

Medina County Historical Society



John Smart House

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 Established 1922



McDowell-Phillips House

We have had a very busy spring season. We now have the Lincoln Wide Awakes and the McKinley parade banners restored and on display at the McDowell- Phillips House. The John Smart House has added a beautiful Victorian Bedroom set donated by Craig and Judy Vanderhoef, descendants of Lorenzo Vanderhoef a Civil War Soldier from Homerville. Craig carefully packed and crated the bedroom set and drove it from Virginia to deliver it to us.

We were honored to receive the very prestigious "Excellence for Leadership in Preservation" award from the Cleveland Restoration Society and the American Institute of Architects of Cleveland for the McDowell-Phillips house. The judging panel was amazed at the work and support from the community. We raised \$525,000 from 2019 through 2021 to purchase and preserve this house along with many volunteer hours and professional contractors that impressed the judges; especially during the Covid pandemic.

We have enjoyed having Anna Denman, a student at Ohio University, intern with us this summer. Anna is planning a career in history and museum operations, so she has shadowed and helped with many projects at the museum. The 100th year anniversary of our society has brought magnificent events and member activities to enjoy. The special programs at the library were at capacity. Planned activities such as the Cora Munson Teas coming up in August are sold out. We offer you (members) first opportunity for such events in appreciation for your support.

As the weather finally improved, we started on some capital projects at the McDowell-Phillips House Museum. The old barn was too far gone to save, and we reluctantly had to have it demolished. We salvaged a few beams and doors to be used in the new barn eventually once we raise enough funds for that phase of development.

A new catch basin and drainage channel was installed to help drain the wet area of the rear lawn and provide drainage for the future driveway and parking area.



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2022 Officers	Board Members	Emeritus Members
Brian Feron-President	Mary Jo Palmer, Pieri Levandofsky	Joann King, Tom Hilberg
Carole Feron-Vice President	Lila Lehrer, Judy Davanzo	Richard Clark
Mike Davanzo-Secretary	Roger Smalley, Mary Jane Brewer	
Chet Simmons-Treasurer	Andrea Spickler, Beth Biggins-Ramer	

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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The 1942 War Bond Building in front of the Medina Hospital/Cleveland Clinic will be relocated to our property next to the existing barn. Although this historic structure will need some repairs, it will be an excellent artifact to explain the role of our home front during WWII.

Looking ahead, we are planning fall activities. In cooperation with the Medina County Arts Council and Show Biz Company, the annual Spirits of the Past event will be held Sept 8,9,10 and at Miss Molly's on the 11th. Mike & Judy Davanzo are lining up the tour guides. This is a fun event so please consider helping us. We can always use more guides and docents for our open house events too. If you have not been through a training session, we would be happy to have you shadow another guide to learn. Believe it or not we will start Holiday decorations in late October. Stay tuned for details.



I invite you to visit our museums and see the changes. If you have ideas for future programs, please share them with us. Enjoy your summer.

--Brian Feron, President

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100TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

The Medina County Historical Society hosted a Birthday Party on the front lawn of the McDowell- Phillips House museum to celebrate its 100 years of preserving the history of Medina County. Around 80 guests gathered on the evening of June 13th to eat birthday cake and ice cream and to listen to the keyboard selections of Ryan Ramer.

To add interest to the evening, Tom Doyle drove the Model T fire truck produced in Medina in the early 1900's by the Hallock brothers from his Little Wiz Fire Museum to the event. He graciously answered questions about the engine and posed for photos.

Guests also were able to admire the beautifully restored McDowell carriage – a 100-year-old Surrey with a fringe on top – complete with its new life-size Fiberglas horse. Fun photos could be taken with Victorian era cutouts.

After mingling with friends, most guests simply sat on the lawn on the hot, humid evening and listened to the mellow music of composer Ramer. Mayor Dennis Hanwell and City Councilman Jim Shields stopped in briefly between two official city business meetings to extend their congratulations.

Society president Brian Feron welcomed the guests and delivered a few highlights of the society's history. Guests could view the vacant patch of land behind the house where the original barn was recently razed because it could not be safely restored. He thanked the members for their support – without their donations of time, artifacts, and money the society could not function.



Left: Mike Davanzo applying finishing touches to cake display.

Right: Tom Doyle with the Hallock Fire Truck



Stay Tuned for Upcoming Programs

September 12: Our history in Telecommunications featuring items from AT&T underground stationed in Medina township.

October 10: Recap history of our county by Joann King and Medina County Commissioner Steve Hambley.

Additional details will be sent via e-mail.

ACQUISITIONS 101

Almost every week MCHS gets something – photos, family treasures, Medina County history info, etc., etc. This is an acquisition and it immediately becomes a part of MCHS's collection. What now? Well, in order for all this stuff to be accessible and have meaning, it has to be accessioned and cataloged. Simple enough, but what does that mean? Well we document the acquisition with donor name, address, date received, and description and then give it an accession number. That makes it official.

Then to make it possible to find it and use it, we catalog it. Do what? Again, simple – we pick a category (object, photo, archives, or library), give it an object ID# and mark it, say where it is located, and list its subjects so that it can be found under people's names, its topic (ie. photograph, furniture, genealogy resource, etc.), or its - kind of like a Google search. Then we put it away and move on to the next acquisition.

Okay, so what does that have to do with our membership at large? Acquisitions arrive in many different ways – by mail, dropped off on the porch, handed to you by a friend, brought by during an event, and when MCHS buys a house sometimes we get an attic full of stuff - the McDowell/Phillips House. This is where you come in.

MCHS has a wonderful team of docents and volunteers who are at the JSH and MPH for multiple reasons. Sometimes a person brings in something and says "I want to give this to the museum." That's a very good thing, but it's even better when the docent/volunteer is prepared to take that first step in accepting the gift. So this is what you do.

There are acquisition forms in the JSH office on the right wall, just as you go in the door. Fill it out, and we will have all the info we need to start the accessioning. If there is not a form available, a piece of paper will do. Please write the following: donor name, address and/or contact info, and date received. If you have a chance ask them the history of the item/items: Is it from Medina County, what family is it associated with, is there a special story with the item? If you can't do that, we can follow up if we have a contact number or email. You may also ask if there are things we cannot use, do they want them back or can we dispose of them?

Using this system we will have a well-documented acquisition, the donor will get credit, and we will know the story behind their gift. Thank you!!! You now are a part of one of the most important parts of the museum's operation. If you have any further questions, let me know.

—Joann King

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Medina County Historical Society continued its celebration of its 100 years in existence with a presentation entitled "A Brief History of the Medina County Historical Society" at the Medina Library on April 23.

Joanne King and Tom Hilberg, self-named "relic curators," presented a power point account of the society's history. Between the two of them, they served as curators for more than 40 years. Their presentation highlighted the main dates and events in the society's fascinating history.

Beginning in 1875, the Medina Pioneer Association formed the basis of the current society.

According to snippets of information found in local newspapers over the years, on April 4, 1922, the current society was established and soon after was recognized by the state of Ohio as a non-profit. On May 19, 1922, the group met in the library.

In February 1940, Frank Weidner was elected as president and the society's artifacts were moved from the library to a room at Garfield School.

In May, 1948, the society rented rooms for meetings and displays at the Rose and Clare Vittel Boarding House. A President McKinley banner recently restored by the society appeared in a newspaper photo taken in the boarding house at the time.

The society received a permanent home in 1956 when Cora Munson Blakeslee died and left her home to the society to be used as a museum. The museum's first Open House was held on May 19, 1957.

In June 1976, the society took a huge leap forward and hired King as a parttime curator. She had just completed her history degree at Akron University and was given her first task – to "catalog and document the existing collection." She discovered that the Munson house was full of history – every closet, every drawer was packed. For a historian, "Every day was Christmas; I could slip back into the 19th Century."

Thanks to a swap arranged by the county administrators, the society became owners of the much larger John Smart House in the summer of 1984, and the county moved the Munson House to Prospect Street to make room for the parking deck behind the courthouse. Members of the society hauled the contents of the house to the Smart House "box by box" in the back of Larry Prebis' pickup truck. Because the society was committed to opening the new home ASAP, volunteers refinished floors, wallpapered, arranged displays and the first floor was open to the public by the end of the year.

In 2019, the Historical Society had the opportunity to purchase the iconic McDowell-Phillips House and began raising more than \$500,000 for the purchase and restoration of the home, now a second museum and repository of amazing and priceless artifacts.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome

Mary Gresock

George Sam

Judy Bartok

Sue & Emma Bower

Tom & Donna Bica

Christine Greene

Linda Lucas

Carl & Marcia Heckert

Rosemary Hurt

Char Klimko

Jim & Margaret White

Wendy Luedy

Barbara Wiedemann

Anna Denman

Elly & Ted Kannen

Ted Gibbs & Betty Czika

Robert & Brenda Thompson

Mary Carpenter

Shawn, Chris & Caden Copen

James Roberts Family

Audra & Todd Morello

Don & Liz Koons

Chris Wheeler

David & Sue Comunale



Past long-time member and Treasurer of MCHS, David Fawcett, passed away recently.

Member Exclusive Benefits

Receipt of Quarterly MCHS newsletter

Discounts to some special events

Discounted admissions to museums

Special programs for members only

**NEW INFORMATION ON
EDWARD P. RETTIG
FOUND IN OUR COLLECTION**

A few years back we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the end of the Civil War and did the restoration of the collage of Civil War photos, one of the first we identified was Edward P. Rettig.

You may remember that he was born in Medina, OH to John & Caroline Rettig. After his schooling in the local village school, Edward worked in his father's harness shop until his enlistment as a musician in Company H of the 8th OVI on June 6, 1861.

Rettig fell ill in August 1861 with typhoid fever while stationed at Camp Pendleton in Maryland. He was furloughed home to recover. Charles Manfield, his friend who had also enlisted, brought him home. Unfortunately, Rettig was unable to recover from his illness and died September 6, 1861 with family and friends at his bedside.



Rettig was buried in the Spring Grove Cemetery.

From another source in our collection, we have discovered new information on Private Rettig's death. That source was found in Florence I. Garrett's "Journal of Everyday Events" that the young lady kept between 1860 and 1863. It passed down through the family until Helen Louise Perkins Noble of Sacramento, California transcribed the journal, published a limited set and forwarded us a copy in 1991.

Here are the entries concerning Edward Rettig:

Wednesday August 28th 1861 – Edward Rettig and Charlie Manville have come home from the war. Charlie is not very well, and Edward is very sick with typhoid fever.

Friday September 6th 1861 – Edward Rettig died today at about twelve o'clock. He will be buried next Sabbath. He has not known anything or anybody for quite a spell.

Sunday September 8th 1861 – Edward Rettig was buried today and there were the most people at this funeral that I ever saw at one house on Sunday. The seats were just as full as they could be and there were benches set in the aisles and those were full. It was full around the stoves and so was the hall.

Edward was dressed in his military suit and he was holding his cap. There was glass the whole length of the top of the coffin. Two or three military companies marched to the grave accompanied with fifes and drums. The funeral was at the Methodist house and Mr. Palmer being absent, Mr. Davis filled his place. He did not take any test, but talked about the war.



OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR MEMBERS

At the annual meeting last December, the membership present approved several changes to the Society's By Laws. One change affords the members of the Society the opportunity to submit nominations for elected positions. Nominations from members must be received by the Board by September 30th.

Nominees must be members of the Society. If you know of an individual whose service would benefit the Society, please make sure they are a member and then secure their permission to submit their name. While there is no guarantee a nominee will be recommended for election, it is important that the Society tap into its full potential regarding leadership. Your assistance in that effort will be appreciated.

BY-LAWS REVIEW: COMMITTEE UPDATE

Beginning in March, a special committee of the board has been meeting monthly to review the current By-Laws of the Society. Per the current language, the Society's board is required to review the full document every five years and the committee is charged to do so.

The committee first thoroughly read the existing language and members proposed possible changes. Second, by-laws from other non-profit organizations were reviewed to broaden the committee's base of possibilities regarding additions which might benefit our society's governing language.

Lengthy discussions followed which led to a general consensus on what language the committee determined would be sent to the Board for discussion. Rationale for each change is included.

The full Board of Trustees will receive the language later this summer and a special board meeting has been set for August where all recommendations will be discussed in detail. Time will be allowed for revisions and the board will prepare final recommendations in October. Those recommendations will be sent to the membership in November and the amendments will be voted on at the annual meeting in December.

BARN TEARDOWN

Sadly, on the advice of several contractors and carpenters, the Historical Society has found it necessary to tear down the larger of two barns on the McDowell-Phillips property. The building was not safe and could not be restored.

The large barn, believed to have been built shortly before the Civil War, was dismantled piece by piece by volunteers Brian, Patrick, & Mike Feron, Chet Simmons, and Scott Benson. After clearing out more than 100 years of accumulated trash and treasures, the men removed most of the rotten exterior siding, exposing the hand-hewn beams and the saw-cut framing. They salvaged 7 beams and a few wide boards and doors.

Because the roof was very unstable and unsafe to climb on, the next step in the demolition was to collapse the barn so the asbestos shingles could be safely reached and removed intact. An excavator from Belsole excavation gathered the fallen timbers. They filled 2 -40 yard and 1 - 20 yard dumpster.

The concrete floor was broken up and hauled away to be recycled.

The next major project involved drainage tiles in the back yard. Soon to come is paving the driveway and creating parking places for workers and visitors as well as moving the War Bond building to the property.



SPEAKEASY AT THE PHOENIX CLUB

SSSSSHHHH.....

It's a Speakeasy at the "Phoenix Club!"

Medina County Historical Society invites you to celebrate our

100th Anniversary Finale on Saturday, October 1st from 7pm – 9:30pm.

"Speakeasy" was a term used during prohibition, since many folks didn't want to talk about where you could relax and enjoy a drink.

Have some fun and support the Historical Society.

Heavy appetizers, drinks, desserts, costume contest and more!

Optional attire is to dress in the spirit of the Roaring 20's.

\$100 per person

McDowell-Phillips House Museum – "The Phoenix Club"

205 S. Prospect St., Medina

Tickets are limited so get yours today!

Call 330- 592-0061 for reservations!

This is a major fundraiser for the Society

If you are unable to attend but would like to support MCHS, you can become a Patron! Please call 330-722-4409



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.MEDINACOUNTYHISTORICALSOCIETY.COM

Membership Categories:
Membership Year is Jan 1st – Dec 31st

Student/Senior	\$10.00	Organization	\$30.00
Individual	\$20.00	Patron	\$50.00
Senior Family	\$20.00	Corporate	\$100.00
Family	\$25.00	Life	\$300.00 (one time payment)

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1922-2022
100 years of History

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MEDINA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY