

# THE AUGLAIZE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HISTORY AT A GLANCE

ISSUE 3 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2006

## The Auglaize County Historical Society TAKES TO THE ROAD!

The Auglaize County Historical Society will host a bus trip to several of Ohio's most historic 19<sup>th</sup> century sites on Thursday, October 5. The event, with stops in Bellevue and Fremont, is the second annual bus trip hosted by the society to highlight Ohio's important heritage.

Attractions featured in the bus trip include:

### *Historic Lyme Village—*

Turn back the hands of time at this 19<sup>th</sup> century village, which features log homes, barns, a one-room schoolhouse, general store, post office, an 1836 home-  
stead, one of only two log churches in Ohio, and more. A highlight of the trip is a visit to the 1880-

1882 Wright Mansion.

### *Tour of Historic Fremont and Lunch at DaVinci's—*

After our guide shows us some of Fremont's architectural landmarks, we'll visit one of the community's culinary gems.

### *Hayes Presidential Center and Home—*

The Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center is home of the nation's first presidential library and museum, having opened to the public in 1916. The Hayes Home is located on the grounds of the expansive lawns and towering trees of Spiegel Grove. The stately, 31-room brick house was constructed in three stages between 1851 and 1889. Its



grandeur and wealth of presidential artifacts and rank the house with Mount Vernon and Monticello.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to tour the recently opened exhibit, "By Presidential Design," which documents the evolution of the house and its ongoing restoration.

### *Toft's Ice Cream—*

As a last stop, the tour will visit the famous Toft's Ice Cream for another sweet treat (on your own).

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

What do *you* like to do? Work with people or by yourself? Write or draw? Create or teach or even do maintenance work? Stay at home or venture out?

Regardless of your interest, there's a place for

you at the historical society. We have volunteer positions available in a number of areas. This edition of the newsletter highlights just a few opportunities to work with the historical society, for even a

few hours a month. We need your help, and we're confident that we have a volunteer position that you'll find interesting and rewarding. Just give us a call at 738-9328 or 394-7069.

## SECOND ANNUAL BUS TRIP THURSDAY OCTOBER 5

\$60 for historical society members

\$70 for nonmembers

*which includes travel, lunch, and admission*

Mail your reservation to  
ACHS  
223 South Main Street  
St. Marys, Ohio 45885

**DEADLINE:  
SEPTEMBER 20**

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## FAIR GOERS GATHER AT *GATHERING PLACES*



What makes a location a *gathering place*, a hangout, a local haunt, the spot to see people and be seen? Gathering places take many forms, from restaurants and bars to the local livery stable or, later, the local gas station. Maybe the original attraction is a good meal, a cold drink, a comfortable chair, or even a great band.

What gives a gathering place its staying power,

however, is atmosphere. Not the décor on the walls. The atmosphere we mean is the feeling that you're welcome to stay a while, catch up on the news, and share some smiles.

The Auglaize County Historical Society's exhibit "*Gathering Places*," presented at the Auglaize County Fair, saw large crowds. The exhibit, which included photographs and artifacts con-

tributed by the Buckland, Cridersville, Minster, New Bremen, New Knoxville, and Uniopolis Historical Societies, highlighted the county's various gathering places (a.k.a., hangouts) through past and present. Visitors also had the opportunity to sign a large poster board indicating their favorite gathering place.

## TRUSTEE HONORS FORMER MISSIONARY

**PHOEBE  
PIERCE**

**1876-  
1965**

What little is known about the life of Phoebe Pierce is revealed in her brief obituary. Born in Houston, Missouri, in 1876, Phoebe Pierce never married. For more than nineteen years she served as a missionary in Hong Kong and mainland China, representing the church of Christ in Christian Union. The last five

years of her life were spent in a nursing home in Huntsville. She died in 1965 at the age of 88, survived by a niece and a nephew. Phoebe Pierce was buried in an unmarked grave at Olive Branch Cemetery, Shinbone. The Historical Society has owned the Olive Branch Church and Cemetery since the mid-

1990s. Trustee Jim McCullough decided that Miss Pierce deserved a tombstone. He contacted Jerry Harrod, owner of Harrod Memorials, Botkins, who agreed to donate an engraved stone. Mr. McCullough arranged for the stone's base, and assisted Harrod with its installation in August.

## Ohio Historical Society Designer to Present Workshop in County

Bill Mahan, exhibit designer with the Ohio Historical Society, will present a workshop entitled "Creating a Visual Hierarchy," on Thursday, October 19, 6:30 p.m., at First English Lutheran Church, Blackhoof and Mechanic

Streets, Wapakoneta. Rachel Barber, administrator for ACHS, explains the concept: "Creating a visual hierarchy refers to methods for designing exhibits that are interesting to all visitors. Information—whether artifacts

or text—is arranged so that you don't overwhelm people with images or words, but allow them to absorb the information at their own pace." If your volunteer interests tend toward design and creation, here's the training for

you. Learn how you can help the Auglaize County Historical Society develop attractive, informative exhibits that are appealing to visitors of all ages and interests. Please call to register by **OCTOBER 13**.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THANKS EVERYONE WHO MADE DINNER AND AN EVENING WITH JASON RINGENBERG SUCH A SUCCESS, ESPECIALLY RON AND TERRI LININGER OF RHYTHM & BREWS

## *The New Deal & the Post Office*

A Special Insert to the Auglaize  
County Historical Society Newsletter

By LaRose Roediger

During a conversation with Karen Dietz (ACHS president) several months ago, she asked if I would be willing to conduct some research for the Auglaize County Historical Society, specifically, to locate information about the mural in the Wapakoneta Post Office, which had been painted by Joseph Limarzi. This would be a new challenge for me, since I had been studying my own genealogy, tracing my father's family back to Prussia in 1776, and my mother's family to Germany in 1829.

I learned that the post offices constructed in the 1930s during Roosevelt's New Deal were decorated with images of the "American scene." As the country continued to struggle with the effects of the Depression, the federal government searched for solutions to provide work for all Americans, including artists.

During this time government-created agencies supported the arts in unprecedented ways. Post office murals were actually executed by those working for the Section of Fine Arts, rather than the Works Project Administration, as often believed.

Commonly known as "The Section," this department was established in 1934 and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury. The Section's main function was the selection of high quality art to decorate public buildings, accessible to all people. Because post offices were located in virtually every community and used by

virtually every citizen, post office murals were truly a democratic art form.

Artists working for the Section were not chosen on the basis of need, but through anonymous competitions where the jurists were often other artists. The jury might also include the local postmaster, a member of the architectural firm for the new building, and a prominent citizen.

Artists were also awarded commissions based on designs submitted for previous Section competitions. One percent of the building construction funds in a federal structure was to be set aside for "embellishment," and artists were paid from these funds.

Mural artists were provided with guidelines and themes for executing their mural studies. Scenes of local interest and events were deemed the most suitable. Artists invited to submit design sketches for a particular post office were strongly urged to visit the site, although distance, expense, or family commitment often made this impossible.

Once awarded a commission, the artist often engaged in lengthy negotiations with the post office, town, and the Section before finally getting the finished mural on the wall.

Portraits of Americans at work or leisure graced the walls of numerous New Deal post offices. Many post office murals have vanished over the years, while others are in need of repair. In addition to the Wapakoneta Post Office, the facilities in Ada, Bluffton, Coldwater, and Tipp City, among others, bear murals.



The mural on the south wall of the Wapakoneta Post Office, painted by Joseph Limarzi, November 1937

To conduct my research, I went to the Auglaize County Public Library, whose staff were most helpful. I looked at the newspapers from 1936 and 1937, but there was no mention of the murals. I then went to the great Internet, and found information about Limarzi from the Federal Census of 1930. As of that year Limarzi, born approximately 1908, lived in Chicago as an art student.

I also found Limarzi's obituary in the *New York Times*. He had died there in March 2000. He was married, had several step-children, and several nieces. I located one of the nieces, and sent her a letter asking for any information.

Imagine my surprise when I received a letter from this woman. She sent a photograph of him (below) and wrote the following:



The post office was established at Wapakonetta, Allen County, Ohio, on January 5, 1829, with Robert Brodrick as the first postmaster.

Locations of the post office:

- 1853—119 West Auglaize Street (Mark Weller's office [not the same building])
- 1882—1 West Auglaize (Zeke & Zelda's)
- 1904—Brown Theatre
- 1936/37—the current location

*Information courtesy of Vern Doenges*

*"How nice to hear that my Uncle Joe has a public work. I remember that he did some work for a WPA project or projects. He attended the Art Institute of Chicago school. 'Bummed' around the world and probably landed in NYC because that was there the action was at the time & still is probably. He taught in public schools for most of his life. I do have many of his works from various periods. I would love to see a picture of the work you have."*

I plan to follow-up with Joseph's niece and find more information. I have enjoyed doing this research and the opportunity to work with Karen.

THANKS TO LaRose Roediger, another of the Historical Society's great volunteers!

Next issue: a St. Marys landmark revealed!

The Auglaize County Historical Society thanks everyone who made *Gathering Places* such a wonderful experience:

All Local Historical Societies

Tony Steinke and the Alpha

Mike's Appliances

Culligan Water Conditioning

The Management at Kroger's

Our Many Volunteers

and Our Very Many Visitors,

who came in from the heat to see us



Wooden Shoe Brewery Rathskeller, Minster; late 1940s  
The Rathskeller was a small tavern in the basement of the Wooden Shoe Brewery. The photograph depicts the following patrons (left to right): Bernard Frieratt, Henry Frieratt, Tony Frieratt, Joe Brinkman (brewmaster), Mike Hartman.

## TRAINING FOR DOCENTS TO BE PRESENTED

The Historical Society will present training for those wishing to volunteer as docents (tour guides) at the organization's two major museums (St. Marys and Wapakoneta), on Saturday, September 16 and 23, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Additional docents will allow the historical

society to open its museums on an extended basis and share history with more local residents. Docents don't need to know the answer to every question; being a tour guide is not like playing trivia! We're looking for enthusiasm and friendliness!

Please consider attending the training and donating your time as a docent (as little as three hours per month). Call to register for *either* of the two-hour trainings. The training is free and all participants will be provided with their own workbooks.

"DOCENTS DON'T NEED TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION!"

The Historical Society welcomes new members

Bob & Marsha Henderson  
Wapakoneta

Pam & Mike Doepker  
Wapakoneta

Charlotte & William Williams  
Wapakoneta

We appreciate your support!

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### September

7:  
*Andrew's Ohio Raiders*  
16 & 23:  
*Docent training*  
17:  
*Museums open, 1-4*  
20:  
*Deadline to register for bus trip*

### October

5:  
*Heritage Bus Trip*  
12:  
*Trustees meeting*  
19:  
*Design training*

### November

2:  
*Collecting Old Coins*  
*by John Brownell,*  
*as well as the annual volunteer appreciation dessert and election of trustees*  
*More details to come!*

THE AUGLAIZE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

223 South Main Street  
St. Marys, Ohio 45885 or

206 West Main Street  
Wapakoneta, Ohio 45895

Phone: 419/394-7069 or  
419/738-9328

rachel@auglaizecountyhistory.org

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

AUGLAIZECOUNTYHISTORY.ORG

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THESE NEVILS ARE THE BEST  
TO BE PART OF THE AUGLAIZE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY!



The Auglaize County Historical Society was founded in 1963. Its mission is the "discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of Auglaize County and the State of Ohio."

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### *September 7 Lecture Highlights Andrews Raiders*

The Historical Society will host a lecture entitled, "Andrews' Ohio Raiders: Twenty-three Buckeyes Steal a Train," on Thursday, September 7, at 7 p.m. at the former Olive Branch Church, Shinbone (State Route 219 east of New Knoxville). The event is free and open to the public.

The lecture will be presented by Lima native Lawrence Huffman. Huffman holds a bachelor of arts degree in history and a Juris Doctor degree, both from Ohio Northern University. Huffman has practiced law in Lima for twenty-five years. Huffman explains his longstanding interest in the Civil War adventure of Andrews' Raiders:

"I have been a lifelong student of military history, and a few years back prepared a presentation on the (Congressional) Medal of Honor. Someone asked me why only 19 of 24 Raiders received the Medal of Honor. I thought it was a great question and in researching the answer found a plethora of information available

about the Raiders. Much of this information is available locally since ten of the Raiders are from Hancock, Wood, Hardin, and Defiance counties."

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW FORMATS FOR THE NEWSLETTER.  
WE APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE AND WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS.