



Warren County History Center
105 S. Broadway
Lebanon, OH 45036

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THE HISTORICAL LOG

Volume 66 ~ No 3

To Preserve and Present the Heritage of Warren County

2016

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Victoria Van Harlingen

«ADDRESSBLOCK»

Dated Material, Please Open

Bootleggers' Ball

You are invited!

AUGUST 27th

7 - 11 PM
THE MANOR
HOUSE

Optional
"Best of the 1920s"
Costume
Contest

Music & Song by
The Different
Hats Dance
Orchestra

TICKETS & INFO AT WCHSMUSEUM.ORG | 513-932-1817

A Gala Fundraiser for the Warren County Historical Society

Annual Fund Drive

The Warren County Historical Society will kick off its Annual Fund Drive with the Bootlegger's Ball on Saturday, August 27, 2016 at the Manor House in Mason, OH. In addition to raising funds to support the award-winning work of the Historical Society, we will be honoring retiring Warren County Commissioner Pat South and all her good work for the people of Warren County.

Regional museums like the Historical Society's Warren County History Center and Glendower Historic Mansion connect people to their communities through their past. By preserving and presenting a community's history, art, and culture, its citizens develop local pride, which is a cornerstone of the success of any community. The Warren County Historical Society is in the business of community-building by recapturing and honoring the achievements of our past.

Annual fund donations make it possible for the Warren County Historical Society to employ professional staff, produce a variety of entertaining and educational programs for both children and adults, and house and preserve award-winning history, art, and culture collections.

You can support the annual fund through the Bootleggers' Ball by becoming a sponsor (see levels at right), purchasing a ticket to the ball, and/or by donating a raffle item. To donate to or sponsor the event, checks may be mailed to WCHS at 105 S. Broadway, Lebanon, OH or call 13-932-1817. Tickets to the ball may be ordered online at WCHSmuseum.org or by mail. Invitations and response cards will be mailed out soon.

Through these fundraising efforts, together we will continue to connect our citizens to their community by preserving and presenting the heritage of Warren County.

Bootleggers' Ball Sponsorship Opportunities

Diamond Sponsorship - \$2400

Table for 8 guests with company logo on table
Complimentary Speakeasy Cocktail flights, one per person
Complimentary wine with dinner
Complimentary treats from Golden Turtle Chocolate Factory
Announced as Diamond Sponsor at the event
Acknowledgement in the printed event program
Acknowledgement on WCHSmuseum.org
Acknowledgement on Facebook and other social media
Acknowledgement in the WCHS members' journal

Gold Sponsorship - \$1600

Table for 8 guests with company logo on table
Complimentary Speakeasy Cocktail flights, one per person
Complimentary treats from Golden Turtle Chocolate Factory
Acknowledgement in the printed event program
Acknowledgement on WCHSmuseum.org
Acknowledgement on Facebook and other social media
Acknowledgement in the WCHS members' journal

Silver Sponsorship - \$800

Table for 8 guests with company logo on table
Acknowledgement in the printed event program
Acknowledgement on WCHSmuseum.org
Acknowledgement on Facebook and other social media
Acknowledgement in WCHS members' journal

1825 – Henry Clay's Year of Tragedy

by John J. Zimkus, WCHS Historian & Education Director

Part II: Continued from the May 2016 *Historicalog*

The next day, Friday, July 15, 1825, the Clay family traveled only about five miles and arrived at William Ferguson's hotel in Lebanon, Ohio. The town of just over 1,000 residents was the county seat of Warren County. The Ferguson House was known for many years as the Indian Chief Tavern. This frame tavern that began in 1805 was located on Main Street a half a block east of the town square. On its west side, was the back of Warren County's first real courthouse building. Completed in 1806, the courthouse sat on the northeast corner of Broadway and Main streets on the town square.

Eliza Clay was now quite ill. A local doctor was consulted and he established that she was suffering from typhoid fever. This inflammation of the bowels is caused by digesting contaminated food or water. It was a common ailment in towns and settlements where poor sanitary conditions were prevalent. The doctor, John Ross, the brother-in-law of the avid Clay supporter and future Governor of Ohio Tom Corwin, advised the Clays not to move Eliza until she was better, which he assured them would be in a few days.

The next day, Saturday July 16, Henry Clay decided to take advantage of this temporary stop and visit Union Village, a Shaker settlement four miles west of Lebanon. Union Village was established in 1805 and was the first Shaker community in the West. Its first 15 years of existence were marred by several protests and mob actions. Some local residents feared the religious communal society because of what they perceived as their "strange beliefs." The Shakers lived celibate lives, and believed in the separation of the sexes. They also, for the most part, separated themselves from the outside world. By 1825, Union Village was more or less accepted by its neighboring communities. The Shaker settlement became quite the curiosity to visiting dignitaries to the area. Clay was said to have been impressed with Union Village and he offered his help to the Shakers if ever the need came.

Henry Clay had initially decided not to attend any public meeting or dinner in Lebanon in his honor in deference of Eliza's illness. However, while he was visiting Union Village well over a dozen men, described as "friends" of the Secretary of State Clay, came to the Ferguson House to pay their respects. Learning that he was not in, they decided to wait for him. Word spread further that the Henry Clay was in town and the number of "friends" soon grew. Upon his return nearly 40 gentlemen were waiting to dine with him in the hotel. They were all anxious to greet the great statesman who had carried Ohio in the election the year before. Clay graciously agreed to



Henry Clay

dine with them and made a brief address "in a manner that displayed some of the powers of his matchless oratory."

On Friday, July 22, 1825, one of the greatest collections of powerful and influential men Ohio had ever seen gathered at William Ferguson's hotel in Lebanon, Ohio. The occasion was a dinner to celebrate the dedication of the beginning of the Ohio and Miami Canal that took place less than a dozen miles away in Middletown, Ohio the day before. The dinner was preceded by the firing of canon, a salute by the local militia, a procession of citizens and an address to the dignitaries in the local Presbyterian Church.

Present at the dinner were: "The Father of the Erie Canal," former governor of New York and Mayor of New York City, Dewitt Clinton; "the Father of the Erie Canal," former Ohio Governor Ethan Allen Brown; the Governor of Ohio, Jeremiah Morrow; Ohio's U.S. Senator, and future U.S. President William Henry Harrison; and by the pure coincidence of misfortune, the Secretary of State of the United States, Henry Clay. Added to this prestigious gathering were dozens of local prominent citizens.

After toasts were made to "the President of the United States," "the Vice President," "the memory of Washington," "the government of the United States," "Governor Clinton," "the County of Warren and its worthy citizens," "Governor Morrow," and "the Ohio and Miami Canal," George J. Smith, a prominent Lebanon attorney, rose. Holding high his glass he stated: "The Honorable Henry Clay, Secretary of State—an enlightened and incorruptible patriot: his past life has been identified with the interest and happiness of his country—a sure guarantee that his future days will be devoted to her glory."

The *Chillicothe Supporter* newspaper reported that Clay then rose and expressed how appreciative he was "for the affectionate regard manifested for his person by the citizens of Lebanon, as for their kindness and attention to his family during his stay among them."

Secretary of State Henry Clay then took the opportunity to promote greater cooperation between the United States and its Latin American neighbors, a position he and President Adams both strongly favored. He toasted General Simon Bolivar, liberator of much of South America from Spanish rule, praising him for his patriotism and the "liberty which he has established." In all some 20 toasts were made.

The *Western Star*, Lebanon's local weekly newspaper, reported on Monday, July 25, that Henry Clay was "still detained in this place in consequence of the protracted illness of his daughter. We are pleased, however, to learn that there are symptoms of a change for the better and that she is likely to recover, which circumstances will enable Mr. Clay in 5 or 6

UPCOMING EVENTS

Reserve Online at WCHSMUSUEM.ORG or call the office at 513-932-1817

August 17

Lunch & Learn: "Death of Vallandingham at the Golden Lamb"

Reserve in Advance by August 13
11:30 - 1:00 PM

August 20

Fortune Tellers' Tea at Glendower

Reserve in Advance
Noon - 5:00 PM

August 27

Bootleggers' Ball

Annual Fund Drive Kickoff
Reserve in Advance
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM

September 9

Lantern Light Cemetery Tour

Lebanon Cemetery
Reserve in Advance
6:30 PM

September 14

Lunch & Learn: "Lost Ohio"

Reserve in Advance by September 10
11:30 - 1:00 PM

September 23 & 24

Old Post Office Flea Market

Free Admission
Friday 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

September 24 & 25

Civil War Encampment at Glendower

Free Admission to Encampment
Saturday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sunday 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

October 1

Ghost Walk & Pub Crawl

Reserve in Advance
6:30 PM

November 1 thru 22

Gingerbread House Contest

Judging November 25



Clockwise from top: Christine Van Harlingen displays lace-making; Lisa Holz demonstrates hat trimming; Cheri Brinkman demonstrates embroidery

ALL ABOUT HATS

We call her the Mad Hatter. Debbie DePaul has been a volunteer in the textile department for the past three years working mostly to catalog the museum's collection of hats. This labor has been what we at the museum call an "heroic effort," as we have a huge collection of wonderful men's, women's, and children's hats from the 19th and 20th centuries. Mrs. DePaul is also our event and exhibit photographer and is a co-chair of this year's annual fund drive kick-off event, the Bootlegger's Ball. She also joined the Board of Trustees this spring.

This past May Debbie took some of our hats on the road to a meeting of the Northeast Republican Women's Club at the Hyde Park Country Club. Mrs. DePaul put together a display of six hats from our collection that might have been worn by some of our President's First Ladies. Guests to the luncheon meeting were given a list of the First Ladies represented by the hats and asked to match the hats to the ladies. Nine entries out of over 60 such were correct and all nine received a prize.



Left: Debbie DePaul, WCHS' dedicated "Mad Hatter;" Right: A fun contest she put together where entrants had to guess which First Lady would have worn which hat



days probably to proceed on his journey to Washington . . ."

Despite the optimistic report and the application of several remedies, Eliza, in reality, showed little improvement. That same day Henry Clay wrote to President John Quincy Adams the following letter:

Lebannon (sic)
25 July 1825

Dear Sir

I am still detained here by the illness of my daughter, of the termination of whose case we can neither anticipate, nor the manner. I am greatly mortified and distressed by the occurrence. Mr. Erwin, my son in law, who will have the honor of delivering you this letter, will explain her situation more fully. His business obliges him to leave us. I shall lose no time that is not unavoidable in reaching the City.

*I am with great respect your ob. servant
H. Clay*

On Saturday, August 6, 1825, Clay wrote a check to William Ferguson the proprietor of the hotel in which his family has been staying since their arrival in Lebanon on July 15. The amount was for \$175 or approximately \$8/day. Adjusted for inflation, that amount would be nearly \$4,200, or around \$190/night, today.

Finally, on Sunday, August 7, 1825, after receiving assurances from the doctor that Eliza would recover but still needed rest, Clay left alone for Washington. It was some 24 days after the Clay family first arrived in Lebanon. He wrote a short time later, "I regret extremely that I left it. I should not have done so but that Dr. (John) Ross was confident of the convalescence of my poor Eliza. I had some forebodings . . ."

Henry Clay left Lebanon heading first north to Dayton and then east to the National Road, which had its ceremonial beginning in Ohio in St. Clairsville, Ohio on July 4.

The August 8, 1825 issue of *The Western Star* reported,

"The Hon. Henry Clay left this place yesterday in the afternoon for Washington City. His family are yet in this place, his daughter is regaining her health slowly and it may be some time before she will be able to proceed in her journey. It was intended by a member of our citizens to escort Mr. Clay as

far as the Miami River on his leave of town but the time of his departure was not known until after he was gone."

It took Clay two weeks to reach the nation's capital. He arrived there on Sunday, August 21. At breakfast that morning, 20 miles from his destination, he sat down to read *The National Intelligencer*, the daily Washington newspaper. It was from reading an article in that paper that he learned that his daughter, Eliza had died on Thursday, August 11, 1825, four days after he had left Lebanon. He was devastated.

Overcome by grief, as well as guilt for having left his family, he wrote to his wife Lucretia on Wednesday August 24, "I wish, my dear wife, I could offer you some consolation for the severe affliction which Providence has seen fit to send us . . . I cannot describe to you my own distressed feelings, which have been greatly aggravated by a knowledge of what yours must have been, in the midst of strangers, and all your friends far away. We must bow, with religious resignation, to decrees which we have no power to revoke."

Back in Lebanon, Eliza Clay's body was placed in a narrow black walnut coffin and was buried in the Baptist graveyard on the corner of Mulberry and West streets some five blocks west of the town square. Years later, an attendee of Eliza Clay's funeral said, "It was the most largely attended of any that ever occurred in the county." People from 20 to 30 miles away came to the service.

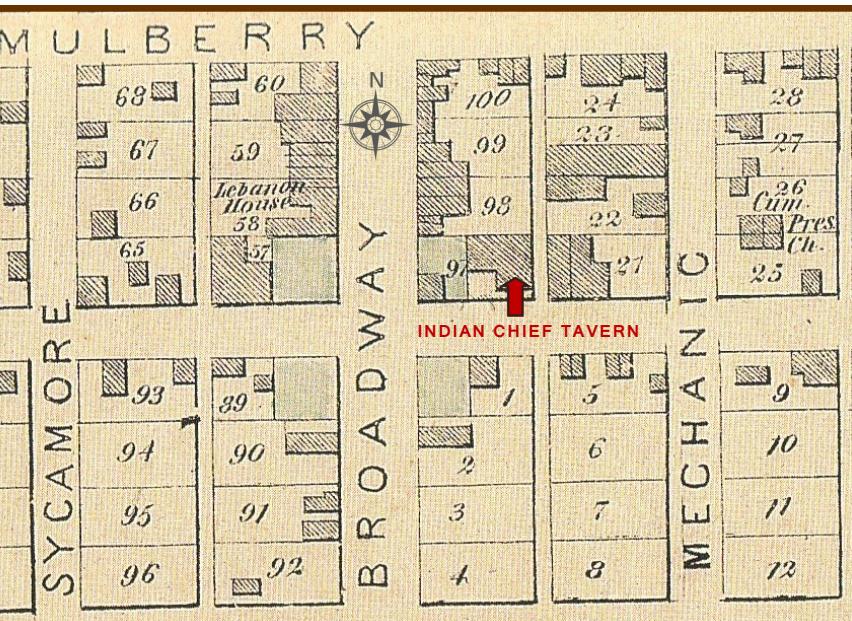
Just one month later, tragedy struck again with the death of Susan Duralde, Clay's 20-year-old daughter. Susan, who was said to be Lucretia's favorite, died from yellow fever on Sunday September 18, 1825 in New Orleans. It was reported to Henry Clay that the "news of her sister (Eliza's death) weighed heavily on her" and that "it

depressed her spirits and perceptibly affected her death."

Overcome with despair, Henry Clay worked even longer hours at the State Department to block out his sorrow. Lucretia was left to deal with her grief on her own, receiving little comfort or support from her husband. She often sat in their rented three-story brick house on F Street in Washington looking "bleak and desolate." She turned to her faith in God for consolation.

President John Quincy Adams was very sympathetic to Clay's situation. He wrote in his diary, "Mr. Clay is in deep affliction having lost two daughters in the course of a month... his own health is so infirm that he told me he feared he should

Continued next page



Downtown Lebanon, OH: William Ferguson's Indian Chief Tavern, where the Clay party stayed during Eliza's illness, and where Eliza died, was located on lot No. 97.

The August 8, 1825 issue of *The Western Star* reported, "The Hon. Henry Clay left this place yesterday in the afternoon for Washington City. His family are yet in this place, his daughter is regaining her health slowly and it may be some time before she will be able to proceed in her journey. It was intended by a member of our citizens to escort Mr. Clay as

resign his office: but said he would retain it through the winter, and himself entirely satisfied with my conduct toward him, and with the course of the administration hitherto." The president did not interfere with Clay's department and the secretary was able to complete the term.

Henry Clay's performance as secretary of state, however, dissatisfied his supporters as well as himself. Throughout his time in office he was haunted constantly by the renewed charge of his supposed "corrupt bargain" with Adams by his political enemies. They were the cause of many of his diplomatic failures in Congress.

It is also true that during his four years as the secretary of state his physical and emotional strength had been severely drained. Henry Clay's famed vitality and spark were not evident. Margaret Bayard Smith, a prominent Washington society leader visited the secretary of state in the latter days of his term. She was shocked by his "pale appearance" and wrote that "his eyes sunk in his head and his countenance (was) sad and melancholy."

Eliza Clay's burial in Lebanon was initially intended to be temporary, but Clay had allowed several years to go by before returning to the village. By that time it was decided that the Baptist churchyard in Lebanon would be Eliza's final resting place. Henry Clay had a Clinton limestone sarcophagus built. It was a little less than three feet high and about six feet long. The inscription on the upper tablet read:

*In memory of
ELIZA H. CLAY,
daughter of
HENRY AND LUCRETIA CLAY
Who died on the
11th day of August 1825.*

*Cut down in the bloom of a promising youth,
While traveling through Ohio, hence
From Lexington, Kentucky to Washington City.*

*Her parents, who have erected this monument
To her memory, console themselves
With the hope that she now abides in heaven.*

The sexton for Lebanon's Baptist Church agreed to look after Eliza's grave. The church was located on the northwest corner of the graveyard, what is now the northern part of what is the Lebanon Pioneer Cemetery. For more than 25 years the resting place of the remains of Henry Clay's little girl was well cared for. In the 1850's, however, two events greatly affected that care.

First, on June 20, 1850, the Lebanon Cemetery Association was formed. The old Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist graveyards, all small and situated on the west end of Lebanon near Main Street, were getting crowded. With the village growing, a new site for future burials was needed. Initially some 8 ½ acres were set-aside on the north side of West Silver Street for the new Lebanon Cemetery. By the 1880s it had grown to nearly 50 acres. The first interment there took place on August 20, 1850. Use of the smaller church graveyards fell off sharply and eventually came to a halt.

The other event was the death of Henry Clay on June 29,



Henry and Lucretia Clay outlived seven of their 11 children

1852. This great Kentucky statesman, arguably one of the nation's greatest, had actually led a rather tragic life. Politically, despite some 43 years of public service, including being speaker of the house, secretary of state and a U.S. senator, for many he is remembered as simply a man who ran for president three times and lost them all. The election of 1824 was only his first attempt.

Personally not only did Henry Clay have to bear the loss of his daughters, Eliza and Susan, in 1825, but he would also outlive seven of his 11 children, including all six of his daughters. This outgoing, charming, high-spirited, ambitious political gambler's life was filled with tremendous sorrow.

In an 1880 newspaper article, a Lebanon resident commented on the state of Eliza Clay's grave, "During Mr. Clay's life the grave was kept clean . . . but when he died no one seemed to take an interest in it, and the leaves and briars were allowed to clamber over it without hindrance. The whole graveyard was allowed to develop a rank growth of grass and underbrush and rubbish rapidly accumulated."

To make matters worse, students from the National Normal University, established in Lebanon in 1855 by Alfred Holbrook began to vandalize Eliza Clay's tombstone. Her sarcophagus provided an excellent source of Clinton limestone for geology class. The students got into the habit of chipping the slab for specimens. Attempts were made to stop the practice. A crude fence of barbed wire was stretched to four unheeled posts around the grave but it proved ineffective. Except for the interest of a few of Lebanon's older citizens, the stained and moldy stone sarcophagus of Eliza Clay was neglected.

Finally, after nearly 69 years to the day of her death, Eliza Clay was going home to Lexington, Kentucky. On Thursday, July 26, 1894, her body was exhumed at the request of Mrs. John Morrison Clay, the widow of Eliza's youngest brother. John was 4-years-old when Eliza died in Lebanon. No Clay family member came north to Lebanon, Ohio for the disinterment.

Gatherings at Glendower

Glendower was once again included in the Lebanon Council of Garden Clubs annual garden tour. The Warren County Master Gardeners have worked hundreds of hours caring for the gardens at Glendower and their efforts resulted in a beautiful display for the garden tour. Our Glendower tour guides opened the house for tours at just \$5.00 each in honor of the Garden Club's garden tour.

In addition, the Glendower volunteers put together a "Reclaiming our Skills of Old" program of needlecraft demonstrations as part of the "Gatherings at Glendower" series of events. New Board of Trustees member Karen Devaney, a longtime volunteer for Glendower, special events, and cemetery tours, demonstrated the ancient art of punch needle work. Liz Morris, our Board Secretary and volunteer bookstore manager, demonstrated all the many decorative stitches of needlepoint. Chris Van Harlingen, the source of beautiful Civil-War-era violin serenades during our Lantern Light Cemetery Tours, brought a lace display and demonstrated ultra-fine knitted lace. Cheri Brinkman, who headed up last year's Gala and put together the wildly successful *Friends of Jane Austen* event at Glendower in May (also part of the "Gatherings at Glendower" series), demonstrated a variety of embroidery stitches. And our newest textile department volunteer, Lisa Holz, Costume Mistress for Stivers School of the Arts, showed visitors how to trim ladies' hats. Sue Watts and Carol Plumb dressed in period costumes and gave guided tours of the house and gardens. Glendower Manager and tour guide Liz Grauwelman gave tours and played her dulcimer. Everyone had a marvelous time.



*Top: "Gatherings at Glendower: Friends of Jane Austen," Lynn Chaney, Sue Watts, Olivia Reed, Judy Grin, Gwyn Pinson, Jeanne Doan, Megan Willard, Vicki Patterson, and JASNA members Katie & Peter LePage; Olivia Reed demonstrating a game.
Bottom: "Gatherings at Glendower: Reclaiming our Skills of Old," Liz Grauwelman playing the dulcimer; lower right & inset: Karen Devaney demonstrating punch needle*



IN REVIEW!

History Camp for Kids

PROTECT & SERVE



The WCHS's 26th annual History Camp was held July 11-14, 2016. The topic this year for the 4th to 8th graders was *Protect and Serve: the History of First Responders in Southwest Ohio*. The campers visited the Lebanon Division of Police and the Lebanon Fire Department's Fire Station 41, as well as the Warren County Sheriff's Office. They toured the Lebanon Cemetery to view the gravesites of the city's honored past town marshals and chiefs of police, as well as walked about Lebanon to see the locations of long gone jails and fire stations.

The campers also traveled by bus to Cincinnati to tour the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum and the Fire Museum of Greater Cincinnati. They learned about the hard work and sacrifice the members of the police and fire departments of our area have made over the decades in their efforts to protect us and our communities. While in Cincinnati the campers had lunch in Eden Park overlooking the Ohio River.



Campers pose with Warren County Sheriff Department's Honor Guard



The Old Fire truck at Lebanon's Fire Station #41; the fire pole at the Fire Museum of Greater Cincinnati



Cincinnati's Eden Park, overlooking the Ohio River



The Warren County Sheriff Department's armored vehicle



John Zimkus showing a picture of Lebanon's Washington Hall Fire Station at its one-time site



The Greater Cincinnati Police Museum

The Western Star newspaper, reporting on the exhumation, stated that "there were traces of the black walnut coffin left, and the bones were in a good state of preservation, the teeth being perfect." The slab with the epitaph was boxed and shipped by freight. It had been mutilated so much that little of its original shape was left. The remains of Eliza Clay left Lebanon for Lexington by express train.

Eliza Clay's final resting place is in the Lexington Cemetery. It is just over two miles west on Main Street from the Clay family home, Ashland. Her simple marker reads:

ELIZA H. CLAY
Daughter of
Henry and Lucretia Clay
1813 - 1825

Across the narrow cemetery road within a handsome marble mausoleum are the remains of her parents Henry and Lucretia Clay. Above the monument is a towering column topped by a 12½ foot statue of the great Kentucky statesman Henry Clay. It gives the impression that Eliza's father is now watching over her.



From Left to Right: The Frankfort, KY, grave marker of Henry Clay, Jr., (Eliza's sarcophagus in Lebanon would have appeared similar to this), the Lexington, KY grave marker of Eliza Clay, the Lexington, KY mausoleum of Henry and Lucretia Clay, and the statue of Henry Clay that sits on top of the mausoleum

CEMETERY *Tour*

The Pioneer Cemetery Tour was May 20th and was a sold-out event. The cemetery tours are part of the Warren County Historical Society's efforts to fulfill its mission to preserve and present the heritage of Warren County. Without the efforts of John J. Zimkus, WCHS' historian and education director, and those of the many volunteers who portray the historical characters, these tours could not take place.

We give many thanks to the Pioneer Cemetery tour participants:

George Van Harlingen who portrayed Reverend Daniel Clark and also early 19th century druggist John Klingling

Karen Devaney as Mrs. Ichabod Corwin, Sarah Griffin Corwin

Gail Rose as the first Mrs. Colonel Lewis Drake, Mary Russell Drake

Olivia Reed as Revolutionary War nurse and veteran, Mary Craig Carpenter Dunlavy

Steve Kaiser as Tom Corwin's father, Ohio General Assembly Speaker of the House Matthias Corwin

Faith Duncan as Henry Clay's daughter, Eliza

Rufus Guy as Civil War soldier 2nd Lt. John A. Koogler

Cheri Brinkman as the second Mrs. Colonel Lewis Drake, Rachel Lincoln Drake

Liz Morris as Elizabeth Harner, one of the four tragically killed Harner sisters

Mike Sheehy as Nathan Sharp, the infamous Shaker Trustee

The next Cemetery Tour will be September 9, 2016 at the Lebanon Cemetery. Paid reservations are required in advance online or by calling 513-932-1817.



The King Family: An Amazing Contribution to Warren County

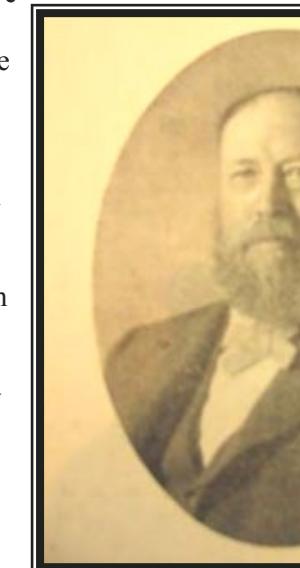
by Jeanne Doan, Exhibits Curator

In May of 2016, the Warren County History Center was contacted to collect items from the Kings Mansion in Kings Mills, Ohio. This impressive Italianate home was built in 1885 and had been owned by four generations of Kings, several private owners, and even by Deerfield Township. It was being sold by Deerfield Township to a private owner and the township wanted the Warren County Historical Society to come and collect artifacts, papers, books, and ephemera for preservation at the museum.

Entering the house, we could feel history all around us, from the very high ceilings, original doors and floors, to the wide elaborate moldings, and extraordinary fireplace mantles and tiles. In keeping with the high style of the Victorians, all the elements were vibrant and grand—though slightly marred by 1980's wall paper—and the interior was still infused with elegance. Questions came to mind as we explored the spaces: Where did this family come from? How were they able to build such a grand house and why was the family so influential?

Joseph Warren King (1814-1885) came from a well-established family in Suffield, Connecticut. A good businessman, he started several successful trades in various locations in Ohio. In 1850, he returned to Suffield, married Betsey Kendell and immediately brought her back to a new venture in gunpowder-making in the wilderness on the Little Miami River just north of Xenia, Ohio. Joseph and Betsey had four children and brought them all up in a grand house named "The Kingdom" located in Xenia. Around 1856, Joseph brought a nephew into the business, Ahimaaz King (*uh-him-ey-az*). Ahimaaz and Joseph King's Great Western Powder Company was

organized in 1878 but the main office for the powder company stayed in Xenia with J. W. at the helm. It was Ahimaaz (1839-1909) who moved the powder works to a spot close to South Lebanon. In this remote spot was a sufficient water supply, abundant trees for charcoal and lots of space for the dangerous



Ahimaaz King,
owner of the King
Powder Company of
Kings Mills, Ohio



revolving the cake through toothed mechanical rollers resulting in various sizes of grains which are then sieved for different grades of powder.

The grains of gunpowder are then taken to the *glazing house* and rolled in drums with graphite and heat to turn the grains black and make them more water resistant. The glazing process dries the grains to some extent but additional drying is done by laying the powder onto trays and letting them either air dry or heating the room. The gunpowder is now ready for the *packing house*. Once it is packed, it becomes more stable and unlikely to explode and can be shipped all over the country.

Each of these processes creates dangers for animals and humans who are working at the mill. Transporting the product to the next process requires that humans wear either protective cloth on their shoes to protect from iron nails causing a spark

millrace into one large water wheel that drove a dynamo which in turn ran generators in each of the buildings. Being electrified also gave the advantage of being able to work in shifts, 24 hours a day as dictated by demand. The composition of gunpowder is approximately 75% potassium nitrate, 15% charcoal, and 10% sulfur. Loads of sulfur and potassium nitrate (salt peter) were brought in from various locations. Charcoal was usually obtained from local sources and made in a small building on site. Potassium nitrate is purified by boiling, filtering and drying into fine crystals; charcoal is made from willow, alder, or dogwood, sized into similar lengths and thickness and left to dry for 2-3 years. It is then burned in airless ovens for 6 hours at 800°, then ground and sifted. Sulfur, also called *brimstone*, is distilled then melted down. This is cooled and ground to a fine powder. The ingredients are then measured out and combined in the *mixing house*.

The *wheel mill* is next where the ingredients are intimately incorporated together, with the hours of mixing differing with the grade of gunpowder wanted. Rifle or sporting powder was given more time than blasting powder. After mixing the product becomes explosive and is handled very carefully using a wooden shovel to place it into a wooden bin and then into a wooden buggy for transport.

The product is then taken to the *pressing house* in order to press it under immense pressure to reduce its size and to alter its burning rate to make it more powerful. This solid cake is called a *pressed cake* and needs to be turned into grainsize particles. In the *corning house*, this cake is granulated into "corn powder" by rapidly

or have the shoes nailed with copper nails. Mules and horses must wear brass or bronze shoes also with copper nails so as not to make sparks. Even the kegs and boxes in which to hold the gunpowder are made with wooden nails to reduce sparks. The black dust made during the process also coated the workers, the buildings, and the surrounding areas. This was a hazard the "Powder Monkey's" lived with every day. These men worked in heat and cold—grinding, sieving, toting and packing with the constant threat of explosion. What could have been the incentive to stay?

When Ahimaaz King built King's Great Western Powder Company on the Little Miami River, he also decided to build a company town. This town would house his workers and keep them close to their jobs, but not too close. Houses for families were built and rented to them cheap, company stores sold goods and schools were built for the children to be educated. A large boarding house, the Cliff House Hotel, was built for the single workers, men on one side, women on the other, with a

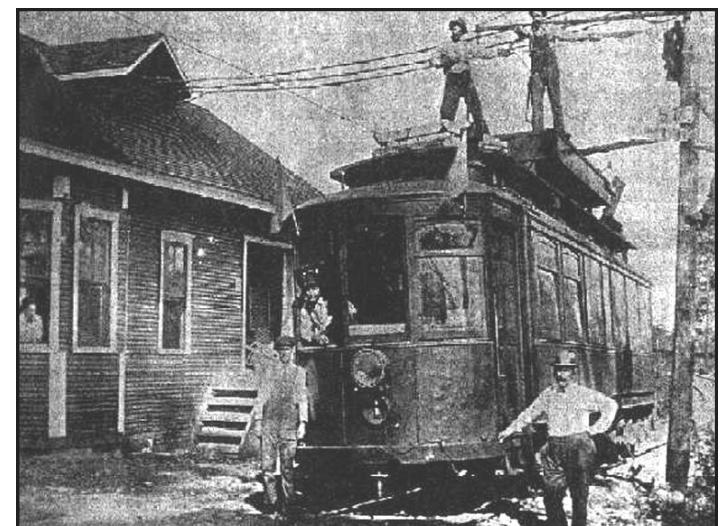


The King Mansion was recently sold to a private owner

large restaurant on the main floor. A post office was established, a library built, and the Kings Mills Baptist Church was dedicated in honor of J.W. King in 1887. A gun club with skeet shooting was very popular with the locals. The Interurban Railway and Terminal (IR&T) was a small rail tram that went through Kings Mills from Cincinnati to Lebanon and an excursion from town on the tram and then a steamboat ride to Coney Island could be made in one day. Even in spite of the dangers, recruits to work at Kings Mills were seldom hard to find except in times of emergency. The town had a peaceful, rural feel that appealed to those who liked a small-town life, until, of course, something exploded, though by all accounts the townspeople seemed to take the interruption in stride and get on with the rest of their day.

Mr. Ahimaaz King also built his home in Kings Mills. The mansion sits on a rise on King Avenue and was a marvel in 1885. It had chandeliers, an ice house, and a large windmill that pumped water to a tall tower so that the house had pressure for running faucets. Owning at one time 500 acres and a splendid stable, Mr. King and his family gave a sense of pride and style to the community that still lingers today.

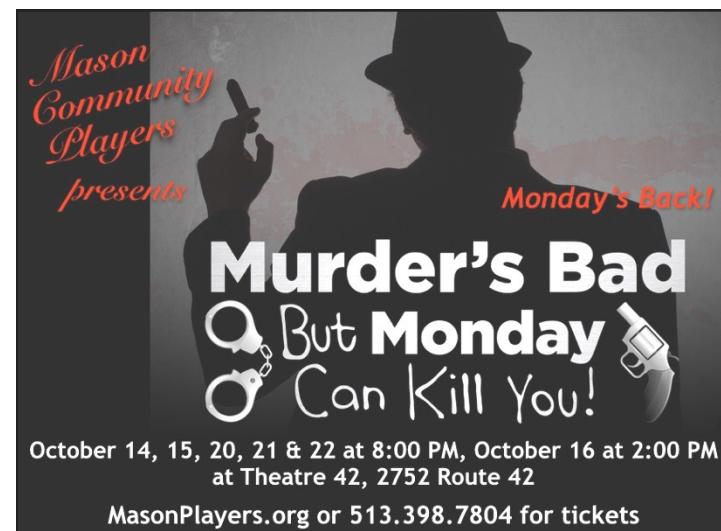
As for the factory, King Powder Co. and the closely associated Peters Cartridge Factory supplied much needed jobs and ammunition for WWI and WWII. The manufacturing of



Kings Mills Trolley Station 1901-1922

gunpowder and cartridges was vital for our national defense as well as being used throughout the years by sharp shooters for competitions and events. When demand was high, Mr. King even built another powder factory, near Wurtland, Kentucky, just like the one in Kings Mills. The King Powder Company (KICO) plant was where they mostly made black blasting powder and dynamite for the mining industry.

All of the factories were closed down by 1948 and Seagram's bought the old Peters factory to store whiskey in 1950. All the mill buildings have deteriorated and grown over with trees, and the ground of the factory is now designated an EPA Superfund site because of soil contamination. The legacy of the King family still lives on in Kings Mills and in the mansion on the rise. Descendants of the King family still live in Warren County. This impressive home will continue as a well-loved home and the village of Kings Mills will keep on growing and flourish with that small-town feel. Our goal at the Warren County Historical Society is to preserve the history of this influential place and family with a traveling exhibit showing the mansion, the Ahimaaz King family, and some of the disasters that befell the factory. This exhibit will be offered at the end of the year to libraries, community centers, retirement communities, and exhibit halls to further knowledge and appreciation of the amazing King Family. ◇



October 14, 15, 20, 21 & 22 at 8:00 PM, October 16 at 2:00 PM
at Theatre 42, 2752 Route 42

MasonPlayers.org or 513.398.7804 for tickets