

THE HISTORICAL LOG

A Publication of the Warren County Historical Society

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Victoria Van Harlingen

Annual Dinner Includes Performance of "A Christmas Carol"



WCHS will have a unique performance of "A Christmas Carol" this year

We've had a busy fall with programs, events and tour groups, sometime all three in one day. November will be a quiet month and we will use the time to get ready for Christmas! This year we have some wonderful events that will make you doubly glad you are a member of the Warren County Historical Society. A wonderful group of WCHS members and friends headed by Rebecca McLaughlin and Michael Coyan have volunteered to produce Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" on the Village Green during December. The play will be presented as a 1930s radio

performance complete with live foley sound effects.

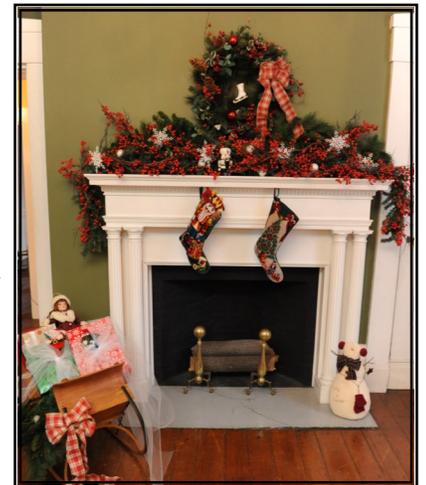
The first performance on Wednesday, December 18th is already sold out. The second performance is Friday evening, December 20. This performance will be for WCHS members only and will be the entertainment for our annual dinner. Dinner will be served at 6:30, we will have a short business meeting and then the play will begin at 8:00 pm. The performance will run about an hour and fifteen minutes. The cost for the evening is \$45 per person and includes the dinner and the play. Reservations and advance payment are required by December 14. You can purchase from our web site or call the museum directly at 513-932-1817.

On Saturday, December 21 there will be a 2:00 pm matinee performance and an 8:00 pm evening performance. The cost for each of these performances is \$20 per person. Seating is regular theater seating. No

meal will be served. Tickets are available for purchase on the web site and at the Warren County History Center.

Christmas at Glendower: A Celebration of Christmas Carols

Again this year we are pleased to announce that professional decorators will be transforming Glendower with beautiful holiday displays. Patti Johnson of Patti Johnson Interiors, Sally Waxman of The Silky Way and Jacqueline Dunn of Lord & Dunn will interpret our favorite Christmas Carols in holiday decorations. Glendower opens for tours December 6 and will be open from 1:00 to 5:00 pm every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in December. Admission for non-WCHS members is \$8.00 adults, \$7.00 seniors and \$6 students.



Gorgeous decorations abound at Glendower (photo courtesy of Studio J)

Give a WCHS Membership and Save Half

One of the perks of your WCHS membership is half-off gift memberships. Give the gift of history all year long for just \$25 for a family membership. Another perk of WCHS membership is free admission to both the History Center and Glendower. This is especially nice if your family has young children who might be overwhelmed by the wealth of exhibits and information we provide inside our museums. With a family membership children can visit with their parents multiple times, providing hours of entertainment as well as education.

See page 6 for details and ordering.

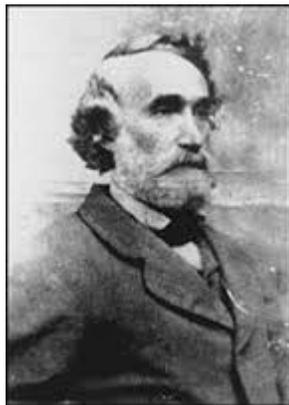
Charles Clark: Lebanon-Born Confederate General

By Mary Klei, Head Curator

Charles Clark was born in 1811 in Lebanon, Ohio, into a family who shared a proud military tradition combined with rare artisanship in the making of long rifles. His forebears were immigrants on the Mayflower. Early in the 18th century a great-grandfather in London served in the king's army. Charles's grandfather Jacob fought in the Revolution, sustaining a head wound at Cowpens, South Carolina in 1781 and witnessing the British surrender at Yorktown. Jacob's son James M. Clark settled in Lebanon to practice his trade as a skilled gunsmith and there married Charlotte Alter, daughter of a founder of Baltimore. The couple lived on East Silver Street. Charles was the third of ten children born to James and Charlotte; official sources cite his birthplace as Lebanon, although "Cincinnati" is carved on his tombstone.

As a young man Charles Clark attended Augusta (Kentucky) College, where he pursued legal studies, graduating in 1831. His mother's brothers operated a shipping line from Cincinnati to New Orleans, and their graduation gift to their nephew was a trip to New Orleans on a family steamboat. During a stopover at Natchez, Mississippi, Charles was charmed by the old city. He and a fellow passenger established a legal firm in a small rented building with financial assistance from his uncle. For a time Charles taught school while furthering his law studies.

The 1830s in Mississippi were favorable for gifted lawyers. Much land was now open to the white man. Legal services involving land purchases and transfers were in demand. Often Charles's fees were paid in land instead of legal tender; thus he was able to amass extensive holdings, including the plantation he named Doro, which he received as a fee in a famous Choctaw lawsuit in the 1840s. An 1832 letter from William McLean of Cincinnati proposes that Charles consider reading the law with his brother Judge John McLean. In a November 1833 letter his father advises Charles to



Charles Clark

enter politics, planting a seed in the young lawyer's thoughts about his future. He relocated to Fayette, some 20 miles from Natchez. During this period, Charles also acted as agent for his gunsmith father, selling fine rifles, as the market in Ohio was in decline and the family was falling upon hard times. In 1836 the Clarks were to move to Mississippi, the oldest son James, a dentist, remaining in Lebanon.

In 1833 Charles had married 16-year-old Eliza Darden, daughter of a prosperous planter. He built an impressive house and enjoyed a solid and respected community standing. Charles was elected to the state legislature in 1838, serving until 1844. He took up arms in the Mexican War, organizing a militia company of constituents from his county who elected him colonel of the Second Regiment, Mississippi Volunteers in 1847. Tuberculosis terminated his command but after war's end Clark continued to serve with Mississippi troops under Major General Jefferson Davis.

After the war, Clark gradually moved away from the Whig politics he had espoused as a former legislator, becoming a Democrat and leaning toward a secessionist perspective, due mainly to his private position as owner of some three thousand acres worked by fifty-three enslaved Africans. Taken in the historical context of the antebellum South, it is clear that Charles Clark, like so many southerners whose business was agriculture, raised tobacco, cotton and rice on a large scale, participating in a system prevalent in the south for generations and which had once been practiced in the north as well.

The Clarks built their new plantation house, "Doro," in 1851 on the Mississippi in Bolivar County. The devastating annual floods necessitated moving and rebuilding the house farther inland three times. The mansion was finally destroyed by the river in 1913. It is said that Mark Twain was a guest at Doro after the Civil War, researching his book *Life on the Mississippi*.

Clark was again elected to the Mississippi legislature for the 1859-1861 term. He helped organize the state convention to consider whether the state should remain part of the Union. During the convention it was voted to commission Charles Clark the senior of four brigadier generals in the Confederate military. Thus he was commander of

Mississippi forces. Now he sought to procure arms for the Army of the Mississippi, but found rifles ordered from Baton Rouge outdated and unfit for army use. Efforts to purchase rifles in Europe failed, due to the state's economic straits, precluding the issuing of credit. So General Clark gave his own cotton to help the state establish a fiscal base for military expenditures. Clark fought in Kentucky and Virginia and commanded a division at Shiloh, taking a ball in the shoulder which he carried to the grave. Once recovered, Clark commanded an understrength division at Baton Rouge. In August 1862 his right thigh was shattered; so severe was his wound that he had to be left on the battlefield. He was captured and, expecting him to succumb, the Union commander had him moved to New Orleans to be treated by his own physician. Eliza Clark was permitted though the lines to nurse her husband. Charles Clark returned to Doro, unfit for further military duty, in October 1863.

Now he again took up politics. He was elected second and last Confederate governor of Mississippi. At his inauguration he "dealt with the political difficulties in a tone of moderation

which bespoke a gentleman...of education and thought," but enjoined against surrender and reunion. Clark's gubernatorial leadership was aimed at getting citizen support by forming a militia; granting amnesty to army deserters who joined the militia; ferreting out corruption among state officials; advocating the enlistment of slaves as soldiers; establishing home industries. He struggled in vain, however. He was prepared for a formal surrender of Mississippi to Union troops on May 22, 1865 knowing that as governor he had met all challenges to the best of his ability. Union forces arrived at the governor's office with bayonets fixed. Clark was arrested and imprisoned at Fort Pulaski near Savannah, Georgia. Upon swearing the oath of allegiance he was sent home to Doro, and there to the end of his days worked as a lawyer and planter. Charles Clark served as chancellor of his judicial district and as a trustee of the University of Mississippi, all the while joining in efforts to rid the state of carpetbag rule. At his death in 1877 the Mississippi governor said, "Eminent as a soldier, statesman and jurist, pure and guileless in private life, he has gone to his grave mourned by the people of the entire state." Charles Clark's grave is at Doro.



Charles Clark's Grave at Doro

WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

105 S. Broadway Lebanon, Ohio 45036 ♦ 513-932-1817 ♦ Fax: 513-932-8560

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FALL ANTIQUE SHOW VOLUNTEERS

We thank you!

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Kroger Community Rewards



Thank you to all of our Kroger Community Reward families! In the last quarter the Warren County Historical Society received \$185. This is a wonderful and easy way to help the Historical Society further its mission—every time you use your Kroger Plus card, Kroger will donate a portion to WCHS. If you are not signed up with Kroger Community Rewards and would like to be, go online to KrogerCommunityRewards.com or call our office.



**YOUR PARTICIPATION
IS TRULY VALUABLE!!**



Holiday Train Exhibit

A collection of Disney-themed trains in action to delight all ages!



At
the Old Post Office
121 S. Broadway
Lebanon

* Free Admission *

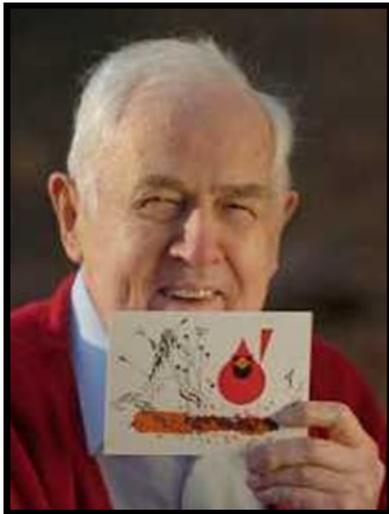
Limited
Engagement!

Nov 29 ★ 10 am—4 pm & 6:30—8 pm ★ Nov 30 ★ 10 am—5 pm

Warren County Provided Final Home for Beloved Artists

By Lynley Dunham , Archivist & Assistant Curator

Charley Harper is one of the most celebrated nature artists and illustrators of the 20th century, and although most locals know of his connection to Cincinnati, few are aware that he and his wife of six decades, Edie McKee Harper spent their final years residing in Warren County. When age and declining health caused Charley, and soon after, Edie to leave their home in Finneytown, the couple settled into Otterbein Senior Lifestyle Community to live out the remainder of their lives.



Charley Harper

This love story began on September 16, 1940. West Virginian Charley Harper and Wyoming High School graduate Edith “Edie” McKee met on their first day at The Cincinnati Art Academy. Sharing similar tastes in art, an immediate friendship emerged which soon blossomed into a romance. Charley

was called into the service during World War II, but the couple reunited and eventually married in 1947. The newlyweds settled in the Cincinnati area, in part to be near Edie’s parents who lived in the suburb of Roselawn, and to help care for her father who suffered from multiple sclerosis. Charlie and Edie eventually built a mid-century modern home and studio in Finneytown among the trees and nature, where they raised their only child, a son named Brett. It is here that the Harpers flourished as artists, and where they intended to live out their lives.

Although many of his contemporaries worked in New York and other larger cities, the Harpers were content to live relatively quiet lives in their suburban Cincinnati “oasis.” If staying in Ohio limited his career, one would never know from reviewing his long list of professional accomplishments. In his six decades as a working artist, Harper illustrated countless magazines and books, posters and paintings for various organizations and corporations, and hundreds of wildlife pieces. He needed to look no further than his own suburban home to find the birds and native critters that he is so well known for depicting. Edie was a

talented artist in her own rite. She enjoyed working with various mediums and was an accomplished weaver, photographer, enamellist, illustrator and painter. Like her husband, much of her work depicted animals, but she was by no means limited to these subjects. The two shared a great admiration, respect and pride in the each other’s work and, in 2007, The Cincinnati Art Museum featured a side-by-side exhibit of their art.



Charley Harper and Edie McKee Harper

Charley Harper, who was said to have had a keen sense of humor, assured his son that the only way he intended to move out of his Finneytown home was “in a body bag.” But when the time came to move into assisted living, he trusted his son Brett to make the right choice for him. Brett, who is also an artist, arranged for his father to move into Otterbein, where he personally decorated a room to ease his father’s transition. Edie soon joined her husband.

Warren County had long held a special place for the Harpers. Over the decades they enjoyed canoeing on the Little Miami and dining at the Golden Lamb, which was one of the family’s favorite restaurants. Their most important connection to the county lies with their son and daughter-in-law, who live just outside of Lebanon.

Although Edie quit painting over a decade prior to their move, Charley continued to create sketches for the remainder of his life. Brett says that his father “was always thinking about the next project.” While residing at Otterbein, Charley allowed the community to use one of his images of a large-mouth bass to sell fundraiser t-shirts for their annual fish fry. He also stayed active by autographing 1,000 book jackets for a limited edition for one of his books. In 2007, Charley contracted pneumonia. He passed away at Miami Valley Hospital on June 10, 2007. Edie remained at Otterbein until her death in January 2010.

The Harper’s legacy can be seen throughout the country in various nature centers, galleries, institutions and homes. Their legacy continues in Warren County with their family who oversee the estate, ensuring that generations to come can delight in the art left behind by Edie and Charley.

Give the Gift of Membership!



WHO WE ARE

- Award-winning history museum and library.
- A private non-profit organization founded in 1940.
- Professional staff and dedicated volunteers.
- 95% self-funded from memberships, admissions and programs.

WHAT WE DO

- Own and operate three historic museum properties in Lebanon.
- Collect, preserve and maintain your local history.
- Produce special exhibits, lectures, and programs about your community.
- Tell the stories that thrill, inspire and educate us all.

WHY GIVE A MEMBERSHIP AS A GIFT?

- Your family and friends will love visiting our museums as often as they like.
- They can amaze their children with our programs and exhibits.
- Every membership helps support your local historical and cultural archive.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS: JANUARY—JUNE 2014

Please check the website or call the office for reservations and information.

Lebanon Conference & Banquet Center
121 South Broadway

Glendower Historic Mansion
105 Cincinnati Avenue

Warren County History Center
105 South Broadway

January 18 & 19

LEBANON ANTIQUE SHOW
Bowman Primary School
825 Hart Road, Lebanon

Fine antique furniture and accessories from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

Admission \$8,

Saturday 10-5, Sunday 11-4

January 24 & 25

WCHS WINTER FLEA MARKET
Lebanon Conference & Banquet Center

Shop or donate goods to help the WCHS!

Friday 10-4, Saturday 10-5

January 22, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: CUT DOWN IN THE BLOOM OF A PROMISING YOUTH

Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch while speaker John Zimkus, WCHS Historian, tells the story of the tragic death of Henry Clay's daughter and other events in the year of 1825.

\$20, paid reservations required

February 15

VALENTINE MURDER MYSTERY DINNER
Lebanon Conference & Banquet Center

Lebanon Theatre Company joins with WCHS to present a night of mystery and fun. Enjoy a served buffet dinner.

Paid reservations required

February 12, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: CINCINNATI AND SOUP-FACTS, FOOD, & FUN
Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch and a talk by speaker Cheri Brinkman, cookbook series author

\$20, reservations required

February 28, March 1 & 2

LEBANON QUILT & FABRIC ARTS SHOW & SALE
Warren County History Center and Lebanon Conference & Banquet Center

Quilts, fabrics, and supplies abound at this annual show & sale.

Friday & Saturday 10-5, Sunday 11-4

March 19, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: A MUSICAL CENTER? OHIO SHAKERS AT THE "HEART OF IT ALL"
Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch and a talk by Carol Medlicott, Associate Professor from NKU and author

\$20, reservations required

April 16, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: DAYTON, OHIO'S FORGOTTEN INDUSTRY—THE STORY OF THE CITY'S ROLE AS THE "TOY CENTER OF THE UNITED STATES"
Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch and a talk by speaker William C. Gallagher, author, toy researcher and collector.

\$20, reservations required

May 3

GRAND VINTAGE SPRING BALL
Lebanon Conference & Banquet Center

Mark your calendar for this not-to-be-missed event. Enjoy an elegant evening with fine hors d'oeuvres, dancing, and refreshments.

Reservations required.

May 21, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: IT CURES LIKE MAGIC—THE FADS AND FRAUDS OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF PATENT MEDICINE QUACKERY
Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch and a talk by speaker Dennis E. Dalton, author, history researcher, lecturer, and storyteller.

\$20, reservations required

June 18, 11:30 am—1 pm

LUNCH & LEARN: EXPLORING HISTORIC WARREN COUNTY
Warren County History Center

Enjoy a catered lunch and a talk by speaker John Zimkus, author and WCHS historian and education director

\$20, reservations required

WCHSMUSEUM.ORG



513-932-1817

Harmon Hall: “The Most Complete Civic Building in the United States to Be Found in a Village of Our Size”

By John J. Zimkus, Historian & Education Director



Harmon Hall circa 1914

One hundred years ago, on November 6, 1913, Harmon Hall was opened to the public for the first time. Today, the building serves as the heart of the Warren County History Center in Lebanon, Ohio.

Approximately

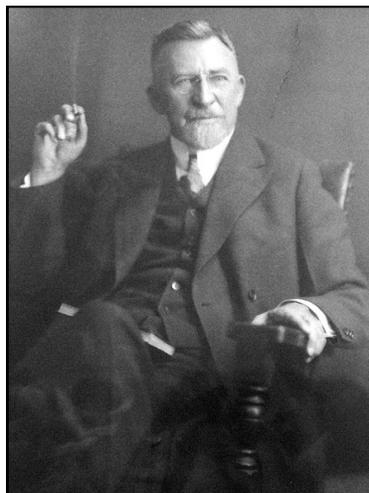
1,500 people, more than half of the village’s population in 1913, attended the opening ceremony.

William Elmer Harmon, a multi-millionaire who was born in Lebanon in 1862, had the structure built. The New York based real estate mogul had told the Men of Lebanon Club back on May 4, 1911, “As long as I live I want to do the best thing in the best way to uplift the town. I am from Lebanon, of Lebanon, and with Lebanon—first, last and always.”

Harmon spent three hours that Thursday in November of 1913 shaking the hands of more than a thousand grateful citizens from his hometown. The November 13, 1913 issue of the *The Western Star*

newspaper called Harmon Hall, “The most complete civic building in the United States to be found in a village of our size.”

The cost of the construction of Harmon Hall was \$35,000. Adjusting that 1913



William Elmer Harmon

price today, solely for inflation, would make that amount over \$825,000.

Harmon had already shown his love for Lebanon by establishing 88 acres in Lebanon as Harmon Park a short time earlier. Prior to that, he purchased the books and furnishing for the Lebanon Public Library, Harmon Hall’s neighbor to the north on Broadway. The library was dedicated in January 1908.

As you entered Harmon Hall back in 1913, immediately to your right was the Harmon Civic Trust committee room. Today it is The Rocking Horse Gift Shop in the Warren County History Center. On your left was the “Harmon Reception Room” followed by “a ladies’ retiring room.” They are now the book shop area of The Rocking Horse and the History Center’s office respectively.



This image, from *The Dayton-Daily News*, shows the two-lane bowling alley once housed in the basement of Harmon Hall

As you walked through the small hallway you approached Harmon Hall’s “spacious gymnasium,” which measured 55 feet by 45 feet. It was “equipped with the finest and most complete [sports] apparatus that money can buy” in 1913. It was planned so that “any of the popular indoor sports may be played and witnessed without either inconvenience to the spectator or hindrance to the contestants.” This now houses the shops of the Warren County History Center’s famous and picturesque Village Green.

Where you find the Victorian Gallery today above the gift shop and office at the Warren County History Center, was a billiard and pool hall that was opened to look down upon the gym. A fee of 20 cents/hour was charged to use of the pool and billiards tables. If people were waiting your time at the tables was limited to 45 minutes. There was also a reading room on the upper floor where one would

find “the latest periodicals of the day and the best books” with more books added from time to time. These rooms could be converted into a gallery which would have “a splendid view of the games below.” It could also be made into a stage for speakers or have a screen stretched across to show movies to “five hundred seated” on the floor of the gym.

In the basement, where the farm tool exhibit is today, was a two lane bowling alley. Bowlers were charged “five cents a string, or per man.” When others were waiting, bowlers were limited to one game. Also in the basement were “shower baths” and lockers, enough to provide for 300 members. In addition there was an empty room, which could possibly “be fitted up with benches and tools, so that boys of a mechanical turn of mind [could] pursue a course of manual training.”

Small boys, under 12 years of age, could only use the gym for an hour on Saturday mornings and have a “shower bath” for \$1.50 a year. Boys over 12, known as “Juniors,” would be allowed to use the building, except for the billiard room, the same time as older members. Classes for them were held on

Wednesdays at 4 p.m. and Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. for \$3 a year. Classes for Lebanon High School boys and National Normal University men would meet Mondays and Fridays at 3:45 p.m. for a fee of \$5 a year. Women and girls over 16 had use of the gym on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons for \$1.50 a year but with no locker privileges. If a basketball or other game took place on Tuesday evenings the women and girls would be allowed to attend with the men and boys.

The steel lockers rented for \$1/year except for sustaining members. These members paid \$10 a year for locker and use of the gym and showers at any time. The fees they paid helped William Harmon and the Harmon Civic Trust with expenses and also kept the costs down for the children of Lebanon. All the money charged at Harmon Hall paid for the heating and lighting of the building as well as for the salary of Assistant Physical Director John Gillespie. The salary of Harmon Hall’s Director S.C. Britton came from an endowment of \$3,000/year funded by the rent William E. Harmon received from an office building he owned in Brooklyn, NY.

Harmon Hall, for much of the early 20th century, was “the” place for



Children in the Harmon Hall Gymnasium, circa 1914

indoor sports and social events in Warren County. In the late 1940s through the early 1950s, it housed Harmon YMCA. For over 50 years, since 1961, it has been the home of the Warren County Historical Society’s museum and research library.

Today, now known as the Warren County History Center, Harmon

Hall continues to fulfill its civic role in the community and

“uplift the town” of Lebanon, and the rest of Warren County, by preserving the area’s rich heritage and telling the stories of its important citizens and institutions. Citizens like its generous native son William Elmer Harmon and institutions like his gift to Lebanon—Harmon Hall that was once, “the most complete civic building in the United States to be found in a village of our size.”

HOLIDAY NOTE



The History Center will close December 22 and reopen January 2, 2014.

Glendower will be open every Fri., Sat. and Sun. in December through December 29.

The Scamp of Union Village

By Jeanne Doan

When I first started volunteering at Warren County Historical Society I was immediately drawn to a project concerning the Shakers of Union Village.

I truly admired their style of honest simplicity and practicality. Learning more about the “United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Coming” has been an amazing education. The group was founded here in America by Ann Lee almost two hundred and fifty years ago. The religion then flowed into the “West” via the Great Kentucky Revival in 1805. The “Shakers,” so called because of their lively dancing, shaking and trembling during their religious services, started Union Village at the site of Turtle Creek Church four miles west of Lebanon, Ohio. Over the years, membership grew to many hundreds of souls at this village and in several offshoot villages throughout Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. The Shakers reputation throughout this time of growth has been recorded as one of creative inventiveness, energetic industry and true Christian charity to any in need. To become an Elder, Eldress or Trustee of the sect you were to be faithfully trusted with this office and hold many important responsibilities. As the years went by, the industrial age, contact with outside influences and the religious conviction of celibacy took its toll on the Shakers. Numbers of members dwindled and those who were distinctive leaders either died or left the village for

“The World.” By the late 1890s, the very large farm at Union Village was in need of new members to help keep the village going.

While working with the extensive collection of materials about the Union Village Shakers, one of the real “perks” of the job is being able to read a great deal of obscure documents that normally would be stored away from the world. I came upon a paper entitled “The Black Sheep Shaker” written by Elaine R. Baxter about her great-granduncle George K. H. Baxter and I became intrigued. Here was



George Kennard Hooper Baxter, circa 1880. Drawing (from a photograph) by Molly Doan

the story of a man who was not your usual Shaker. George Baxter came to Ohio right as this outpost of the religion was coming to an end. He stayed to the very end, writing anecdotes, having fun and generally being a scamp.

George Kennard Hooper Baxter was born on October 30, 1861 in Charlestown Massachusetts. The fifth of eight

children of Augustus and Helen Johnson Baxter, George came from an old propertied Boston family. A photograph taken of him in the 1880's shows a very handsome young man with long sideburns. By 1884, George was reported at Canterbury Village in New Hampshire as “trying out the Shaker Life.” The records from both Canterbury and Enfield Shaker Villages show that he came and went *several* times until he signed, in 1887 at Enfield in New Hampshire, the Articles of Agreement that officially join one to the Shakers. In 1899 at the very young age of 38, George was made an Elder and Business Manager at this large and busy village. There he wrote articles of news and events for “The Manifesto,” a Shaker publication. His writing included quotes of scripture, relayed events and the types of entertainments that were happening at Enfield including a description of an evening listening to a new invention, the Gramophone.

Suddenly in January of 1900, George was reported in the local newspaper to have disappeared from the village along with several hundred dollars of Enfield funds. Just as mysteriously George then reappeared in March at Union Village in Ohio. No mention was ever made of the disappearance or the money that was lost. By June a Federal Census made in Ohio reported his occupation at the village as “painter.”

This episode in George’s life borders on the scandalous, especially in Victorian times; that this was happening in Shaker communities must have put all the leaders in quite a commotion. Reams of correspondence must have flown back and forth from Ohio to New Hampshire. I would love to volunteer for the job of sorting through the letters and then reporting back!

Life on a farm in the early 1900s is reported to consist of plenty of work for everyone. Chores in the garden, fields, household and with the animals must have filled the daily life. However, Ms. Baxter writes about George that he considered himself a recluse, spending his life in quiet contemplation observing his fellow man and writing down his impressions of their behavior. Two small booklets were written and published by George in 1908 and 1914 that give a personal glimpse of George’s life at Union Village. In his “The Philosophy of a Recluse” written in 1914, George explains in his introduction, “The larger part of my life has been a reclusive one. For many years, the larger part of the day, I was, and continue to be, alone. During those hours of solitude I jotted down impressions, wrought of what I read, heard, observed and experienced.” Yet George is recorded in the *Center Family Journal* as being a very social and gregarious person. He is regularly noted as visiting neighbors, especially for dinner and card parties, traveling to Chautauqua meetings for long periods, going to the circus, military and aerial shows in the area. He was even sent to represent the Shaker Village at functions and public events. When in 1910, the Shakers bought an automobile, George was a part of most of the outings. I’m not exactly sure when he had time to be a recluse.

These are some of his pithy sayings and anecdotes

from "A Cluster of Thought Flashes" written in 1908 and "The Philosophy of a Recluse" written several years later.

On Religion: "There is no such thing as being excommunicated from God's love and mercy; they are everlasting gifts to mankind."

"To those who question, what must they do to be saved, The answer is, in all things decently behave."

On Society: "The mirror of 'know thyself' is rarely used by Lord and Lady self-righteous."

"A person may be as honest as the day is long and still do a lot of cussed meanness."

On Women: "Women like in men what they themselves lack: complacency."

"A woman has charms none will deny; But a woman's tongue, Oh My! Oh My!"

During the time between his arrival in 1900 till 1920, George made a good friend in Homer Holcroft, a hired hand at Union Village. At the end of his stay with the Shakers, George used a "Golden Floral Album" he had gotten forty years earlier and filled it with memories in verse, personal couplets and adages as well as decorating the book with stickers of Santa, holly and wreaths and gave it to his dear friend Homer for Christmas.

Here are just a few examples from his 1919 tribute to his old friend:

*Today I would be with you
But Christmas keeps us apart
So I sit in my den and dream
Of our acrobatic larks*

*The time in the O.F.-Home
Where we wash'd and rung our
clothes;
You soaked me from head to feet
With that dum old rubber hose*

*And the many games of euchre
Play'd in your sitting-room
Which you won, easy as Harry
Who hunted for and found mushroom.*

*The times we've lay'd in the woods,
And felt the spirit of Bill Nye:
Trying to out-do the other
In compounding OK lies.*

*As you were "Jonnie-on-the-spot"
When you ran over the water tank,
Making those old Saints skip,
All innocent of your prank.*

*Yes, old top, we have had them,
Pleasures some of which I have pen'd;*

*And I would not exchange them
For the gospel of pulpit men.*

*So I'll not think of what might be
In the years that are to come
For I believe that each day we
Should reap wisdom, profit and fun.*

*Of such no one can have too much
In this world of pain and struggle.
And for one I intend to get
All the fun that I can snuggle.*

*As this may be my last Christmas
In Ohio, sing cherubs near,
I wish you A Merry Christmas
And an extra good New Year.*



George Baxter, later in life. Drawing (from a photograph) by Molly Doan

George Baxter left Union Village in 1920 with a monetary settlement of \$50.00 a month. He was recorded as being in the vicinity of Wakefield, Massachusetts around where his family was living when he died on December 11, 1924. He is buried in the Lakeside Cemetery in Wakefield. Like the Shakers, he is in an unmarked grave. As I reflect on the writings of George and his great-grand-niece Elaine, I am struck by the difference in my idea of a Shaker and the reality of who George paints himself to be. Dutiful, diligent, trustworthy and industrious are words that usually describe the Shaker sect. Yet George had a high-spirited and playful outlook towards life. In his photographs, he is the one with the huge smile and a gleam in his eye. The folks at Union Village might have had a different point of view of the shenanigans of this scam. All the materials and correspondence were sent back east to be stored. Wouldn't you just love to take a look and see? I would. I volunteer!

*Though sickness assail and make you sigh,
Don't complain.
In this world of toil, trials surround,
Disappointment will confound.
Have thy heart with cheerfulness abound.
Play the game.*

George K. H. Baxter, 1919



Warren County History Center
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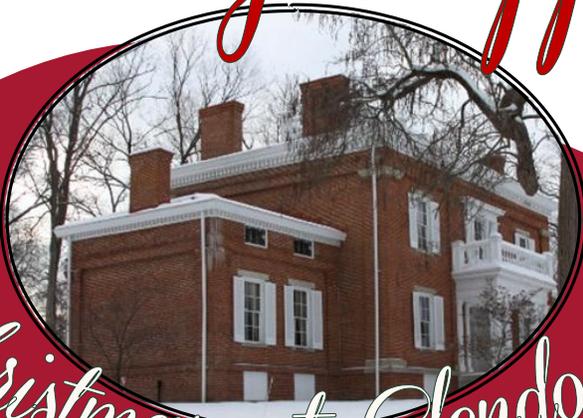
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