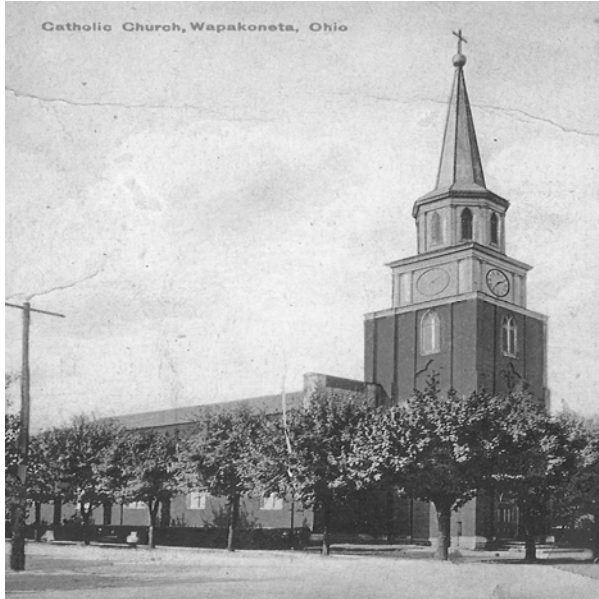


# History at a Glance

Volume 5, Issue 1 Spring 2010

## The Historical Society Plans a Busy Spring!



The Auglaize County Historical Society will host a presentation by historian Mary Ann Olding entitled "The Verdin Bell Company and its Auglaize County Connections" on Monday, March 22, at 7 p.m. in the Parish Life Center of St. Joseph Catholic Church. The program is free and open to the public.

The Verdin family has operated a bell and clock company in Cincinnati for almost 170 years, serving churches and other institutions across the country and around the world. The Verdin family, however, has a special connection to this area, in the person of Philomena Verdin Puetz.

Olding's historical research—in Wapakoneta, Cincinnati, and France—focuses on five brothers

and two sisters of the German-speaking Verdin family who moved to Cincinnati about 1837 from the Strasburg area of France. Within a few years, Francis De Sales and Michel Verdin founded a bell and clock business operated today by the sixth generation of the Verdin family. The connection to Wapakoneta dates from the family's earliest days in Cincinnati when Philo-

mena Verdin was born in 1841 to Francis de Sales and Josephine Verdin. Upon the death of her mother, the infant Philomena was sent to France to live with her grandmother and uncle, while her father remained in Cincinnati.

In 1842, the Verdin Brothers installed the clock tower in St. Mary's Catholic Church, the oldest Catholic church building in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. After the Miami-Erie Canal opened in 1846, dozens of Catholic parishes were established in communities around Mercer and Auglaize Counties, an area later termed the "Land of the Cross-Tipped Churches." Skilled clockmakers, the Verdin Brothers served many of these brick churches, with their

soaring steeples and clock towers.

Philomena Verdin returned from France to Cincinnati about 1855. She followed her Uncle Michel Verdin to Wapakoneta where he went to install the clock tower for the (original) St. Joseph Catholic Church, dedicated in 1858. A cultured, single woman who taught French and piano, she must have been an anomaly in a city settled primarily by German immigrant families. In 1859, she married Adolph Puetz, raised four children, and lived at 109 E. Pearl Street until her death in 1892. Descendants of the Philomena Verdin family still live in the Wapakoneta and the Cleveland area.

Mary Ann Olding is known throughout the area for her decades of meticulous scholarship documenting the architecture, culture, and history of the communities of west-central Ohio and beyond. The Auglaize County Historical Society is pleased to host this presentation and thanks Pastor Patrick Sloneker and St. Joseph Parish for their hospitality.

*Do you have a photograph of a one-room school? If you have an image to add to our archives—only actual photographs, no copies, please—consider lending it to the Society. We'll gratefully borrow, scan, and get it right back to you.*

**Don't forget the Membership Meeting on Sunday, March 7, at 1:30 p.m. preceding the Lucy Webb Hayes presentation (see page 4)**

### **Society Hosts All-Site Open House**

In commemoration of the opening of the 2010 season, the Historical Society will present an all-site Open House on Sunday, March 14, from 1 to 4 p.m. Visitors may tour the Mooney Museum (223 South Main Street, St. Marys), Wapakoneta Museum (206 West Main Street), the Gary Log House (Auglaize County Fairgrounds), and the former Olive Branch Methodist Church (State Route 219, Shinbone). Those who visit all sites will have their names entered in a drawing for a copy of *Postcard Images of Auglaize County*, a \$50 value.

### **Society Collaborates on Workshop**

The Auglaize County Historical Society is collaborating with Downtown Wapakoneta Partnership to host a preservation workshop on Saturday, April 17. The workshop will include presentations by representatives of the Ball State University Historic Preservation Program, Over-the-Rhine Foundation, Midwest Maintenance Services, and more. More details will appear in the next *History at a Glance*.

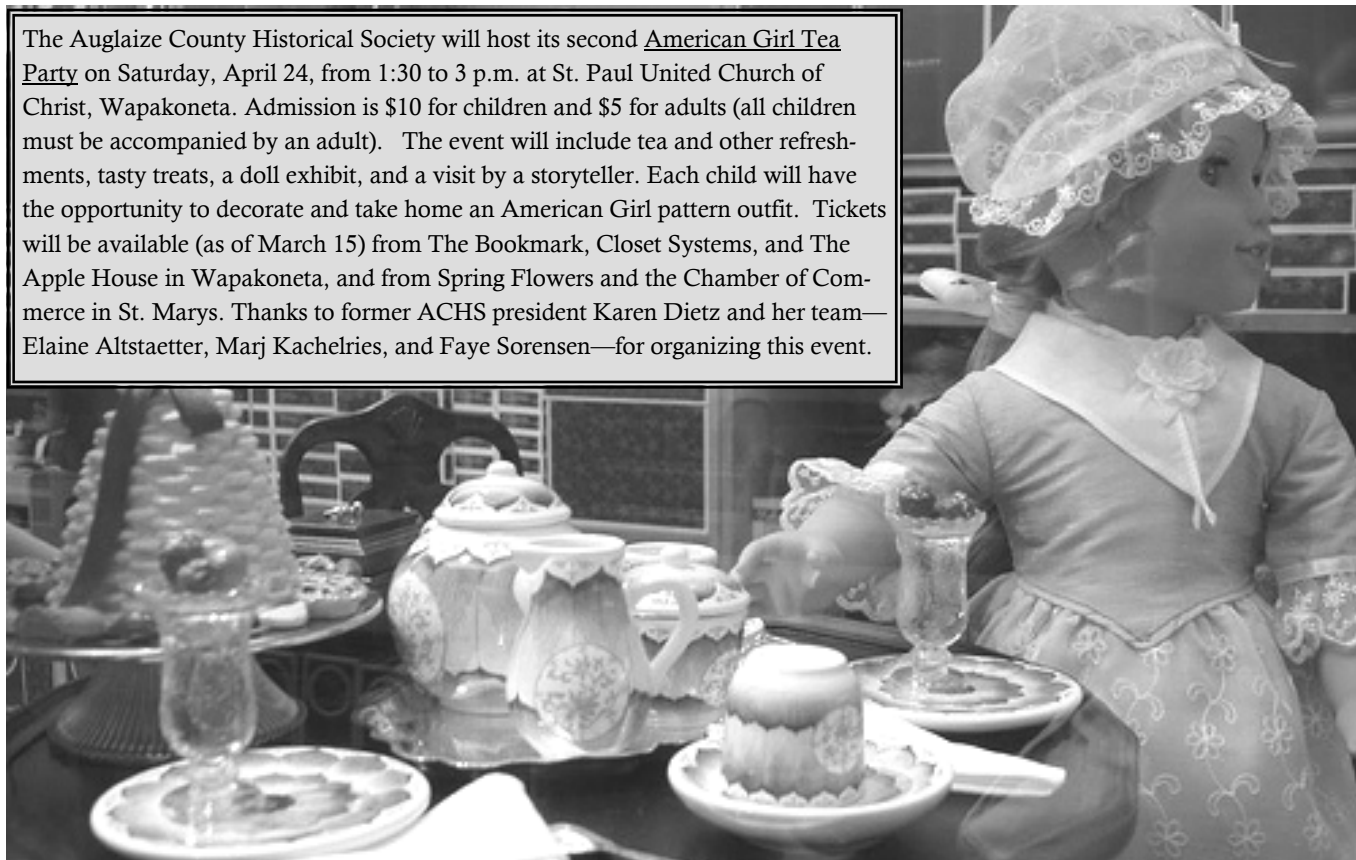
### **Society Seeks Assistance for Century Farms Program**

The Historical Society is looking for volunteers across Auglaize County who can assist with the 2010 Century Farms, Homes, and Businesses program. The effort documents buildings/property that have been in the same family for at least 100 years. If you are interested in helping, please contact the office.

### **Sponsors Needed for Painting Project**

The Historical Society is seeking sponsors to support painting the walls at the Wapakoneta Museum. Because of the high ceilings and adjacent exhibits, this project is best left to professionals. It is estimated to cost approximately \$2000. If you wish to support this project, please contact the Society.

The Auglaize County Historical Society will host its second American Girl Tea Party on Saturday, April 24, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at St. Paul United Church of Christ, Wapakoneta. Admission is \$10 for children and \$5 for adults (all children must be accompanied by an adult). The event will include tea and other refreshments, tasty treats, a doll exhibit, and a visit by a storyteller. Each child will have the opportunity to decorate and take home an American Girl pattern outfit. Tickets will be available (as of March 15) from The Bookmark, Closet Systems, and The Apple House in Wapakoneta, and from Spring Flowers and the Chamber of Commerce in St. Marys. Thanks to former ACHS president Karen Dietz and her team—Elaine Altstaetter, Marj Kachelries, and Faye Sorensen—for organizing this event.





*Auglaize County native Jim Tully*

***YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!***

*We have many volunteer opportunities at the Auglaize County Historical Society, from docents (tour guides) to researchers to catalogers to cemetery workers. That's right—you can even help us restore tombstones at the former Olive Branch Methodist Church, Shinbone! Call the office, 394-7069 or 738-9328, for more information.*

**Historic House Tour Scheduled for May**

The Historical Society will host a tour of several of St. Marys' historic homes on Sunday, May 16.

Organized by ACHS Trustee (and historic home owner himself) Tim Bigham, the tour will honor and highlight some of the many architectural significant and well preserved residences in the community.

The event is being held in conjunction with National Historic Preservation Month in May.

For more information about attending the tour or volunteering to help, contact Rachel Barber.

**Historical Society to Present Summer Teachers Institute**

For the second time in three years the Auglaize County Historical Society was awarded a major grant from the Ohio Humanities Council to host a Summer Teachers Institute.

The 2010 Institute is entitled "Ohio's Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Authors. It will be presented Tuesday, June 22 through Thursday, June 24, 2010.

Throughout its history Ohio has been home to many significant and influential authors, no less so in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Ohio's Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Authors* will provide Literature/Language Arts and Social Studies instructors with the tools they need to incorporate the writings of some of the most significant authors of this period into their classrooms.

The works of Sherwood Anderson, Louis Bromfield, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and James Thurber are familiar to many. Although representing a broad spectrum of writing styles, the authors are often connected by their

autobiographical references, historical influences, and themes, which will be addressed during the three-day session. The Institute will also introduce teachers to Ruth McKenney and Auglaize County's Jim Tully, significant but lesser known Ohio writers from the period. The Auglaize County Historical Society has assembled scholars from Ashland University, Hiram College, Ohio State University, and the Paul Laurence Dunbar House, among others, to present this Institute, geared toward secondary teachers of Literature/Language Arts and Social Studies. The three-day event will include individual presentations, panel discussions, and a field trip to the Dunbar House in Dayton. ACHS Trustee Chad Doll serves as curriculum consultant for the Institute, Through an arrangement with Wright State University, two graduate credits are available for Institute participants. Enrollment is limited to 25. For more information about attending or volunteering for the Institute, contact Rachel Barber.

## Auglaize County Historical Society

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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### Mark Your Calendars for March 7: *Lucy Webb Hayes LIVE!*

As the inaugural event of its 2010 programming season, the Auglaize County Historical Society will host a living biography of Lucy Webb Hayes, wife of President Rutherford B. Hayes, on Sunday, March 7, at 2 p.m. at New Knoxville's historic United Methodist Church, 109 South Main Street, New Knoxville. The program will be presented by Betty Darst. The event is free and open to the public, and has been made possible by the Ohio Humanities Council.

Native Ohioan Lucy Webb Hayes is connected to many "firsts." She was the first wife of a president to have a college degree, and she described the dynamic of the Civil War on the first typewriter in the White House. Stretching her role as First Lady beyond that of hostess, Mrs. Hayes worked for completion of the Wash-

ington Monument. She also brought the Easter Egg Roll to the White House lawn, where it continues today. This first person portrayal lifts Lucy out of the pages of history and connects her to the present and future of Ohio and the country.

Historical Society administrator Rachel Barber states, "Inasmuch as the accomplished Mrs. Hayes was such a devoted member of the Methodist Church, and a strong leader for women of the denomination, we're also excited that this first person portrayal will be hosted at this beautiful Methodist Church."

Betty Darst presents a living biography of fascinating First Lady Lucy Webb Hayes. The roles of historian and dramatist are Darst's favorite avocations. She has worked for many years to share stories of excit-

ing people, including many Ohioans. Darst is an adjunct faculty member at Wright State and is recognized nationally for her leadership in young adult and children's literature.

