



## SCENES FROM A BUS TRIP: September 27

Fifty-five persons traveled with the historical society for a long, rainy, but fascinating trip to Brown County, Ohio.

*Top left: ACHS secretary Julie McCullough aspires to the judiciary while sitting in the courtroom of the 1851 Brown County Courthouse, Georgetown (top right), whose exterior resembles Auglaize County's original 1850 building (long gone). Center left: Genevieve Conradi looks over the offerings in the gift shop of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Museum, Old Washington, Kentucky. Bottom left: a view from the John Rankin House, Ripley, to the Ohio River. Bottom right: an example of the beautiful and sophisticated architecture of Ripley.*

# Coverlet Weaver Philip Nagel

*Adapted from an article by Bridget Nagel Weller (thank you, Bridget!),  
which appeared in the Newsletter of the Colonial Coverlet Guild of America*

Until relatively recently, Philip Nagel was something of a mystery. He was an obscure weaver with written sources providing little information beyond the fact that he was active in Dover Township, York County, Pennsylvania, around the mid-1830s. Much more is now known about this weaver's story.

Philip was born in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, in 1808. His wife, Margaretha B. Hoffman, was born in 1811, and was a native of Bavaria. The couple had seven children, only the oldest of which was born in Germany (in 1834), rather than in Ohio. The Nagels' immigration to the United States may well have occurred in the same year that their first child was born, as Pennsylvania coverlets of Philip's exist that date from 1834.

By 1840 Philip Nagel, his wife, and their two oldest sons were living in Pusheta Township, in what was then Allen County. The Nagels were members of St. John's Lutheran Church, Pusheta Road. With the exception of the first child, the baptisms of all the children are found in the St. John's archives.

A very popular coverlet style at the time that Philip first moved to Ohio incorporated a centerfield medallion and grapevine border. There are two extant Nagel coverlets of this type, and they are nearly identical. Both feature perfectly round medallions, with small symmetrical leaves adorning each perimeter of the circle. Inside are four tulips flanked by leaves that are joined in the middle with a small design embellishment. The colors used are golden yellow, mauve, and deep blue on a natural background. The mortar and pestle used to make the dyes for these coverlets is still in the possession of the family. Into both coverlets, the creator wove *P. Nagel, Wapakoneta, Ohio*.

Frontier life in Ohio was precarious. It is known that the oldest Nagel daughter, Margaretha, died before the 1850 census. Although the family seems to have escaped the cholera epidemic that swept through the county in 1849, they fell victim to the 1851 influenza epidemic. In September of that year a store account records purchases of indigo and madder, but by October 31, quinine was being purchased. Philip Nagel died on November 8, 1851, at the age of 43; influenza also claimed the lives of three of his children. He is buried in Keller Cemetery on Cemetery Road, south of Wapakoneta.

Nagel's estate lists the sale of his loom, spoon wheel, and loom harnessing. His wife never remarried, and lived to the age of 81. Both of his surviving sons served in and lived through the Civil War, and became prosperous businessmen. All of the Nagels in Wapakoneta are descendants of Philip.

Six Nagel coverlets are known to have survived. Two are in the Columbus Museum of Art and the museum at the University of Wisconsin. Two are in private hands, one owner known, one unknown. Two are owned by Nagel descendants.