in many cases) by children. These toys will serve as learning tools through the act of sensory observation and play. If you are comfortable with this type of donation, please call me (Melissa Wagner) at 937-291-2223. Future uses for toys donated to our Education Program may include the following:

- "History on the Go" presentation for area schools
- *"On the Road"* Chat topic regarding favorite toys from the 20th century
- Special Event Interactive Display



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The Deeds Connection

By Karen King, Staff

A photograph of a beautiful and clearly well-off woman is displayed in the bedroom of the Walton House. It is Edith Walton Deeds, sister of William Walton. This sibling connection, along with Edith's marriage to Colonel Edward A. Deeds, is an important piece of history in the preservation of the stone building at 89 W. Franklin Street.



Edith Walton was born Nov. 27, 1869 in Spring Valley, the oldest child of Samuel and Mary Amelia (Weller) Walton. She had two brothers, William and Robert. Edith attended Earlham College in Richmond, IN and studied music, painting, and languages. She moved with her family to Dayton after a factory fire destroyed the manufacturing business and after her father passed away in 1891. Because of her love of music, she became a member of the First Baptist Church in Dayton where she would eventually meet Edward Deeds in 1897.

Edith and Edward Deeds were married in 1900, just a few months after Edward had become a factory engineer at NCR. Edward's career took off through his own talents, ambitions, and connections to several of the great Dayton innovators of the day including Charles Kettering, Orville Wright, and James Cox. In 1912 the couple built their home, Moraine Farm, on Stroop Road in Kettering. They also purchased and donated several tracts of land in Dayton to the city for conservation.

Edith is perhaps best known in Dayton for bringing the Deeds Carillon itself into existence. Having been inspired by church bell towers in Belgium, she oversaw their design and construction and was the first to play the carillon when it was completed, playing the Doxology.

Their son, Charles Walton Deeds, and his wife Ruth, provided three grandchildren to Edith and Edward. Edith remained close to her brother William and his wife, Mary, over the years. They were known to travel together. Edith died in 1949 at the age of 79 in New York City in her suite at the Park Plaza Hotel. She is buried in Woodland Cemetery along with her husband and several family members.

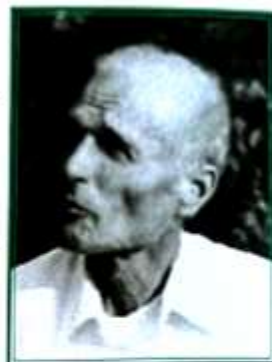
After Edith's brother, William Walton passed away in 1950 and Mary Walton passed away in 1971, the Walton's home in Centerville passed to the Deeds' grandchildren. These heirs, now living outside of Ohio and successful in their own endeavors, gifted the house to the newly formed Centerville Historical Society so that it could be preserved and used for educational purposes.

Learn more about Colonel and Mrs. Deeds on our website - local history/people.

Tom Stolz is Dead and Almost Forgotten

By Jerry Strange

To paraphrase Rodney Dangerfield, "Some people don't get no respect" and it would seem that Tom Stolz is one of them. Tom died in 1993. From the lack of information available about Tom on the internet, you might be led to the conclusion that he was a nobody in our area, just a guy who lived, worked and died here. But, from what I have



been able to find, that is far from the truth. The evidence points to the fact that Tom hasn't gotten the respect he deserves.

During his lifetime, Tom owned and operated Countryside Nursery. He started the business in 1966 on land that his family owned on Rt 725. In 1977, he found himself overextended and was forced to sell his business and some of his land. It was at this time that he donated 8.5 acres of his land at the corner of McEwen Road and Route 725 to the YMCA (now the Washington Township Rec Plex) and to Countryside Park, where he planted hundreds of trees, built a shelter and ball fields for public use. He led the effort to raise 2.5 million dollars for the building.

The last years of his life were devoted to donating land, time and money towards preserving green space and creating parks in our area including Stubbs Park. During this period, Tom reportedly planted thousands of trees, laid miles of limestone trails, dug ponds, and built ball fields for the use of the citizens of our community. Tom was clearly not your average citizen.

Now, to me, the irony in this story is that, in the thirty years since his death, Tom has gotten very little recognition from the city, the township or the park district. The building at Countryside park used for storage and maintenance bears his and a short biography and small picture of Tom is also on a sign at Countryside Park. It is conceivable that when this sign board needs to be replaced, the public recognition of Tom and his contributions to our area will disappear with it.



Somewhere in our community there should be a significant memorial to Tom that says, "Thanks Tom Stolz, for all you did for us." Maybe put his name on a park or how about naming the amphitheater in Stubbs Park in his memory?

Note: You can find information on Tom Stolz at www.centervillewashingtonhistory.org

A Warm Welcome to History

By Melissa Wagner

Would it surprise you to know that Centerville-Washington History buildings receive visitors from all over the world? This is not due merely to our convenient location next to an ice cream store and the short walk from a nationally recognized donut store. Our guest book contains addresses from far-away states like California and Nevada, as well as countries like Canada and Costa Rica.

Recently, our museums hosted members from the group "Welcome Centerville!" These students and their CHS Advisors were interested in learning more about their Centerville-Washington Township community, the place they now call home. Originally born and raised in other countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Puerto Rico, these young men and women explored the Nutt Research Cottage, the Schoolhouse Museum, Asahel Wright Museum and the Walton House Museum.

Additionally, CWH hosted exchange students from Ecuador on their first day visiting the United States. Along with their host families and teacher, these students learned about early and modern American life while comparing and contrasting the history and culture to their native country. CWH would like to thank the following individuals that served as tour guides for these events-Sherry Betche, Karen King, Jan Mazza, Cheryl Meyer, Joellen Ulliman and Melissa Wagner.



After serving on the Board of Centerville-Washington History for over 10 years, Washington Township Trustee President Dale Berry attended his final Board meeting on Thursday, Feb. 2. Centerville-Washington History will sure miss seeing Dale but we know that he will always be an advocate of this organization. His love of the historical nature of this community and his passion for sharing history will always be present. We wish Dale good luck on this next chapter.



In Sympathy

Arthur Komorowski, Jr. a member since 2013, passed away on June 16, 2022.

Sympathies to his wife, Susan, and their family. Art left a legacy of charitable service.

We recently learned that Richard Lee, a member since 2016, passed away on December 8, 2021, at the age of 102.

Mary Lou Palmer, a member since 1992, passed away on October 19, 2022, at the age of 99. Mary Lou grew up in Centerville and is the sister of Sue Turton.

Welcome New Members!

Robert Cahill
Laura Vernon-Biteau
Clara Wharton

Gifts given in 2022 in Memoriam for:

Ralph Bender
Arthur Komorowski, Jr.
John & Sally Beals

Gifts given in 2022 in Honor of:

Phil Kern

Collaborative Quilt

Throughout the month of February, the Woodbourne Library displayed a unique and colorful quilt. At the Centerville Fall Festival in 2022, Centerville-Washington History in collaboration with the Washington-Centerville Public Library, provided fabric for children to paint symbols of the Underground Railroad. These symbols helped enslaved persons learn of local dangers or pointed them in the right direction. The Creative Quilters' Guild created the finished quilt from the squares.



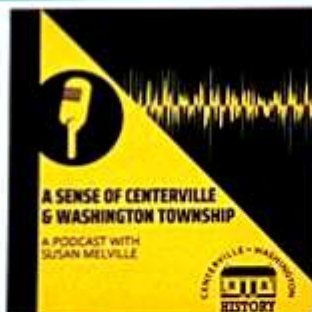
Holiday Walk 2022

It was a very cold day but our hearts were warmed by the volunteers who supported the Holiday Walk by baking cookies, giving tours or helping with the carriage rides and schoolhouse games. Thanks also to our teen volunteers who decorated and undecorated for the event! Thank you for your support and contribution to the community!



Looking Ahead - 2023

Speaker Series 7 pm	Tuesday, March 21
Speaker Series 7 pm	Tuesday, April 18
Speaker Series 7 pm	Tuesday, May 16
Homesteading Event (register ahead)	Saturday, May 20
Membership Dinner (Time TBD)	Tuesday, June 6
Americana Parade and Festival	Tuesday, July 4
A Sense of Taste (5-8 pm)	Thursday, Sept 7
Speakers Series 7 pm	Tuesday, Sept 19
Ghost Walk on Main (Time TBD)	October 10 and 11
Speaker Series 7 pm	Tuesday, Oct 17
Speaker Series 7 pm	Tuesday, Nov 14
Hometown Holiday Walk	Sunday, Nov 19



Podcast

We just celebrated a year of producing podcasts! If you'd like to listen they are on our website. YouTube video recordings are also available if you prefer to watch them.

Thank you to our guests for sharing their stories and to Miami Valley Communication Council for providing the space to record.

Richard Diaz also does a wonderful job helping with the edits.

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW! • 13 DAYTON INVENTIONS

By: Phil Kern

STEPLADDERS: In 1865, Daytonian John H. Balsey, a carpenter by trade, devised a wooden stepladder and patented it on February 8, 1870. In 1876, he also patented a 'paper bag' making machine.

CASH REGISTER & INDICATOR: In 1879 James Ritty & John Birch applied for a patent for their 'cash register & indicator'. Ritty sought to find a way to keep his saloon employees from stealing money.

WRIGHT AIRPLANE: In 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright invented and flew 'the first sustained and controlled heavier-than-air powered flight'.

ENGINE STARTING DEVICE: On August 17, 1915, Charles F. Kettering applied for a patent for his engine starting device, or electric starter. This device would save motorists from the back-breaking and sometimes dangerous job of crank-starting engines.

BACKPACK PARACHUTE: On March 28, 1919, Floyd Smith, designer of the first Back Pack Parachute, piloted the airplane where Leslie Irving made the first jump with the 'new' parachute at the McCook Field.

FREON: In 1928, Thomas Midgley, Jr & Charles Kettering invented a 'miracle compound' called Freon that was designed to be used in refrigerators & air condition equipment.

THE HUFFY RADIO BIKE: In 1955-56, The Huffman Manufacturing Co. produced a bike that had a 'waterproof & shockproof electron-tube radio' in a tank with the battery located on the back of the bike.

ICE CUBE TRAY: On July 21, 1959, Arthur J. Frei & Raymond C. Davis received a patent for their invention of the 'ice cube tray'. It was described as '...a way to minimize effort on the part of the housewife...'

PULL-TOP CAN: In 1963, Ermal Fraze invented the pull top can that replaced the use for a can opener.

BAR CODE: In 1959, Paul McEnroe, a University of Dayton electrical engineering graduate, developed the bar code system including a laser code-scanner. Bar codes became an industry standard in 1970 and are currently used throughout the world.

LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY (LCD): In the early 1970's, John L. Janning, an employee of NCR, perfected the liquid crystal display. The LCD's took off quickly appearing in watches, calculators and later into computers, TV screens, cell phones and more.

CHEEZE-IT: In 1921 the Cheez-It was invented by Green & Green Company. But its origin goes back even further. In 1847, Dr. William Wolf, of Dayton, determined his patients with dietary restrictions needed a different kind of food, and he created a hard butter cracker that became known as the 'Dayton Cracker'. The popularity of the cracker kicked off the growth of the Dayton cracker-baking industry in the city.

TRAPPER KEEPER: In the late 1970's, Mead's E. Bryan Crutchfield invented the Trapper Keeper, a binder with folders & pockets designed to hold school paper & supplies. It grew in popularity and in the 1980' & 1990's, over 75 million were sold.

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