1820 2020

WOOD COUNTY

O·H·I·O

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

July 2020

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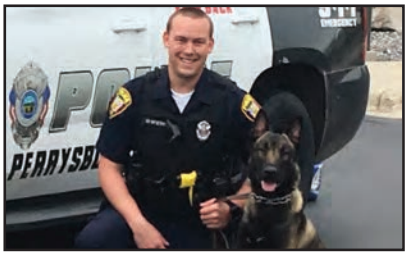
PERRYSBURG MESSENGER & ROSSFORD RECORD JOURNALS

PERRYSBURG TOWNSHIP

Established 1823



Following on the heels of Wood County's 200th birthday, Perrysburg Township soon will have a celebration of its own.

Established in 1823, the township has a long history in agriculture, beginning with settlements along the banks of the Maumee River. After the War of 1812, pioneers began expanding east of the river, clearing the land. As the Great Black Swamp was drained, farming became a way of life. The fertile agricultural fields continue to produce a bounty of crops and remain a vital part of the community. Farming traditions such as threshing remain robust today with the Five Point Steam Threshers celebrating their 60th reunion in 2020.

Industry took hold during the short-lived gas and oil boom of the late 1800s and continues today with diverse companies including FedEx, Daimler Chrysler, First Solar and Walgreens.

Education has always been important to residents, and the township is proud to count Owens Community College, Penta Career Center and several school districts within its borders.

For the enjoyment of residents, there are several township parks as well as county parks, most notably: Buttonwood, a popular walleye fishing spot; W.W. Knight Preserve and Sawyer Quarry Preserve.

The township's blend of business, education and parks make it an attractive area in which to live as evidenced by the growing population, which now sits at more than 12,500 residents. The largest populated township in Wood County, it also is the 86th largest in Ohio.

Trustees Gary Britten, Bob Mack and Joe Schaller invite area residents to visit Perrysburg Township and see all it has to offer!

The township police and fire building.

An early Lime City School in the township.

Officials:
Gary Britten, Vice Chair, gbritten@perrysburgtownship.us
Robert Mack, Trustee, rmack@perrysburgtownship.us
Joe Schaller, Chairman, jschaller@perrysburgtownship.us
Shirley Haar, Fiscal Officer, shaar@perrysburgtownship.us

Visit **www.perrysburgtownship.us**, or
stop in the office M-F 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.,
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The Great City of Rossford wishes a Happy 200th Birthday to Wood County!

The Formation of Wood County

Wood County was organized February 12, 1820, when the legislature carved 14 counties from the lands purchased from the Wyandot, Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee, Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa tribes as a result of the Lower Maumee Treaty of September 28, 1817.

In May 1822, the commissioners designated Perrysburg as the first county seat, and it remained so until 1868 when the seat of justice moved to Bowling Green.

Lucas County was then part of Wood County, and Maumee was named by law as the temporary seat of justice. The act further provided that the unorganized counties of Hancock, Henry, Putnam, Paulding and Williams should be attached to Wood County for civil purposes until further provisions were made by law.

County lines were the same as now, except that the northern boundary extended to Michigan. In 1835, Wood County was dismembered when Lucas County was formed and the Maumee River became its northern boundary.

Wood County was named for Colonel Eleazer D. Wood, a graduate of West Point, a gallant soldier and the engineer who planned Fort Meigs.

Today, Wood County has 19 townships, 21 villages and five cities.

1820 2020
WOOD COUNTY
O·H·I·O
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

Congratulations
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Sheriffs have been preserving the peace in Ohio since 1788, and we look forward to another 200 years and beyond.
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Mark Wasylyshyn, Sheriff

MARK WASYLYSHYN
SHERIFF
WOOD COUNTY

Early Settlers in the Black Swamp

The close of the War of 1812 found this locality a scene of desolation. Ashes and charred cinders marked the places where cabins once stood. Fresh mounds of earth showed where the dead, who strove and bled there, now slept. It was not until the spring of 1815 that the scattered fragments of the Maumee settlements began to return.

John Carter and John Race led the influx and built a cabin near Turkey Foot Rock. Amos Spafford came and constructed a rude cabin out of old abandoned barges.

In 1815, the fort was formally abandoned. Lieutenant Almon Gibbs, who had been in charge, resigned from the Army and crossed to the other side of the river, where he opened up a store, taking the post office with him.

Seneca Allen, who became the first resident justice of the peace, arrived in 1816. On the same vessel, came Jacob Wilkinson and Elijah, Charles and Christopher Green, each with their families.

The first marriage celebrated in Wood County was that of Aurora Spafford and Mary Jones.

Benjamin Cox was the first settler in Center Township. He built a cabin near the Portage River in 1827. His son, Joseph, made the first land entry in that township, which documented the transfer of public lands from the U.S. government to private ownership.

Henry Shaw was probably the earliest settler in the North Baltimore area, although he later moved to Indiana where he was elected to the legislature.

In 1822, Thomas Howard and sons Edward and Robert, together with their wives and children, settled at Grand Rapids where they built three cabins on the north bank of the Maumee River. They were the only neighbors until William Pratt and Joseph Keith appeared upon the scene.

Elisha Martindels, who entered 40 acres of land in 1832, was the first person to pre-empt land within the present limits of Bowling Green. In the following spring, he brought his family to their new home–an 18- by 24-foot cabin. His eldest daughter was married to William Hecox in April 1833–the first marriage solemnized in Bowling Green.

Henry Dubbs was the first settler in the west part of Liberty Township. He and his son, Lewis, were tanners by trade and built a tannery on their land, doing "a large and successful business."

Lewis served as justice of the peace for 27 years and was "a leader in all public improvements."

–A History of Northwest Ohio, by Nevin O. Winter, Volume 1, 1917.

The Messenger Remembers

In February 1953:

Second and third graders took a field trip to the union depot where they purchased a ticket to Perrysburg for 18 cents.

The Perrysburg police reported that they received 29 complaints, made 31 arrests and collected $235 in fines and costs in January. The department also issued 267 parking tickets.

Herb Bennett was named head football coach at Perrysburg High school for the 1953-54 season. Mr. Bennett taught math, science and physical education.

Perrysburg seniors walked off with the major portion of honors in the General Scholarship Test for high school seniors.

Wood County Finds its Feet

Ohio, about 1805. Wood County would be carved out of Greene and Franklin Counties.

When Ohio became a state in 1803, it had only nine counties that took up vast space on a map in those days. As time passed and population ticked in, county districts divided into new ones, merged or otherwise adjusted. Wood County was the result of these rearrangements.

Before Wood County, there was Wayne County, created by proclamation

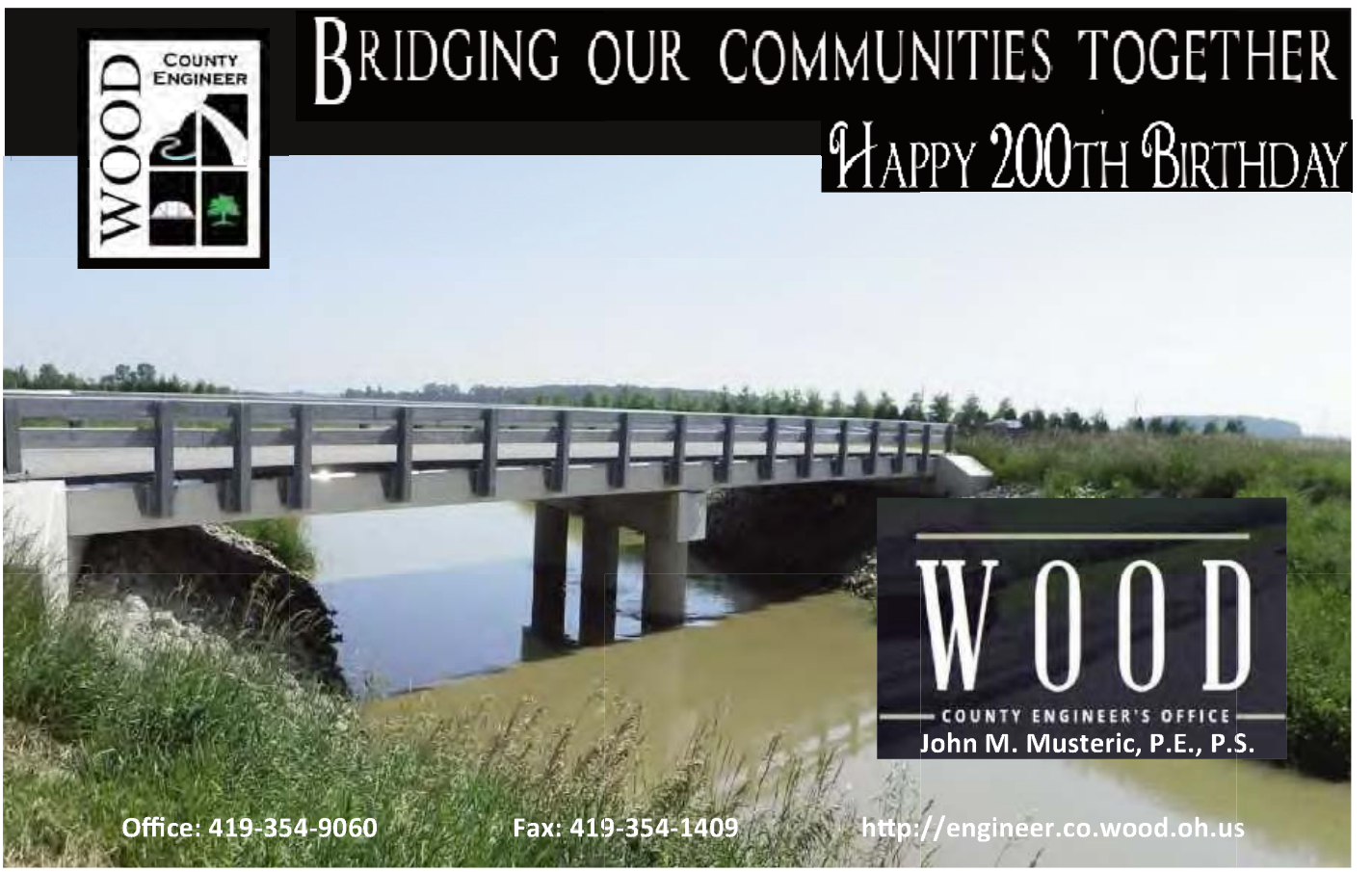
General Anthony Wayne founded Wayne County in 1796 and parts later became Wood County.

of General Anthony Wayne on August 15, 1796. It was an extensive stretch, taking in the Maumee Valley and other parts of Ohio as well as regions northwest–area that later would become future states. Detroit was the county seat.

This territory was divided by an act of

Horatio Conant, from Maumee, was one of Wood County's original judges.

Congress in 1800, the borders of Ohio and Indiana physically formed. Ohio was first to have enough population for a state–60,000–and became one in 1803. At the first state convention, the portion of Wayne County known as the Maumee



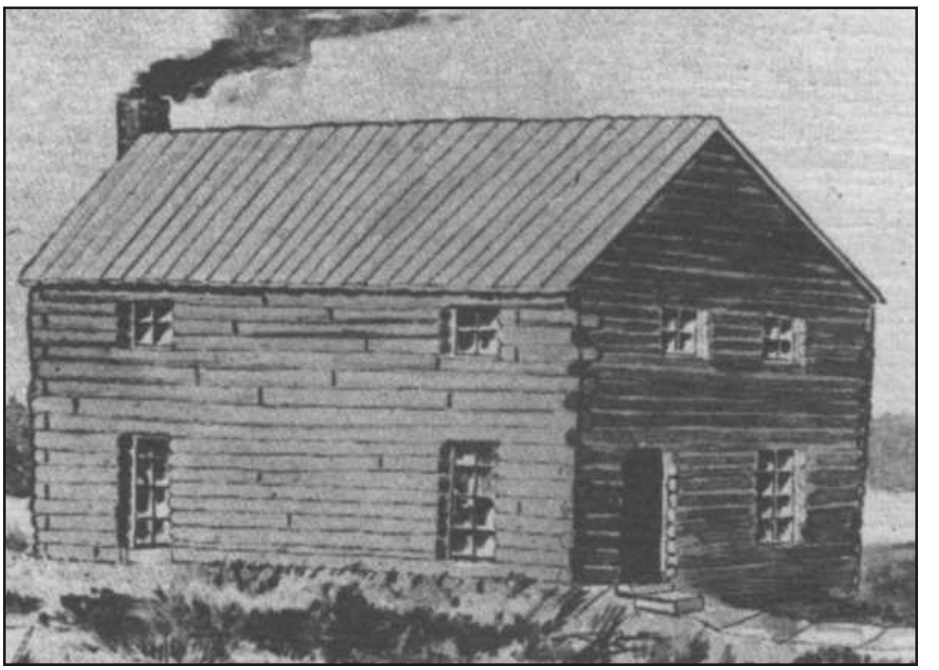
Valley was organized into eight counties.

The portion of eventual Wood County was originally split between Franklin and Greene Counties. In 1805, parts of these two counties were realigned to form Champaign County. Perrysburg was founded in 1816, and, in 1817, the new village was readjusted to another new county, Logan County, with one last division in the works.

The Indian title to this territory was not wholly extinguished until April 1, 1820, when 14 new counties, including Wood County, were organized by the Ohio Legislature. Other new counties established in 1820 were mostly to the west and south of Wood County. And some of these were later divided further into new counties. It might be mentioned that Lucas County did not yet exist and would be the result of a later division.

The larger portion of the Maumee Valley was named Wood County after Captain Eleazer D. Wood, an 1806 graduate of West Point and General William Henry Harrison's chief engineer at Fort Meigs.

This is brand new country. Who will hold the county seat? North is Michigan territory, Lake Erie east, nothing yet south or west of Perrysburg. It was still the grim Black Swamp. Perrysburg itself barely existed. There were three choices: Orleans, a pre-existing tiny settlement on the flats below Fort Meigs; Maumee, which was founded in 1817; or Perrysburg. It turned into a bitter, triangular fight.



Perrysburg Courthouse built in 1823, near the corner of Louisiana Avenue and West Front Street. Court was held on the second floor.

In 1820, both Orleans and Maumee were more established than Perrysburg, which probably had less than 25 inhabitants and not a single business. Orleans and Maumee had more population and

Continued on page 7

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Wood County Finds its Feet

Continued from page 5

several businesses, but Orleans was withering due to its floodplain location. Consequently, Maumee was named the county seat. The first Wood County commissioners were Samuel Ewing, Daniel Hubbell and John Pray. William Pratt was the first treasurer and Francis Charter the first coroner. Seneca Allen was first auditor, Thomas McKnight first clerk.

Maumee built a courthouse and jail. The first judges were George Tod, Horatio Conant and Peter Oliver, with Thomas Powell prosecuting attorney. David Hull, a tavern-keeper, was the first Wood County sheriff. But politics intervened and took away the county seat from Maumee.

The federal government was instrumental in creating Perrysburg and invested heavily in it, owning the land. On May 7, 1822, the U.S. Congress vested the rights to all unsold lots and outlots of the town plat of Perrysburg to the county commissioners–provided Perrysburg be designated county seat.

This was a great gift, as money would be available to build public buildings without much expense to the county taxpayers, which numbered about 600 people. This action probably influenced the state commission authority to choose Perrysburg. And that's what happened. Money from lots, $12 each, set things in motion.

The first courthouse was built of logs in 1823, located on West Front Street, roughly across from today's Hood Park. The jail, which was probably the size of a large shed was dragged/floated over from Maumee and placed in the rear of the lot.

Once the county seat was established in Perrysburg, its basic functions came into play. The officers of a county consisted of two sets, administrative and judicial. At the head of the administrative camp were the commissioners, treasurer, auditor, a county surveyor and a department to oversee the poor. The judicial arm were judges, sheriff, clerk, prosecutor and coroner. The system would take time getting to speed.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian
Way Library

And in the beginning...
First Commissioners' Meeting in 1823

The first meeting of Wood County commissioners Hiram P. Barlow, Samuel Spafford and John Pray, as recorded in their journal, took place March 3, 1823, in Perrysburg.

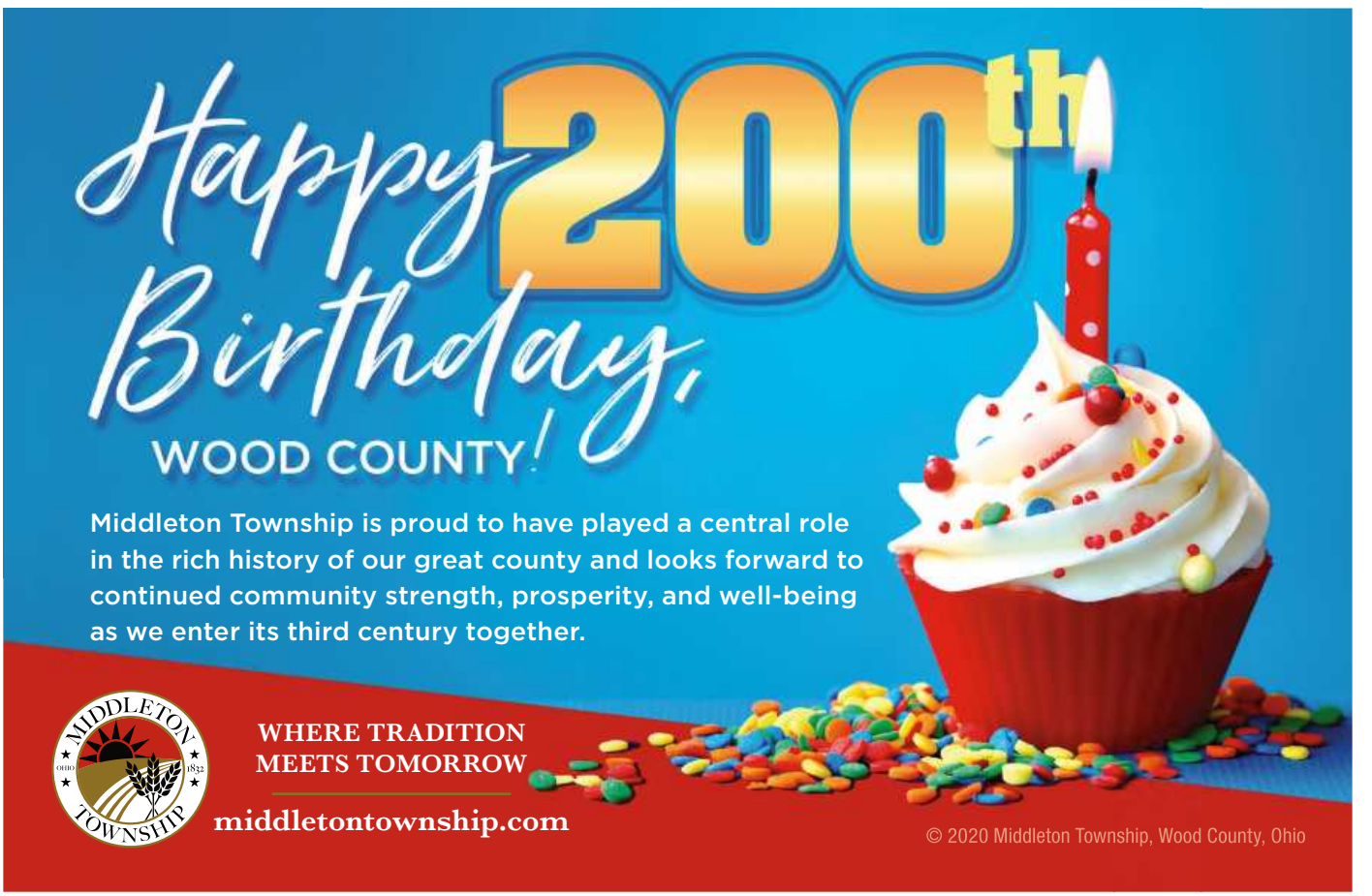
The minutes from preceding meetings, which had taken place in Maumee for three years, revealed routine work–construction of a log jail and establishing some roads.

The auditor, Ambrose Rice, received $29.75 for his services for the year ending March 4, 1822. Thomas W. Powell, then prosecuting attorney, was appointed auditor for 1823 and paid $30.

The first official act of the commissioners was to appoint William Pratt as county treasurer. They next purchased "on credit" a record keeping book, at a cost of $4.50 as "evidence of the poverty of the county. There was not so much as a nickel in the treasury."

The entire population of the county did not exceed 700 people at that time.

–A History of Northwest Ohio, by Nevin O. Winter, Volume 1, 1917.



President Andrew Jackson Shrinks Wood County

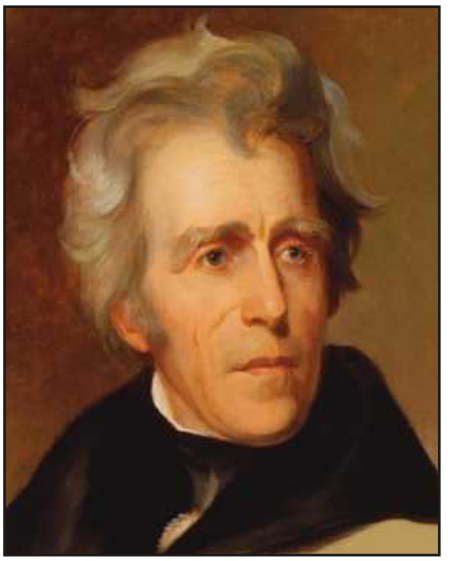
Northwest Ordinance created five states in 1787.

Wood County is 620 square miles today. In 1820, it was roughly 900 square miles. What happened? Politics reared its ugly head, and it took only 13 years for Wood County to face its first major crisis –besides the miseries of the Black Swamp.

In spring 1835, the border of Ohio and Michigan was in dispute with Wood County on the crunch-line. Ohio's original boundary line had its roots in the 1787

The south point of Lake Michigan was north/south line of Ohio/Michigan, but the line was erroneously calculated, causing the border spat.

Northwest Ordinance, a document which outlined how the territory would be divided. In 1787, the Northwest Territory consisted of what would become Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin. From this group, the territory of Ohio



Wood County was a poker chip to Old Hickory.

advanced to statehood first, in 1803.

But Ohio's northern boundary was fuzzy. The border ran from the most southern point of Lake Michigan and proceeded east, terminating in Lake Erie at the Pennsylvania line. Back in 1787, the surveyors didn't quite nail the southern

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- Telephones to conduct your job search or apply for unemployment benefits.
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edge of Lake Michigan and drew the line farther north than it should have been. This defect was the cause of the dispute, but it gave Ohio valuable Lake Erie frontage, and Ohio did not want this line corrected.

To assure itself Lake Erie access, the state constitution written in 1802 maintained that "the east line from the south bend of Lake Michigan would pass south of Lake Erie (and it did) then the boundary should angle north to the extremity of the Maumee Bay." These writers of the constitution were smart fellows.

Congress received Ohio into the Union without objecting to this proviso. William Harris' later 1817 survey agreed with this boundary. Michigan's territorial governor disagreed and in 1818 had John Fulton resurvey the line. It conformed to the flawed Northwest Ordinance line which favored Michigan. Consequently, an 8-mile wedge in soon-to-be-called Toledo was in flux.

By 1835, Michigan wanted to become a state. They demanded this strip of land along with its all-important harbor. The Toledo strip was part of Monroe County and governed by them, although the people living there considered themselves Buckeyes and wanted to stay that way. In the meantime, Ohio was building a series of canals–one was the Miami-Erie to terminate in Toledo-Michigan Territory.

Ohio wasn't going to build a canal terminal for Michigan. It had had no intention of giving up this future epicenter of transportation and commerce. Each state sent out its militia to protect its interest. Michigan in Toledo and Ohio in Perrysburg. This was April 1835. Then politics again showed its teeth.

By 1835, Ohio as a state was a political power. It had 21 electoral votes, while Michigan, still a territory, had none. President Andrew Jackson wanted those votes in 1836 for his anointed successor, Martin Van Buren. If he didn't give Ohio the strip, he might not get their votes. To complicate matters, Michigan's territorial governor was 24-year old Stevens Mason, an appointee, pet and protégé of Jackson. How to placate the two governors, both Democrats? Old Hickory had to kill time until the election.

Jackson ordered Captain Andrew Talcott of the U. S. Army Engineers to re-survey the line. He had done the same in 1833, and the Fulton line prevailed. But let's do it again for politics sake. So Talcott came out here with a survey crew that included an unknown, lowly Second Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, who camped in northeastern Wood County for several days.

Wood County actually bordered Michigan. The line ran west from Lake Erie through Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and then advanced roughly parallel and slightly north of Curtice Road. Cutting across Route 280, just north of Great Eastern shopping center, it continued along East Broadway to Miami Street and

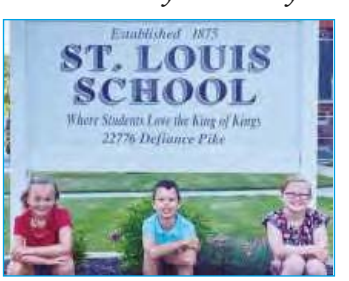
Continued on page 10

Robert E. Lee was one of the survey crew who made Wood County smaller.

St. Louis Parish & School

St. Louis Parish, in Custar, was established in 1864 and the school followed in 1875.

Proud to serve the Wood County community!



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President Andrew Jackson Shrinks Wood County

This disputed strip became Lucas County. Wood County once adjoined Monroe County, Michigan.

Continued from page 9

crossed the Maumee River near the Rossford Marina.

On the opposite side of the river, the line bisected UTMC, then Swan Creek Metro Park and on a bead slightly north of Airport Highway. The line split the future village of Holland and passed about a mile north of the airport and on west to Indiana. Maumee, still part of Wood County, adjoined the Michigan line on the north.

The result of the survey was that the Fulton line was correct and Michigan retained the disputed land. It didn't matter. The crafty Mr. Jackson conjured a Wizard of Oz solution. He awarded the strip to Ohio and as a consolation prize accorded Michigan the Upper Peninsula, which was actually planned to be part of Wisconsin. But Wisconsin held no voice, still a territory with more wildlife than people and no lost skin to the politicos in Washington. As always, politics dictated the outcome. But it was the beginning of the end of Perrysburg as the seat of Wood County.

Lucas County was drawn, Maumee was detached from Wood County and put with Lucas. The middle of the Maumee River became the dividing line between Lucas and Wood counties. Perrysburg lost ground and now was stuffed into the far northwestern corner of Wood County.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian
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Early Days in Perrysburg

Perrysburg was the last of navigable water going south or west–a logical jumping off point for people or goods traveling in those directions on the Maumee River. (Although, one could resume water travel beyond Grand Rapids in smaller craft if the water was high.)

After 1825 when the Erie Canal opened, you could travel every inch from New York City to Perrysburg by water. Water was the easiest and cheapest mode of travel, with people and goods often taking circuitous routes to their destinations by following the waterways.

The settlement of Orleans, located below Fort Meigs, was shrinking. The big ice flood of 1818 chased a lot of people out.

Leading merchant John Hollister saw the future, pulling up stakes, moving up to the high ground of Perrysburg. He soon gained traction with his steamboat company and trading enterprises, later becoming a Wood County judge. Others would move uphill to Perrysburg after it became the seat, and Orleans would be abandoned by 1831.

Mr. Hollister prospered and, in 1823, built a fancy home for himself and a steamboat hotel, called the Exchange, on Front Street, a couple of doors down from the courthouse.

Also in 1823, Perrysburg Township was created. The township of Waynesville–which had been Maumee's original name–straddled both sides of the Maumee River. The Perrysburg side was reconfigured into Perrysburg Township. The region was finding its feet.

Soon the whole area around these two river towns would ignite into an important commercial port on the lake and a shipbuilding center, putting the area's abundant timberland to good use. In 1830 though, Perrysburg was still the Wild West, quite primitive, the population about 175.

Between 1828 and 1840, Perrysburg grew and prospered, doing as much shipping business as any port on Lake Erie except Cleveland and Buffalo. Most of the business was forwarded and commissioned through Mr. Hollister. He owned the steamer lines and the warehouses. He also operated the horse teams that carried goods overland from Perrysburg to the head of the rapids to be put on smaller boats to Fort Wayne, Indiana and elsewhere.

Rich country indeed, as the flatboats on their return were laden with furs, skins–40,000 muskrat on one trip–dried meat and maple sugar. All were destined for Perrysburg and points east. Big business, 1830s style, was putting Wood County on the map.

People were moving in, and by 1833 the Ohio General Assembly chartered Perrysburg, and the village elected its first mayor, lawyer John Spink. Perrysburg's population was nearing 200 people, comprising perhaps 25 or 30 houses or cabins.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian
Way Library

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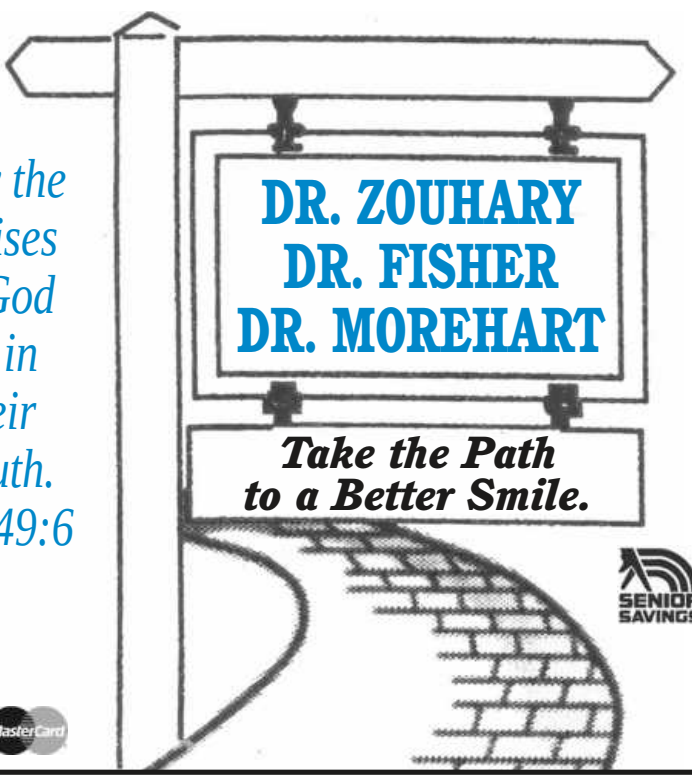

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The Messenger Remembers

In June 1935:

All of the 640 telephones in the exchange were converted to dial operation simultaneously.

Ralph Quay suffered a broken arm when he fell from a cherry tree.

E.D. Jarvis, recently elected superintendent of schools for Perrysburg, visited Perrysburg.

The tennis courts at Way Park were opened to the public. Reservations were made by dialing 741.

This children's birthday party in 1998 was among the last events at the park, which closed permanently in 2001.

Vollmar's Park Once a Popular Amusement Park

A long-time park in Wood County brings back fond memories to several generations of amusement parkgoers who enjoyed visiting Vollmar's Park along the banks of the Maumee River near Grand Rapids.

Closed for good in 2001, the park used to be a popular place to visit in the 1900s. People came to ride the roller coaster, train and other amusement rides.

Originally purchased by Charles Vollmar at the turn of the last century, it was later acquired by Mike Hofner and his family in the 1960s.

The Hofners turned it into a park that was in its prime, adding a small coaster and several rides, as well as offering roller skating, food and more.

There also was a main dance hall that catered weddings and featured a hotel.

But alas, all things must come to an end and as costs exceeded income, it became necessary to auction off the rides in the 1980s.

The park remained open with only a few kiddy rides until its closure in 2001.

The Messenger Remembers

In September 1935:

The home of Mr. and Mrs. William Hay on Kurfis Road was destroyed by fire Friday. Loss was estimated at $13,000.

Two cases of typhoid fever were reported in Wood County.

The Perrysburg Yellow Jackets football team lost its first game to the Whitehouse team.

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Custar, Formerly Known as Lewisburg

Custar was originally called Lewisburg after its proprietor, Fredrick Lewis. The village was platted in 1865 and incorporated as Custar in 1881, after the name of its post office. Custar measures 0.25 square miles and is home to 179 residents. Above is the town in the early part of the 20th century.

The Case of the Missing Cows

Shibnah Spink, who came to Perrysburg in 1832, was one of the prominent pioneers and operated a general store. He would go on to be elected sheriff of Wood County and also served as county treasurer.

This incident, illustrative of pioneer life in Wood County, occurred in spring 1833:

"Mr. Spink started out in search of his cows, milk being in great demand at Perrysburg. He was absent for three days while wandering through the country, overcoming many obstacles, and making a circuit that now could be accomplished in a few hours."

–A History of Northwest Ohio, by Nevin O. Winter, Volume 1, 1917.

The Messenger Remembers

In September 1926:

School opened with a record enrollment. Citizens were advised to begin thinking about a new school.

Gale Bolton, former Perrysburg deputy marshal, was indicted on three counts of larceny.

Community means everything.

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Historic L-O-F Whistle Finds New Home in Old Ford Club

A unique piece of L-O-F history has a permanent home in a historical building with some of the deepest roots in Rossford.

The steam whistle that blew above the Libbey-Owens-Ford plant for decades is displayed in the lobby of the old Ford Club, which has become the headquarters of Industrial Power Systems (IPS).

"Many of us grew up to the sound of this whistle," Rossford historian Judy Sikorski explained. "You could hear it all the way to Maumee."

For at least 20 years, the Fifth Third Bank on Dixie Highway had been custodian of the whistle until 2018 when it was moved to IPS headquarters.

"We were honored to have had it here for that long," said Sheila Evans, Fifth Third manager. "Edward Ford's granddaughter bought it, and it was here ever since. She was a great lady."

Mrs. Sikorski described how Felia LeBoutillier, granddaughter of Rossford's founder Mr. Ford, helped the city reclaim the steam whistle that sat atop the factory 120 years ago.

"The whistle was used to sound for shift change, indicate an accident or an alarm for a fire," she noted.

No longer used through the years, it was discovered under the steps in the old plant "covered with many coats of grey paint, every time the steps were repainted," Mrs. Sikorski said.

In a clean-up operation, the whistle was sold off as scrap metal and purchased by a local man who stored it for 10 years in his garage.

When he decided to clean the paint off, he discovered the name plate identifying it as the Edward Ford Plate Glass Co. steam whistle and decided to sell it.

Mrs. Sikorski learned of the pending sale and that Sauder museum in Archbold was interested. She and other members of the Rossford centennial committee feared it would be lost from the community.

"I thought, 'we can't let this happen,' but we didn't have the money to buy it. 'Fe' stepped in and came to the rescue. I called her and she said, 'This is where it belongs. Give me 20 minutes, and I'll give you a check.'"

The change of location for the whistle began with a chance meeting at a yard sale of Mrs. Sikorski and Mary Gray, receptionist and sister of Kevin Gray, the CEO/owner of IPS.

The stamped nameplate on the whistle states: "The Edward Ford Plate Glass Company, Rossford, Ohio, November 1899."

Their conversation focused on the old Ford Club building at 146 Dixie Highway, and they discussed how the structure was used for five

years of programs around the city's centennial celebration in 1998.

IPS purchased the long vacant Ford Club building in 2016 to move their headquarters across the street from 129 Dixie Highway.

It had been constructed by Mr. Ford as a place for employees to socialize and includes a ballroom and gymnasium on the upper floors.

The steam whistle's location is in the IPS lobby, next to a display case of historic Rossford photos and memorabilia.

Roots of Rossford

In 1898, Edward Ford (1843-1920) purchased 173 acres of farmland on the Maumee River to build a plate glass factory, thereby establishing the roots of Rossford.

Construction began on the factory, as well as the many needed homes for the workers who would follow him from Ford City, Pennsylvania.

Known as a kind and generous man, he personally paid for or donated toward many projects in the community, including schools and the public library.

He also built the Ford Club near the plant as a place for employees to gather with fellow workers and their families.

The name "Rossford" is a combination of his last name and that of his second wife, Carrie Ross.

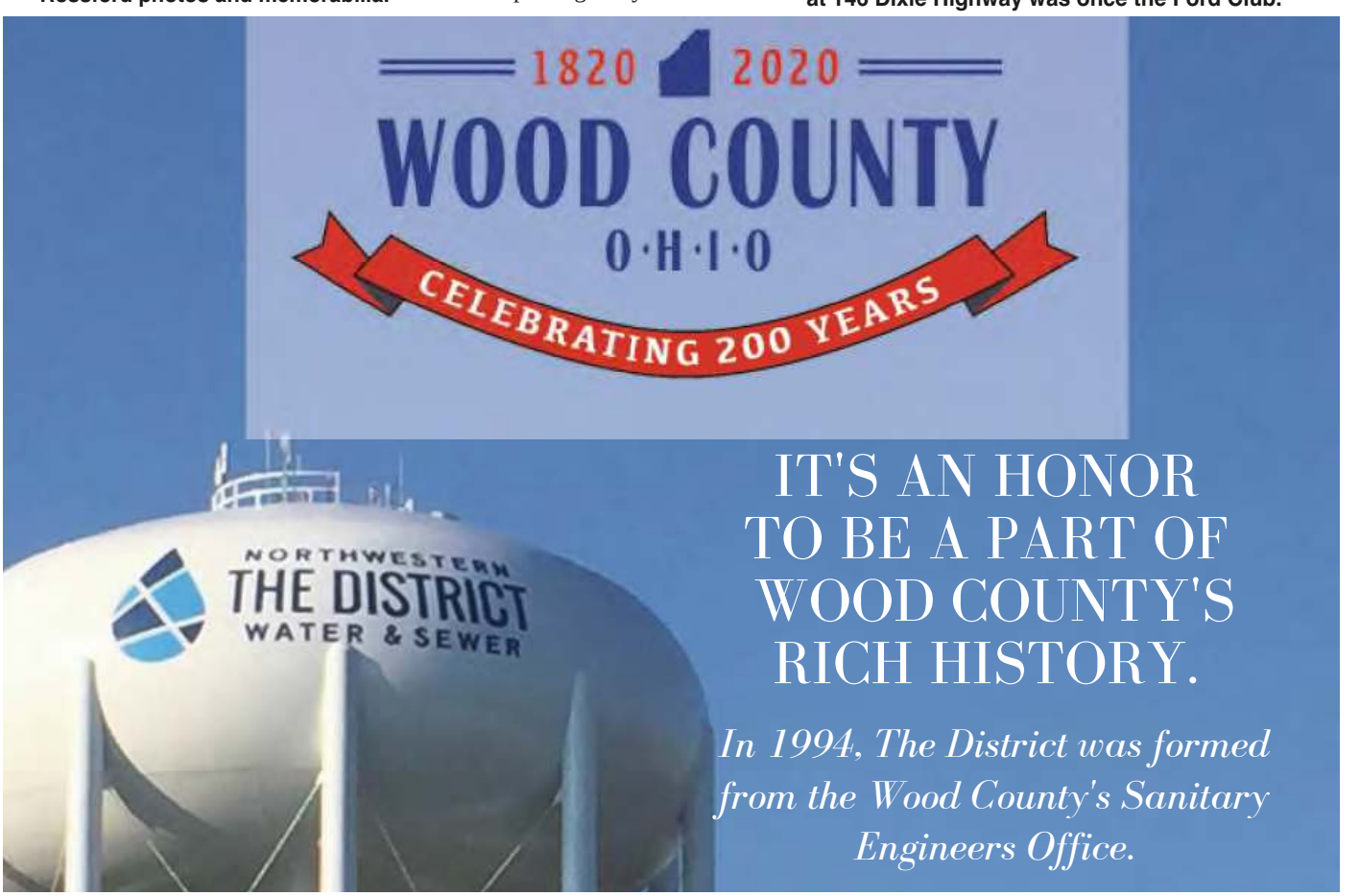
Active in the community, Mr. Ford served as a director of Second National Bank of Toledo, Dime Savings Bank of Detroit and the Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad, as well as a trustee of the Toledo Chamber of Commerce.

In 1916, the Libbey-Owens Sheet Glass Co. was formed and, in 1930, merged with the Edward Ford Plate Glass Co. to form the Libbey-Owens-Ford Co. (L-O-F).

This merger helped to create Toledo's reputation as "the Glass Capital of the World."

The company was producing roughly one fifth of all the plate glass in the U.S. by the time of Edward's death in 1920. He operated the factory until passing away.

The Industrial Power Systems (IPS) headquarters at 146 Dixie Highway was once the Ford Club.



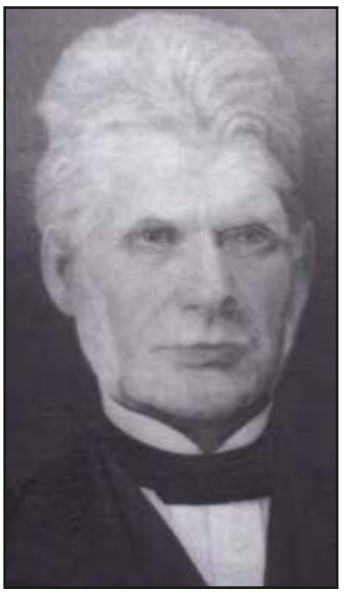
A Day in the Life of the County Seat

What does a county seat do? Counties are the legal center of an entire area and transact a myriad of business. There are nearly 25 departments in Wood County today, including courts, coroner, sheriff and jail. Counties are tax collectors, provide titles for different types of property, and issue licenses and permits of all types. They manage highways and elections, perform building inspections and provide services for the poor.

When Perrysburg held the county seat during the 1800s, there weren't as many departments–who needed a building inspector in 1850? Court sessions were held in the spring and the fall. There was a common pleas judge and probate judge. Court sessions were the big event of the year for participants and spectators, not to mention business owners, hoping to snag some of the money floating around.

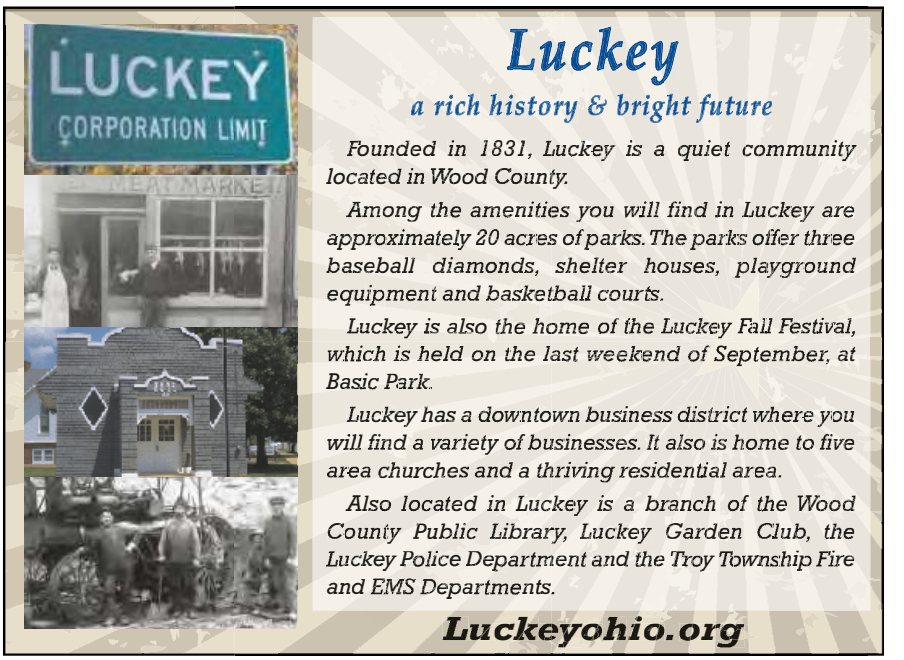
Having the county seat was a plum for business. People had to come to pay their taxes, for one thing. Many traveling here on county purposes had to stay over. They also needed a livery to feed and bed their horse as well as food and drink for themselves. And when court was in session, Perrysburg jammed up with visiting judges and attorneys, as well as people involved in court business needing these services, too. Though a small town, there was an abundance of hotels. The Exchange Hotel was the center of comfort and civility, with a reputation of providing the finest liquors. The thriving first-floor bar was the nerve center as all visiting judges and lawyers stayed there.

The county seat created much business for local attorneys with the role of county prosecutor a game of musical chairs among them. In 1860, there was an attorney for every 100 people in the



Willard Way, county prosecuting attorney, 1834 and 1842-46.

Asher Cook, Wood County's first probate judge, 1852.



Luckey

a rich history & bright future

Founded in 1831, Luckey is a quiet community located in Wood County.

Among the amenities you will find in Luckey are approximately 20 acres of parks. The parks offer three baseball diamonds, shelter houses, playground equipment and basketball courts.

Luckey is also the home of the Luckey Fall Festival, which is held on the last weekend of September, at Basic Park.

Luckey has a downtown business district where you will find a variety of businesses. It also is home to five area churches and a thriving residential area.

Also located in Luckey is a branch of the Wood County Public Library, Luckey Garden Club, the Luckey Police Department and the Troy Township Fire and EMS Departments.

Luckeyohio.org

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Wood County Courthouse, built 1843.

A block west of the courthouse was the Wood County Jail, 1847.

village of 1,500. Frances and Daniel Hollenbeck, Willard Way, Asher Cook, James Murray, Jonah Price, John Spafford, George Strain, Sylvanus Jefferson and Patrick Slevin, among others. Slevin was an especially familiar face in the courthouse as he shared his office different times with auditor George Parsons and sheriff Charles Evers. Politically ambitious, Slevin had a judge's job for the taking but instead made an unsuccessful run for Congress.

It might be noted that the Perrysburg *Journal* profited as well as they held the contract for all county legal printing and advertising, such as various land transfers and ditch notices, which started appearing in 1854, sheriff's sales and other court news. It took a big chunk of the paper every week–steady business with sure payment. In a few years when the county fight got hot, the *Perrysburg Journal* and the Bowling Green *Advocate* would use their instruments as megaphones to denounce one another or anyone else who did not agree with their opinions.

A sample of court cases in October 1860 spins a story of its own. Alexander Latty of Defiance was the common pleas court judge. He was elected in 1856 and would serve 20 years as Wood County judge. There were wills to be probated, divorce petitions, money disputes by the dozens, as well as a major land dispute by the Dayton & Michigan Railroad. Willard Way, a railroad law expert, was most likely involved. Lawsuit after lawsuit, times haven't changed. There were a few criminal cases, mostly larcenies such as

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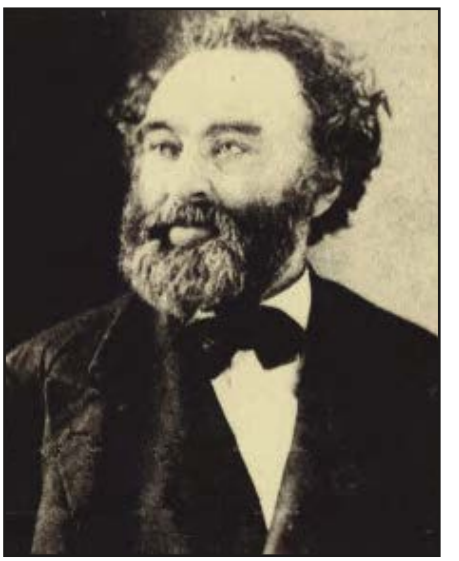


Alexander Latty was Wood County Common Pleas Judge for 20 years and "richest man in the Black Swamp."

Attorney Patrick Slevin used Wood County as a springboard in a run for Congress in 1866.

This hotel was adjacent to Perrysburg's original courthouse, home to visiting judges and lawyers.

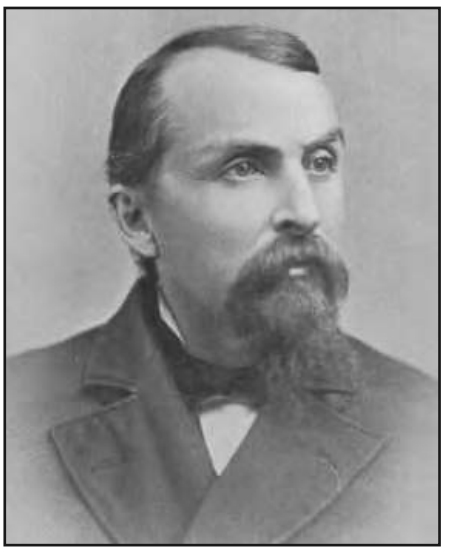
A Day in the Life of the County Seat

Continued from page 19

horse-stealing.

There were also dozens of cases involving sheriff's sale of property in arrears, parcels sold at the courthouse door and court-ordered real estate auctions. This procedure carries on to this day with weekly auctions in the courthouse atrium, as foreclosures are just as commonplace today.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian
Way Library



Charles Evers was the last full-term county sheriff with an office in Perrysburg [1866-68]. He wrote a monumental history of Wood County in 1897.

James Murray, Wood County attorney, step-stoned to Ohio Attorney General in 1861.

Freight Train Wreck in Custar Destroys Parsonage

A frightening train wreck marks a special place in Custar's history with serious destruction and only minor injuries.

In a letter from D.E. Sites of Custar to his sister and family, he describes "an awful wreck here early in the morning and the excitement was too much to settle down to letterwriting."

About 6:30 a.m., on February 22, 1920, village residents heard a terrible noise when an Ohio Electric freight train of three cars jumped the tracks at the curve and slammed into the parsonage at the church.

Fortunately no one was living in it at the time, as the minister was residing in Grand Rapids.

There were three men on the train, and the motorman was hurt but not seriously.

"The force of the three cars drove their way through the middle of the house, completely destroying it," Mr. Sites stated.

He dressed and ran quickly to the site, hoping "I could help someone out of the smashed up cars."

What he discovered was that the cars and house were on fire, and so he returned home for water.

Mr. Sites sent another neighbor "after the chemical engine," but they had the blaze under control before the fire engine arrived.

"Railroad men say they never saw such a wreck," he noted.

The force of the train drove the whole house against the church so hard, it damaged the south side of the church wall and roof.

Shipping in Perrysburg

Between 1828 and 1840, there was as large a volume of commercial business transacted at Perrysburg as at any port on Lake Erie, except Buffalo or Cleveland.

Business primarily came through the forwarding and commission houses of Hollister & Smith and Bingham & Co.

Through these houses nearly all the goods consigned to northern Indiana, and a large portion of northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan, were forwarded by teams from Perrysburg to the head of the rapids of the Maumee River, where they were taken on keel boats, canoes and flatboats and transported to Fort Wayne, and from there distributed to their destinations. These boats on their return carried back furs, skins and dried meats.

"From 1835 to 1840, this business together with the immigration which came to this port by water, afforded a very lucrative business for nearly all the schooners and steamboats in the service."

Major Amos Spafford, appointed collector of the Port of Miami in 1810, was likely the first permanent occupant and owner of land in Wood County.

Although the collector's office for the port and the post office were on the north side of the river, the major built his cabin on the south side just above where Fort Meigs was afterward located.

His first quarterly report shows the exports of skins and furs for that period amounted to $5,611, and that $30 worth of bears' grease also was sent out from Miami.

–A History of Northwest Ohio, by Nevin O. Winter, Volume 1, 1917.

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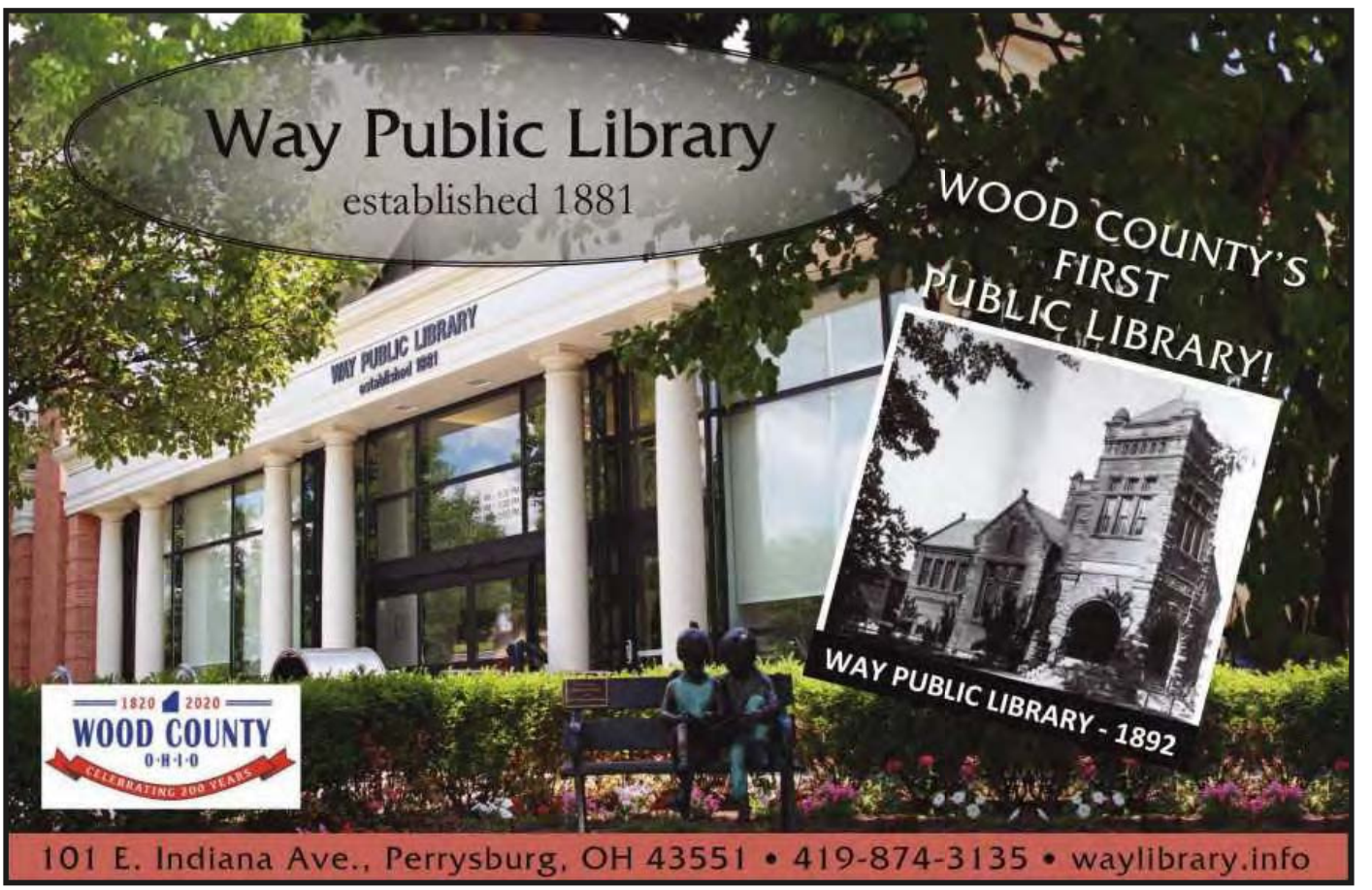

Newspapers Tell the Story of Wood County Life Since 1833

The earliest newspaper published in Wood County, and in the Maumee Valley, was the *Miami of the Lake*, by Jessup W. Scott and Henry Darling. The first edition was issued December 11, 1833.

A few months later, it was sold to J. Austin Scott and continued to be published until March 10, when the name was changed to the *Perrysburg Star* and later the Perrysburg *Journal*. Originally a Whig newspaper, in the fall of 1854, the *Journal* became an advocate of the principles of the Republican party.

The first newspaper in Bowling Green was *The Advocate*, a weekly publication established May 18, 1866, to further the interests of the town in securing the county seat. After the election, it ceased publication.

Frank C. Culley issued the first edition of the *Sentinel*, another weekly newspaper, on February 22, 1867. The first daily paper issued in Bowling Green was the *Daily Sentinel*, printed on the fairgrounds, from October 3, 1882, to the close of the fair by C.W. Evers.

The Perrysburg *Journal* began publication on March 10, 1853, disseminating news and information in Perrysburg. More than 100 years later, in 1965, it would merge with the *Perrysburg Messenger*, which had been founded in 1935.

Robert and Dorothy Welch purchased the *Messenger Journal* in 1969, dedicating their lives to owning and managing the newspaper. Mr. Welch passed away in 2008 and Mrs. Welch in 2015. Their grandsons, Chet and Adam, are the current owners and publishers.

The *Perrysburg Messenger Journal* is the longest-running newspaper in Wood County and the oldest business still operating in Perrysburg.

The *Rossford Record Journal* can trace its roots back to 1939. In 1969, Mr. and Mrs. Welch acquired the *Rossford Record*. Bob Welch served as editor of the *Rossford Record* and came out with his first publication on January 8, 1970.

The Welch Publishing Co. newspaper offices were located at 229 West Sixth Street, Perrysburg, for many years, later moving to the former historic Perrysburg Post Office, 117 East Second Street, and then to 130 Louisiana Avenue.

The printing press plant was moved to 215 Osborn Street, Rossford, in January 1980. The newspaper was renamed the *Rossford Record Journal* in 1978 to reflect its sister Journal publications, the *Perrysburg Messenger Journal* and *Point and Shoreland Journal*. Welch Publishing Co. also prints the *Holland-Springfield Journal* and numerous other area publications. Online versions of all four newspapers can be viewed at welchpublishing.com.

The Messenger Remembers

In October 1940:

Concerns about flooding led the Perrysburg Township Flood Prevention Association to file a permanent injunction against the Ohio State Highway Department to prevent further work on the Dixie Highway drainage project.

The Perrysburg School Board reported that 20 children were malnourished. Perrysburg Child Conservation League was granted permission to supply milk for the children who needed it.

By a four-vote majority, the citizens of Luckey voted to incorporate.

Wrestling was a featured weekly event at The Commodore in Perrysburg.

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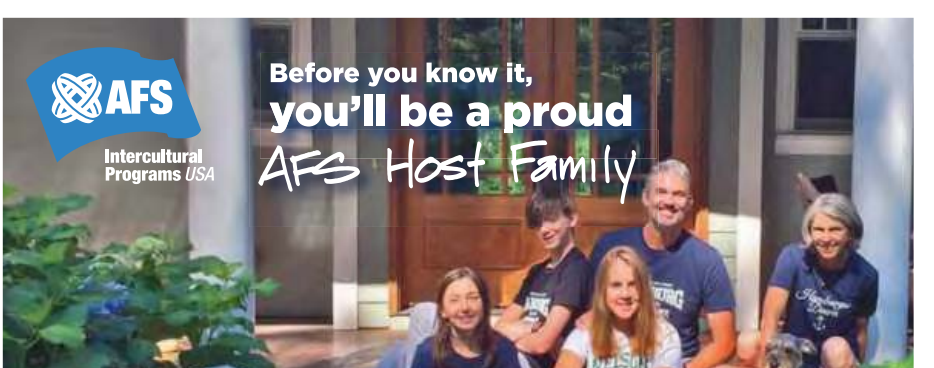

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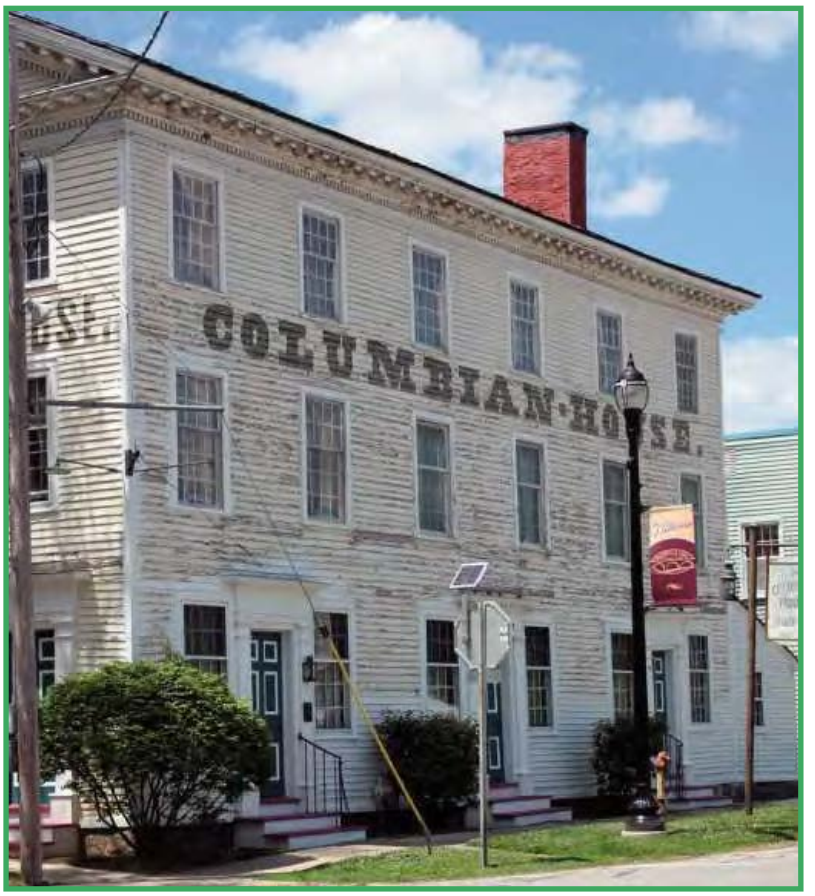


Trading Post and Hostel for Travelers

A photo of the historical Columbian House in Waterville, Lucas County, may seem out of place to many residents not familiar with Wood County's history.

But when the county was organized on February 12, 1820, present day Lucas, Hancock, Henry, Putnam, Paulding and Williams counties were all part of Wood County.

Built in 1828 by pioneer John Pray, the building housed a small trading post complete with tavern and overnight hostel. A popular stagecoach stop, it catered to weary travelers making the trip between Fort Wayne and Detroit.

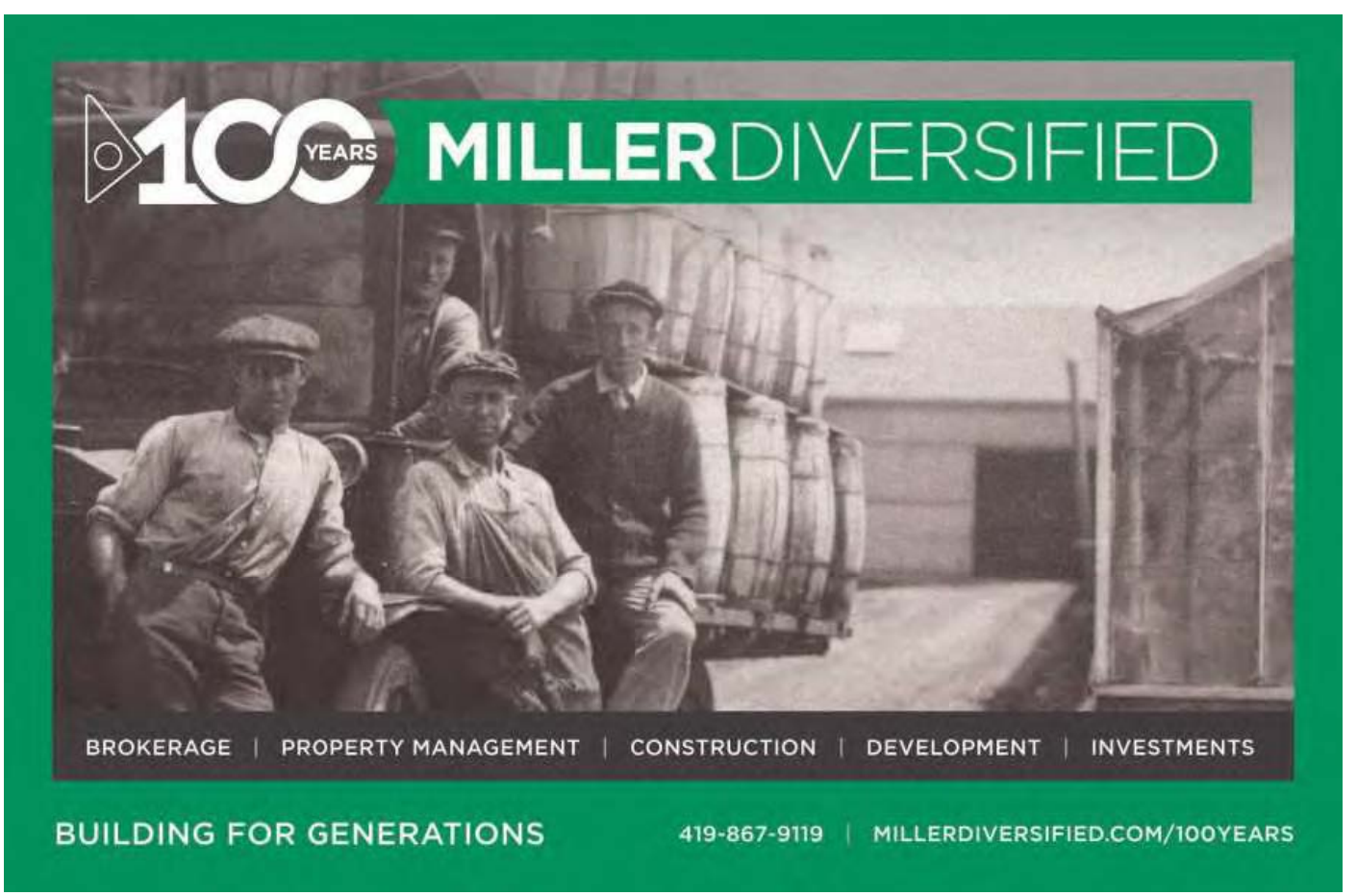
Waterville and the Columbian House remained a part of Wood County until 1835 when Lucas County was formed.

The Messenger Remembers

In December 1905:

Marshall Frank Thornton was shot and killed by a "gang of desperadoes" at Krauss Restaurant in downtown Perrysburg.

An employee of Spratl and Nichols Stone Road Contractors was critically injured after placing hot coals on some sticks of dynamite.



Why Relocate the County Seat?

By the mid-to-late 1800s, the lower reaches of Wood County slowly began to populate. It made sense to centralize the county seat as more people were wont to suffer the long traveling distances.

For example, a person from North Baltimore on county business had to travel 30-some miles to Perrysburg. Riding a horse at the average speed of 4 miles per hour made an eight or nine-hour trip–and that was if the weather was good and the road not ankle-deep in mud. It could be a three-day trip. Bowling Green, on the other hand, perched in the center of the county.

Bowling Green may have been testing the county seat waters as early as 1850. In 1851, the first Wood County Fair, termed the Wood County Agricultural Society, was held in Bowling Green, and the village pretty much took over the tradition. Perrysburg seemed to have no objection as they only hosted it twice, 1852 and 1860.

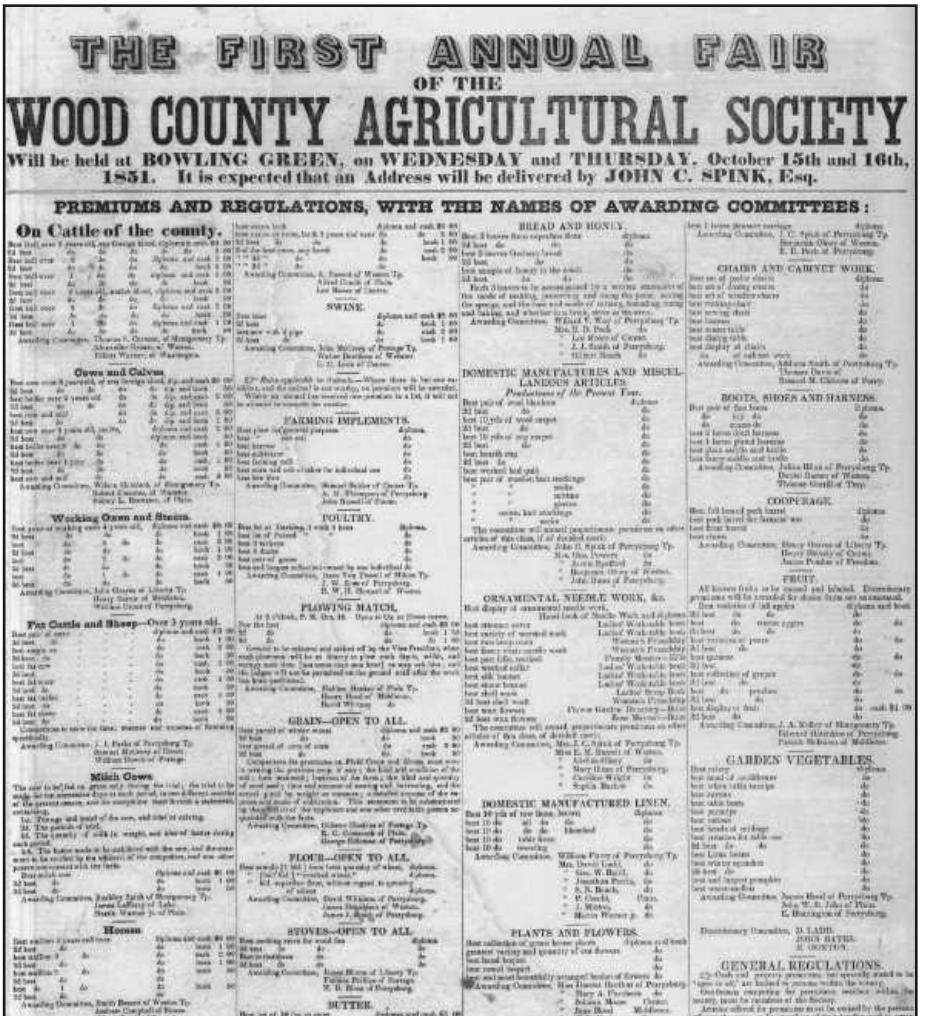
A few years later, a County Infirmary was bandied about. If one were built, the commissioners wanted it centrally located, and it eventually was in Bowling Green. It is the Wood County Historical Center and Museum today.

These were hardly noticeable blips, but perhaps first steps toward this thought of centralization, but not yet ripe, as Bowling Green's central location still contrarily isolated them. And later, that would be Perrysburg's argument against removal.

Let's hold that snapshot of Perrysburg in 1860. The village is well-established, riding high, perhaps its peak. It holds the county seat along with the judicial and other political cream that go with it. Railroads, the epitome of progress, had just chugged in. Businesses and factories proliferating, many along the riverfront with assistance from the hydraulic canal. Toledo has yet to make its full mark.

Ditches were being dug to drain the Black Swamp and the area was being populated with immigrants from Germany, staunch New Englanders and others attracted by the now-realized rich, level farmland. Land speculation was rampant. Plenty of legal business and money was to be made in Perrysburg. But all this would soon change.

In winter 1865-66, a petition initiated by a group of prominent Bowling Green citizens was presented to the state legislature. It called for authority to vote on the question of removing the seat of justice from Perrysburg to Bowling Green. The group later filed a bond for $15,000 to buy property and construct buildings for county purposes as good as the buildings in Perrysburg.



THE FIRST ANNUAL FAIR
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GENERAL REGULATIONS.

First step to centralization? Bowling Green held the first county fair in 1851.

Letters began appearing in the Perrysburg *Journal*. There were many opinions. Two should suffice.

One wrote, "Farmers in the southern part of the county spend a day getting there, a day to consume business and a day to get home, the expense of four or five dollars and the loss of a man and team for the trip."

However, Toledoans did a lot of Wood County business and one Toledo letter writer complained about "Black Swamp Mud," and impassable roads, adding "from Toledo to Bowling Green is almost equal to the ancient pilgrimage to Mecca."

The vote was held October 9, 1866 with 2,454 for removal and 2,176 against removal. No surprise, Perrysburg had 817 against and 17 for. Lake and Troy Townships also had large majorities against removal. Tellingly, most southern and central townships wanted Bowling Green. Some did not cast a single vote against removal. Perrysburg contested the vote, but a recount in June 1868 with 2,390 for and 2,265 against removal verified the issue.

Perrysburg was not going to take this lying down. The removal was appealed and they tried other methods, such as hindering the construction of new buildings in Bowling Green. In February 1869, their appeal was denied in the state supreme court. By

Continued on page 28

A Brief History of Communities in Wood County

North Baltimore

It was the coming of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1873 that led to development of swamp land and the community that was to be known as North Baltimore. In 2011, the railroad gave another boost to the community with creation of an intermodal facility.

Located in the southern part of the county, North Baltimore was first settled in 1850, a swampy area with a dense forest of trees.

Originally called New Baltimore, its name changed to North Baltimore in 1880. It was part of the county's oil boom in the late 1800s with the first oil well drilled on North Second Street.

The most famous gusher, drilled on the Dave Fulton farm near the northeast corner of Oil Center and Mitchell roads, led to the first oil boom to hit the county.

Natural gas was discovered in 1886 on the Peters farm on East Broadway. The well was reactivated in 1985 and is still in use, furnishing the energy supply for the SMC Aluminum Foundry.

Bowling Green

Bowling Green is the county seat. In 1832, Elisha Martindale became the first occupant of land within what is now Bowling Green. The community grew slowly due to its location in the Great Black Swamp.

In the mid-1870s, the town became the new seat of county government, replacing Perrysburg.

Residents named the town after Bowling Green, Kentucky, and the town grew slowly, with only 1,539 people in 1880.

The discovery of natural gas deposits in the 1880s led to a population surge to 3,521 people by 1890. In 1888, the town consisted of three newspapers, six churches, two banks and several manufacturing businesses.

Many provided services or products for farmers in the surrounding countryside. Others used the region's natural gas to manufacture glass. In 1888, the town's four largest employers were all gas companies. Two railroads connected the community with other points in Ohio.

During the 20th century, the natural gas industry declined. Most Bowling Green residents returned to earning their living by supporting farmers' efforts in the surrounding area.

Others commuted to Toledo to find employment. Some also worked for Bowling Green State University, which was established in 1910. In 2000, Bowling Green was the largest urban area in Wood County, with a population of 29,636.

Pemberville

The village of Pemberville is on State Route 105 and rests on the forks of the Portage River. The Iroquois, Wyandot and Ottawa tribes were the original inhabitants of this area. The Portage River was an important water route for the Native American population.

The War of 1812 brought the army of General William Henry Harrison to the area. They encamped along the Portage in an area now known as Harrison Park. After the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the tribes were gradually forced westward, and pioneer settlement began.

The first survey of Pemberville was completed on May 24, 1854. The town is named after James Pember, who built the first frame house there.

On June 8, 1876, the village was ordered by the county commissioners to organize. The State of Ohio records the date of incorporation as December 20, 1876.

The village is home to industries, small businesses, parks, recreation centers, schools, churches and a library. Farming is still a vital part of life.

Grand Rapids

In 1812, Thomas Howard, a Revolutionary War veteran, came by boat across Lake Erie from the east to the head of the rapids. He became the first settler of the village. His family walked through the woods of Pennsylvania and Ohio to join him. Others came, too, and the town of Gilead was platted in 1833.

Before Howard arrived, Peter Manor, a man of French descent from Detroit, had an established home across the river. He was a good friend of the Native Americans, and they granted him a large plot of land.

On that plot, the town Providence was platted in 1835, and it thrived with canal business. Providence met bad fortune with a terrible fire in 1846 and was completely devastated by a cholera epidemic in 1854.

The most important structure remaining is the St. Patrick's Catholic Church, one of the oldest in the Toledo diocese. The church remains active to this day.

In 1838, Irish and German immigrants began digging the Miami and Erie Canal to create a water link for transportation and commerce. The first dam at the rapids was built to provide water for the canal town and a side cut was provided for Gilead. Gilead's name was changed to Grand Rapids in 1868.

The coming of the railroad spelled the end for canals. There was not much canal traffic after 1910, but some boats traveled it until the early 1930s.

Grand Rapids in the first part of the 20th century was a busy, active town. It was easy to get to Toledo by railroad.

There were three doctors in town, and Joe Hampshire's drug store dispensed medical necessities. There also were three grocery stores, the Grand Rapids Bank, a movie theater, three churches and the railroad.

A Greyhound bus could be taken to Toledo, where passenger rail connections could be made.

In 1946, all 12 grades of school were in the former middle school building, but just 20 years later in 1966, schools in the area had changed names to Anthony Wayne, Eastwood and Otsego.

In spring 1967, the Grand Rapids school board decided to consolidate with Otsego. Some citizens objected, and a referendum was put on the ballot. The vote was to consolidate, so the Class of 1968 became the last to graduate from the Grand Rapids School building.

Luckey

Luckey is the only incorporated village in Troy Township. The town was surveyed by Charles Roberts in 1820. In 1835, the United States deeded 240 acres to Christopher Bair that included present day Luckey. In 1880, Isaac Krotzer purchased 80 acres for $2,800 in what is part of present day Luckey. The town is named after Captain James B. Luckey.

On July 12, 1893, a fire destroyed all of the buildings on the north side of Main Street. Reconstruction began almost

Continued on page 28

Why Relocate the County Seat?

Continued from page 25

April 1870, operation of the county government left Perrysburg.

In the meantime, ground had been broken for the new county courthouse, offices and jail in Bowling Green. Although things had calmed down, this issue was not quite dead. In 1872, John Norris of Perry Township took his place in the state legislature. He proposed a bill providing for reopening the county seat question. Norris had campaigned in Perrysburg and won support of the Perrysburg *Journal* on the promise to get their county seat back.

He didn't do what he said he'd do, and in 1873, Norris was succeeded by Nathan Hatfield. He did better, introducing a similar bill which passed required stages and again called upon the voters to answer the question.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian, Way Library

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A Brief History of Communities in Wood County

Continued from page 26

immediately afterward and new structures were completed by 1894.

For the next 60 years, the town grew and prospered, even surviving the Great Depression in 1929.

Millbury

Millbury is eight miles southeast of Toledo in the northeast corner of Lake Township. It is a little more than one square mile. Like most villages in northwest Ohio, it was established after the draining of the Black Swamp in the 1850s.

In 1856, petitioning for a post office brought up a discussion of a name. George Hewitt, a switchman for the railroad, suggested Millbury after his hometown of Millbury, Massachusetts.

A petition with 64 signatures for the incorporation of the village was presented on June 1, 1874. The commissioners granted the request on September 10, 1874.

At that time, according to the Perrysburg *Journal*, there were 100 homes with 500 residents; two saw mills making 20,000 feet of lumber per day; two stave factories using 50 to 60 cords of bolts per day; four bowl factories making 80 to 100 dozen per day; five provision stores; one dry goods store; one drug store; four blacksmith shops; one carriage shop; plus other businesses including doctors and shoemakers.

Today, Millbury is mostly a "bedroom community" with residents working outside of the village. There are two churches, a funeral home, pub and roofing company. The Millbury Fireman's Association has a fire hall, built in 1956, which hosts many receptions, dances, and gatherings.

Lake Township has 22 acres with a fire station and a park within the Millbury limits. Millbury also has two parks totaling more than 60 acres with over two miles of walking paths. They also are used for baseball, softball, soccer and picnics.

On June 5, 2010, around 11:15 p.m. an EF-4 tornado ripped through Millbury and the surrounding area, destroying more than 50 homes and killing seven people. It also destroyed Lake High School and the Lake Township administration building and police department.

Walbridge

Walbridge was originally known as "Owls Nest" to the settlers of the 1840s. Phillip G. Loop first settled here in 1846. His son, George, was born in 1847.

Early property records show that in 1836, Truman P. Handy of Cuyahoga County purchased 160 acres of land in what is now Walbridge known as Warner's Addition from the federal government. President Andrew Jackson signed the deed for the sale.

In 1839, Mr. Handy sold this acreage to the Ohio Railroad Company. The first school was built in 1850, a one-room building for grades one to eight. It was on the east side of South Main Street.

Levi S. Warner purchased 80 acres of Warner's Addition in 1865 and sold 40 to Samuel Dixon, in 1875. In 1873, there were six families in the area. The Stein, Taylor, Clark, Warner, Loop and Allen families lived in log cabins and wooded areas.

Early development began with the first railroad being constructed through the village. The Toledo and Ohio River Railroad located here in 1870. Shortly thereafter, a post office was granted by the government in 1871. A group of local men met at the school house and renamed the Owls Nest to Walbridge, after one of the area's largest landowners, Henry Walbridge.

Early growth led to a new school being built. In 1906, the community built a cement block school on the present day site of Walbridge Elementary.

On March 25, 1913, Walbridge completed the last step to become incorporated.

Continued on page 29

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Continued from page 28

A.E. Kusian was elected the first mayor and Elery Scott the first marshal. The first council meeting was held on April 7, 1913.

Progress for Walbridge was further evident in 1919 when Perry Street was the first to be paved in town. To meet the needs of the village, a municipal electric system was set up in 1920. Walbridge purchased electricity from Fremont, Ohio, where the Ballville Dam generated power.

William Schier was named the first fire chief in 1921, and in 1927, the town purchased its first fire truck, a 1927 Seagraves, delivered by railroad flat car from Columbus, on March 28, 1928.

The Walbridge Fire Department became the Walbridge-Lake Township Fire Department in 1945, and was located where the present-day Walbridge Police Station is.

Although crime was generally regarded as low or non-existent in those days, the newspapers of the day highlighted the story of someone blowing open the safe at the town's post office on Christmas Eve 1949. The story called the thieves professional safecrackers who used "nitro" and absconded with $1,500 in savings bonds and $100 in cash.

Bradner

Bradner is a small, largely residential community along U.S. Route 23, south of U.S. Route 6.

Bradner celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1976. While the railroad stops and horses of 1876 are gone, the residential neighborhoods still suggest a changeless quality.

Bradner's small-town feel and its open spacious layout, pockets of woodland areas, graciously landscaped streets and gardens, and low density development, all contribute to its special charm.

Haskins

Haskins village is on State Route 64 between Waterville and Bowling Green. It was platted in 1862. In 1868, the village was incorporated.

It has grown immensely in the last couple of decades. Haskins is locally known for its small town, country-like atmosphere and deep community pride.

It is located minutes from popular locations yet far enough away to enjoy the country air and relaxing evenings. Haskins is positioned in the Otsego Local School District.

Weston

Weston was originally called Taylortown, and under the latter name was platted in 1853 by Thomas Taylor, and named for him.

Another early variant name was New Westfield. The present name is from Weston Township. A post office called New Westfield was established in 1856, and the name was changed to Weston in 1863.

Tontogany

The settlement of Tontogany is credited to Samuel Hamilton, who came from New York in 1830. The town site was surveyed for Willard V. Way and E.D. Peck in 1885, and named in honor of the Ottawa Indian chief Tondoganie.

The village was incorporated in 1874, and J. Patchen was chosen mayor at the first election. With him were elected T. Klussman as clerk and William Crom as peace officer. A post office has been in operation since 1857.

According to the Census of 2010, there were 367 people residing in Tontogany.

Hoytville

A small village in southwest Wood County, Hoytville was platted in 1873 when the railroad was extended to that point.

The village was named after William Hoyt, an original proprietor of the town.

Originally called Hoyts Corners, the name was changed to Hoytville in 1874, and the village was incorporated in 1886.

Portage

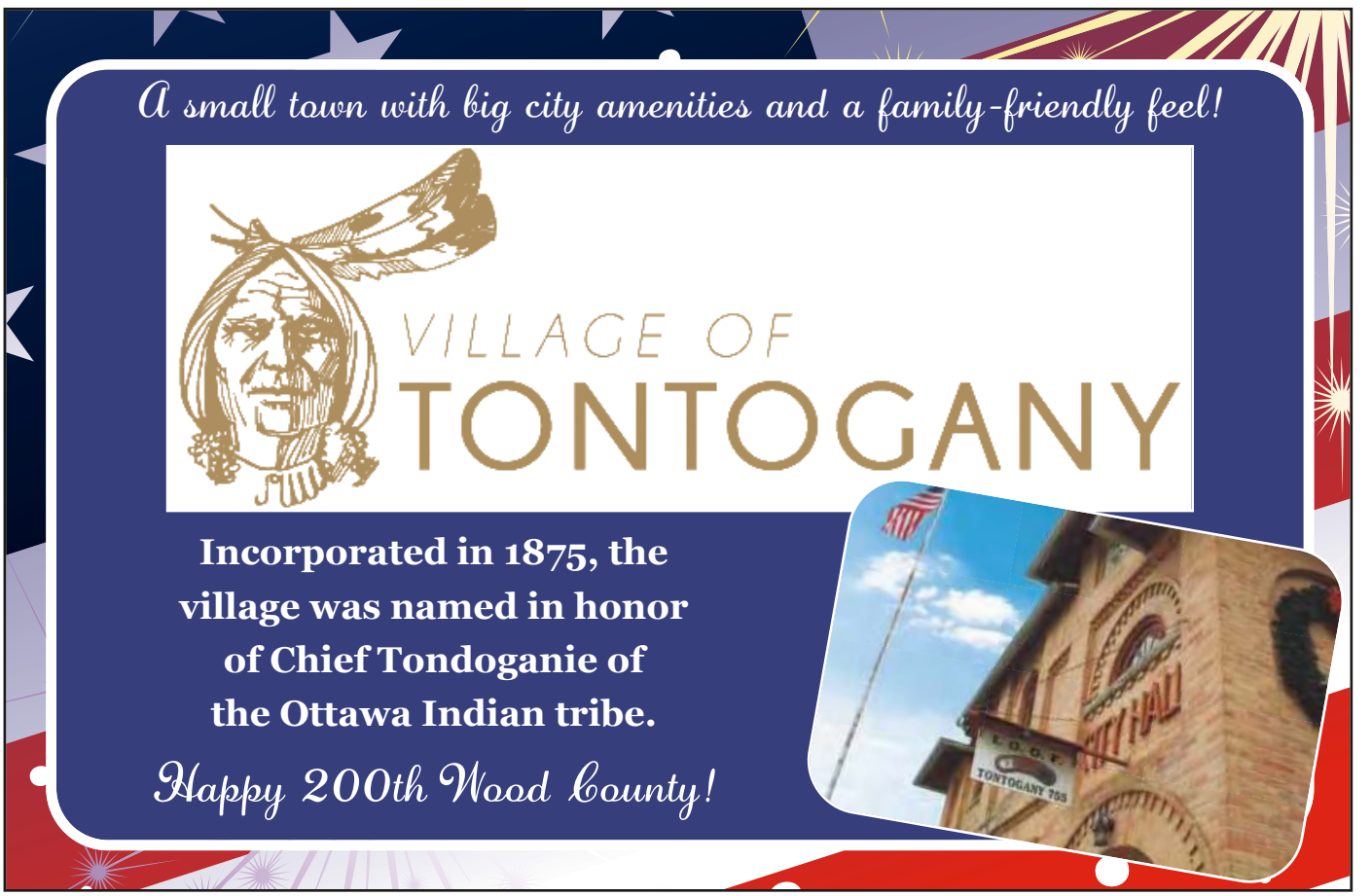
Portage, just two miles south of Bowling Green, is bisected by State Route 25.

Platted in 1836, the village takes its name from the nearby Portage River. A post office has been in operation since 1829. Portage was incorporated as a village in 1857.

Milton Center

Platted in 1857, Milton Center took its name from Milton Township. A post office

Continued on page 30



A Brief History of Communities in Wood County

Continued from page 29

called Milton Centre was established in 1861, and the name was changed to Milton Center in 1893. The village was incorporated in 1869.

As of the 2010 Census, there were 144 people residing in the community.

Bairdstown

In the oil-field era of the 1880s, Bairdstown was a boom town overflowing with promise and prosperity.

There were two hotels, saloons, stores and a barrel factory. The town had a reputation as a brawling village amid a prosperous oil patch.

A number of oil and refinery workers made the small southern hamlet their home, joining many farmers who toiled in the fields.

Jerry City

Jerry City was formed in the early 1860s and was originally called Stulltown and later Shiloh. It was replatted in 1872 as Jerry City, after Jerry Nestlerode, a local businessperson. The village was incorporated in 1875.

Jerry City once had 100 oil wells within city limits. Oil was first discovered in Wood County on December 13, 1886 on a farm just outside of North Baltimore.

The second discovery in February 1887 in Henry Township began the oil boom. By 1896, 5,500 wells were in operation, and by 1900 the county had approximately 14,000 wells and 1,000 derricks.

Unprepared for such rapid development, the county had no adequate provisions for receiving and storing the oil, creating dozens of small oil boomtowns like Jerry City.

The oil boom brought a significant amount of growth and affluence to Wood County.

Around 1910, the production quality and quantity of the oil began to decline. By 1917, northwest Ohio dropped out of the top four oil producing areas in the nation.

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Eleazer Derby Wood–Soldier, Engineer, Man of Honor Remembered at West Point

Eleazer Derby Wood lived just 30 years, but within those three decades he graduated from West Point, served with distinction as a U.S. Army officer and engineer in the War of 1812, scouted the lands of northwest Ohio and built Fort Meigs.

For these accomplishments, Wood County was named in his honor.

The Massachusetts resident was admitted to West Point Military Academy in May 1805 and graduated in October 1806, commissioned a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers on graduation day. He was the 17th graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.

While a cadet, he was noted for his soldierly qualities, rigid compliance with regulations, devotion to duty and fondness for the sciences, in which he displayed such proficiency that he was detailed for engineering duties in New York harbor. After graduation, he served as assistant engineer in construction of defenses at Governor's Island in New York harbor, 1807. In 1808, he was promoted to first lieutenant.

Soon after, he was ordered to Norfolk, Virginia, to aid in fortifying its harbor, where he remained until 1810, when he returned to West Point, becoming the military agent of the post until 1812. From there, he was ordered to the charge of the defenses of New London harbor, Connecticut, and to build a battery at Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York.

After the surrender of Detroit to the British during the War of 1812, Wood received his orders to head to the Northwest Territory as part of General William Henry Harrison's campaign of 1813, for which Wood was the chief engineer.

He oversaw construction of Fort Meigs, worked on Fort Stephenson in Fremont and assisted in the transport of Harrison's army to Canada after Commodore Perry's victory on Lake Erie.

Wood was killed in the Battle of Fort Erie on September 17, 1814. Later that year, a fort on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbor was named in his honor. The island was renamed Liberty Island and today is the home of the Statue of Liberty.

His eight years of army life "had uniformly been an exhibition of military skill, acute judgment and heroic valor;" and in the language of his commanding general, "no officer of his grade could have contributed more to the safety and honor of the Army."

Wood was memorialized with a monument at West Point in a prominent position when viewing the Hudson River. The monument was even used as a navigational aid for ships traveling down the river.

In 1818, Major General Jacob Brown contacted the academy and ordered the monument's construction at his own expense. The four-sided obelisk is 15 feet tall. As the academy expanded, the monument was moved to the West Point cemetery in 1885.

Wood's monument in West Point Cemetery.

–Information from military scholars, U.S. Military Academy library, Wood County commissioners and Ohio Historical Society.

This painting from the U.S. Military Academy Library from 1828 includes Wood's monument.

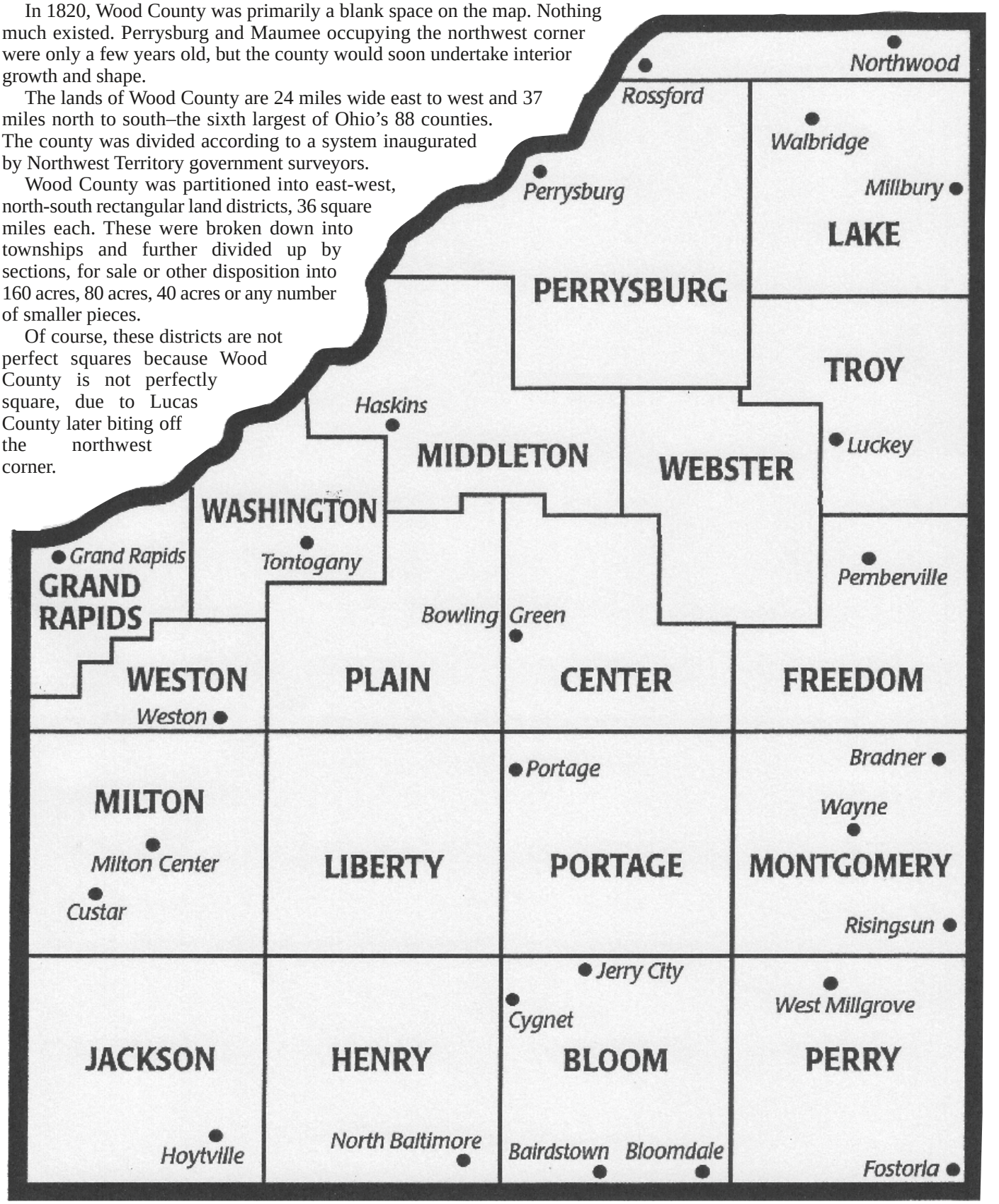
Wood County Takes Shape

In 1820, Wood County was primarily a blank space on the map. Nothing much existed. Perrysburg and Maumee occupying the northwest corner were only a few years old, but the county would soon undertake interior growth and shape.

The lands of Wood County are 24 miles wide east to west and 37 miles north to south–the sixth largest of Ohio's 88 counties. The county was divided according to a system inaugurated by Northwest Territory government surveyors.

Wood County was partitioned into east-west, north-south rectangular land districts, 36 square miles each. These were broken down into townships and further divided up by sections, for sale or other disposition into 160 acres, 80 acres, 40 acres or any number of smaller pieces.

Of course, these districts are not perfect squares because Wood County is not perfectly square, due to Lucas County later biting off the northwest corner.



Wood County established 19 townships:

Perrysburg – 1823
Weston – 1830
Middleton – 1832
Perry – 1832
Portage – 1832
Montgomery – 1834
Freedom – 1834
Troy – 1834
Milton – 1835
Center – 1835
Liberty – 1835
Plain – 1835
Bloom – 1835
Henry – 1836
Washington – 1837
Jackson – 1844
Lake – 1844
Webster – 1847
Ross – 1874
(Now Northwood & Rossford)
Grand Rapids – 1888

Villages/cities emerged in the townships. These are the major incorporated areas (ones which have elected officials) of Wood County and earliest plat date:

Perrysburg – 1816 (City)
Grand Rapids – 1831
Portage – 1834
Bowling Green – 1834 (City)
West Millgrove – 1835
Wayne – 1836
Weston – 1853
Pemberville – 1854
Tontogany – 1855
Milton Center – 1857
Jerry City – 1861
Haskins – 1862
Millbury – 1864
Custar – 1865
Hoytville – 1873
Bloomdale – 1874
North Baltimore – 1874
Walbridge – 1874
Bairdstown – 1874
Bradner – 1875
Risingsun – 1876
Luckey – 1881
Cygnet – 1883
Rossford – 1898 (City)
Northwood – 1962 (City)

The Black Swamp attracted few buyers.

Wood County also had several dozen tiny, unincorporated areas. Rails were the lifeline and some had their day in the sun, such as Dowling, Dunbridge, Hull Prairie, Woodside, Lemoyne, Latchie, Riverdale and Miltonville, but times change and some of these hamlets now are just a signpost.

The original settlement of Wood County moved along at a sloth's pace, taking a good portion of the 19th century.

Home to the Black Swamp, the land had a bad reputation. At first, those heading west avoided the whole area. The roads that did cut through were poor and remained so for many years. What was left was impenetrable, dense with tangles of trees and undergrowth, stagnant water and deep mud–the "Devil's Hole." Better and healthier land was correctly thought to be ahead. Other regions farther west were settled much earlier than Wood County. But once smart minds figured out how to drain the rich soil, the settlers would come.

–Richard Baranowski
Local History Librarian, Way Library

Owens' History–a Story of Innovative Education

Owens Community College is named after Michael J. Owens, a Toledo inventor who changed the glass industry forever by mechanizing bottle blowing in 1903.

The son of a coal miner, he began his career as a glassmaker at the age of 10, stoking glass furnaces in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Nearly 20 years later, in 1888, he came to Toledo to work for Libbey as a skilled glassblower.

His Owens Bottle Machine introduced automation to glassmaking, in the process eliminating child labor and revolutionizing the glass industry, which had changed little in 2,000 years.

His work made it possible for thousands of jobs to be created and changed the community forever.

Michael J. Owens

Michael J. Owens also is the "Owens" in Owens-Illinois, Owens Corning and Libbey-Owens-Ford.

Owens Community College began as a technical institute under the jurisdiction of the Ohio Department of Education.

The first classes were offered in Toledo on September 13, 1965, with less than 200 students.

Two years later in 1967, the college was chartered by the Ohio Board of Regents as a technical college.

In 1983, Owens Community College opened its Findlay-area campus.

In 1994, the college was chartered as a comprehensive state community college with a district encompassing Lucas, Wood and Hancock counties, and parts of Ottawa and Sandusky counties.

The Messenger Remembers

In February 1952:
Harry Pomeroy, editor and publisher of *Maumee Advance-Era* from 1910 to 1937, died at his Maumee home.
The Gulf station at Indiana and Louisiana avenues installed a new electric Gulf sign. The station is open 24 hours a day.
Advertisement: Steady job for sober, honest, conscientious man as a truck driver.
The Sonja Henie Ice revue came to the Toledo Sports Arena. The show cost more than $700,000 to stage.
Delbert Latta announced his candidacy for the office of state senator.
Worden's 5 cent to $1 store opened at 123 Louisiana Avenue.

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to taking time to read,

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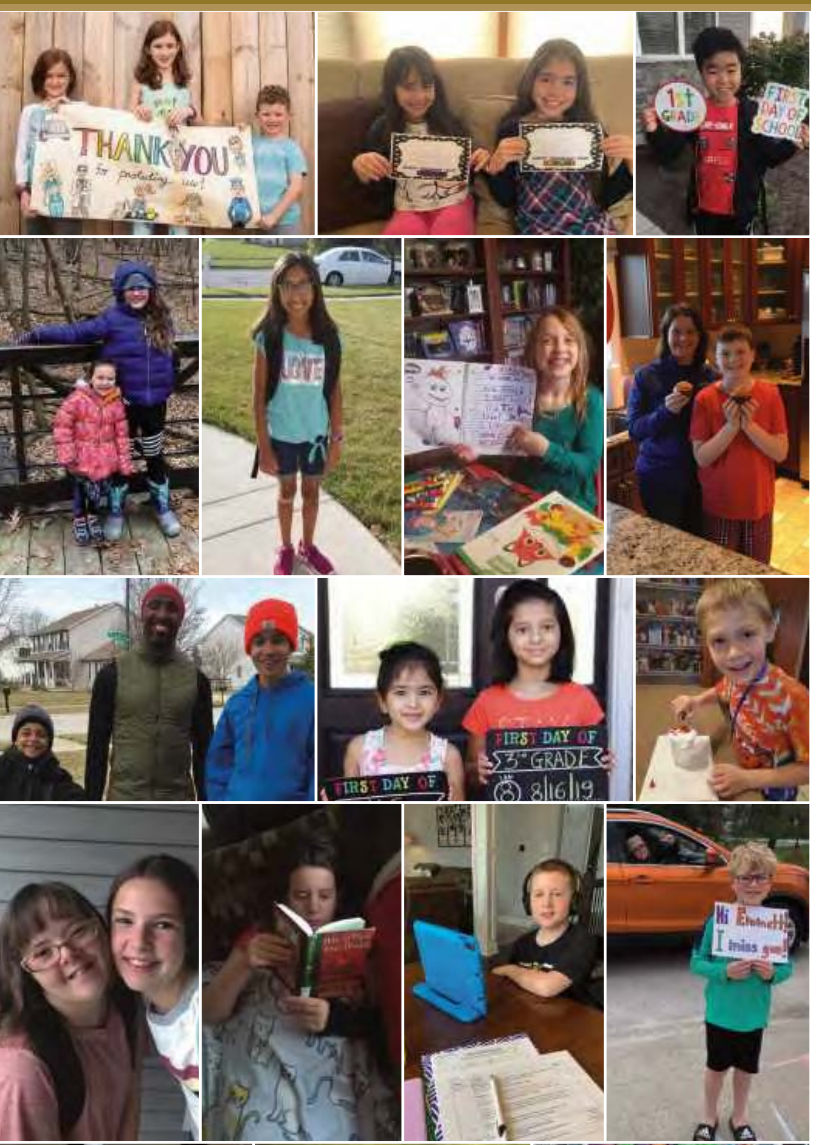

‘Utopia’ Photo Exhibit Highlights Wood County

In celebration of Wood County’s 200th anniversary this year, the Wood County Historical Center and Museum’s latest exhibit, Utopia is currently on display.

The display fills two rooms on the museum’s second floor and features photographs taken by Taylor Houpt Ayres, a Perrysburg High School and Bowling Green State University graduate.

“This exhibit is not an exercise in looking backwards, but a symbol of all the possibilities waiting for those just beginning their adult lives,” explained curator Holly Kirkendall. “Young people are full of hope. Her journey showcases the visual storytelling of our home and highlights beautiful landscapes, vibrant cityscapes and a multitude of back road barns and farm fields.”

Museum staff started work on the project three years ago. Ms. Ayres took about 6,000 photographs which were eventually whittled down to 35 for display.

Made possible with support from American Frame, the exhibit runs through December 18.

The Messenger Remembers

In April 1865:

General U.S. Grant’s surrender terms and General Lee’s formal acceptance letter were published.

The *Journal* devoted much of two additions to the news of Lincoln’s assassination. The publisher referred to it as “a blow more terrible than any of which the nation could have conceived.”

Miltonville, a Ghost Town Along the Banks of the Maumee

Scattered throughout northwest Ohio lie the remains of numerous towns that were developed during the 19th century but have since disappeared from the cartographer's landscape. One of these long dead "ghost towns" was located along the banks of the Maumee River just upstream from Waterville. Known as Miltonville, it was, for a rather brief period of time, a prosperous town crucial to the early development of the county.

Miltonville was platted in 1835 by William Fowler and George W. Baird who operated a saw mill, hotel and general store at the site. The town was named after Milton Baird. A rope ferry connected the town with the north shore of the river.

A historical marker on the site details the settlement and surrounding area. The post office closed in 1859, the beginning of the end for the community. Ravages of a flood and cholera epidemic doomed the small town, whose waterways could not compete with railroads attracting residents to the interior of Wood County.

Its founders, Mr. Baird and William Ewing, were laid to rest in Fort Meigs Cemetery in Perrysburg.

All that remains of Miltonville is a cemetery at the top of the hill. It contains gravestones of several war veterans who were early residents of the area. Today, the acreage is owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and is a popular fishing spot for anglers.

History–By the Book

For more in-depth information on Wood County's history, see the following resources:

"A Brief History of Wood County and Bowling Green," 1908

"Commemorative Historical and Biographical Record of Wood County" by J.H. Beers & Co., 1897

"Historical Gazetteer of Wood County, Ohio" by Lyle R. Fletcher, Whipporwill Publications, 1988

"History and Government of Wood County, Ohio: Sesquicentennial Edition" by Wood County Board of Education, 1958

"Human Interest History of Wood County, Ohio" by Paul W. Jones, Wood County Genealogical Society/ ECPrinting, 2007

"Pioneer Scrapbook of Wood County and the Maumee Valley" by C.W. Evers, 1910

"Southern Wood County Oral History Project" by Joseph J Arpad, Archival Books, 1994

This mural on the third floor of the Wood County Courthouse depicts the oil boom of the late 1800s.

Oil Boom of the 1800s

Investors and speculators were attracted to the county by hundreds. It was the day of the gusher. While oil was struck in different counties in northwest Ohio, Wood County, in the heart of the Black Swamp, proved to be the greatest oil center on the continent for a time.

Intense excitement spread across Wood County in the 1880s, following the discovery of oil here.

Oil was found in 16 townships, and prices for land went skyward.

Farms that previously could have been sold for $10 to $50 per acre could not be touched for less than hundreds of dollars per acre. One farmer with a tract of 50 acres declared he would not sell for under $30,000.

More than half the oil workers in Wood County fields came from Pennsylvania and were considered experts in the business. They brought with them, families, household goods and all the property they owned.

It is because of this fact that the county is dotted everywhere with little and big towns. There are more villages within its borders than any other of the 20 counties in northwest Ohio.

The first oil field to develop was at North Baltimore in December 1886. After the drill penetrated the Trenton rock without any signs of the "black gold," the owners and drillers were about to give up the search.

They decided to push another 100 to 200 feet, and thousands of barrels flowed out over the surrounding land. It was a 600 barrel well and maintained production for a considerable time.

In 1887, four gushers were completed, yielding 1,200, 4,800, 15,000 and 800 barrels, respectively. Two gushers in 1888 gave up 3,000 and 1,250 barrels, and drilling continued on annually. By 1892, 20 gushers yielded 36,600 barrels. All figures are from oil reports in newspapers at that time.

By the mid-1910s, the production of oil had greatly decreased, although it remained an important industry. The entire county was covered by a network of main and district pipelines.

–A History of Northwest Ohio, by Nevin O. Winter, Volume 1, 1917.

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Courthouse Murals, Panels Depict Early Life

Wood County Commissioners Doris Herringshaw, Craig LaHote and Dr. Ted Bowlus examine one of the panels that explains the historical significance of a courthouse mural.

In January, to prepare for Wood County's 200th anniversary, the commissioners authorized restoration of the 122-year-old Bowling Green courthouse historical murals.

Completed last year, the murals depict Fort Meigs and the oil boom that took place in the late 1800s.

To better explain the murals, Wood County Common Pleas Judge Matthew Reger, a historian, suggested displays be placed in front of each painting.

Judge Reger loves history and believes the panels provide more detail.

Visitors to the courthouse can tour at their own pace and discover regional history. The panels also are convenient for visiting school groups, he said.

"The panels provide meaning to the murals," the judge explained, and noted the murals are "very important or the county wouldn't have invested in restoring them." The Fort Meigs panel describes the fort's importance, noting it was the "largest fortified place in America when completed in April 1813."

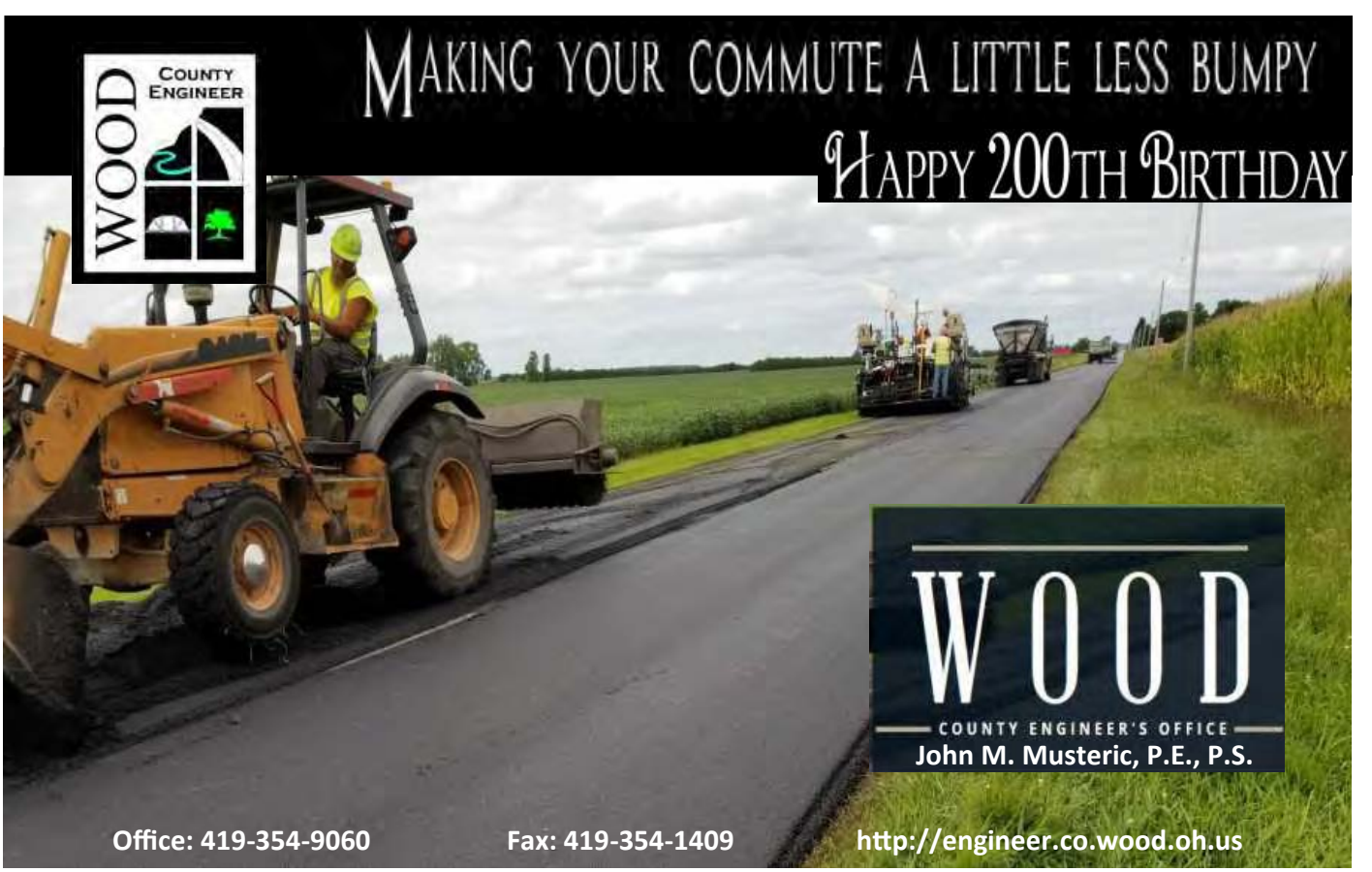
It served the U.S. military during the War of 1812 and withstood an attack by British, Canadian and Native American forces.

Abandoned after the war, the fort was reconstructed by the Ohio Historical Society in the 1970s.

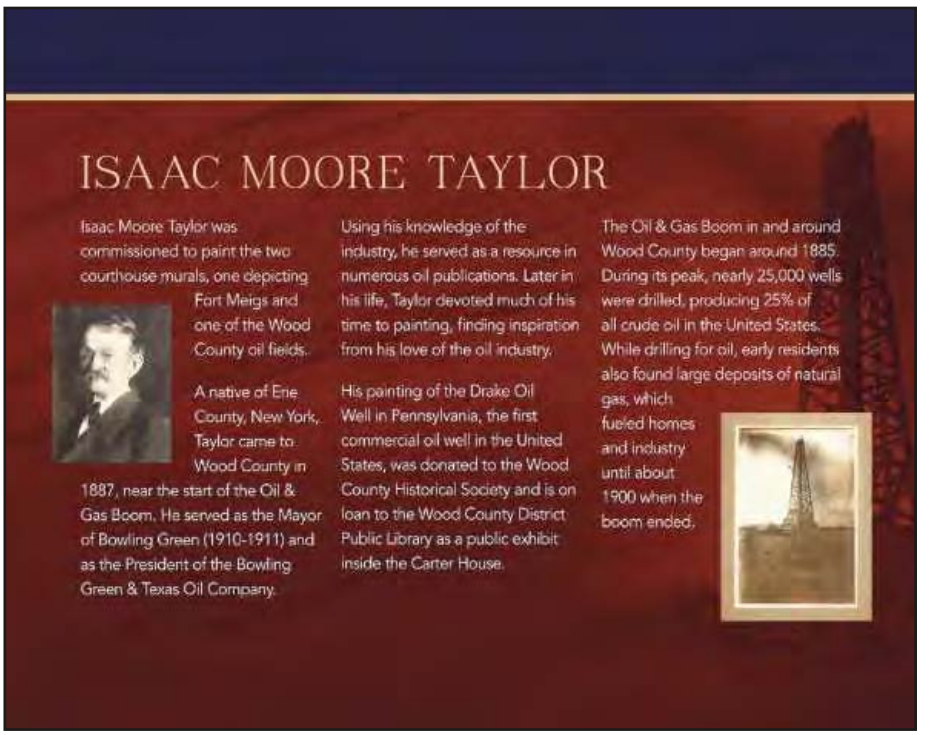
Under the oil and gas boom mural is a panel that describes the period of local production that began in 1885.

At its peak nearly 25,000 wells were drilled countywide, producing 25 percent

Continued on page 40



Courthouse Murals, Panels Depict Early Life



This panel features Isaac Moore Taylor who was commissioned to paint the courthouse murals.

Continued from page 39

of all crude oil in the nation.

The mural is believed to represent the oil fields around Cygnet.

Wood County's oil boom led the county prosperity but only for a short period. By 1900, the boom had gone bust.

In addition to information on the boom, the panel reveals the history of the murals' artist.

Isaac Moore Taylor was commissioned to create the paintings.

Mayor of Bowling Green from 1910 to 1911 and president of the Bowling Green and Texas Oil Company, he spent his later years devoted to painting and found inspiration from the oil industry.

Mr. Taylor painted the Drake Oil Well, the first commercial oil well in the United States.

That painting is on loan to the Wood County District Public Library as a public exhibit inside the Carter house.

–Jane Maiolo

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Help Wood County Preserve its History

As part of its mission to both celebrate and preserve 200 years of Wood County history, the Bicentennial Committee has created a digital archive of photographs to expand awareness of the county's rich and diverse history.

Do you have photos you think would be a great addition to this collection? The committee would love to see them.

Items will be added to this collection throughout the year, and the group would like to borrow photographs from public individuals and organizations.

Photographs will be gifted or loaned to the local history department of the Wood County District Public Library (WCDPL).

Items will be scanned, cataloged, and posted online for viewing by the public.

Photographs loaned to the library for scanning will be returned to the owner.

For a photograph to be included in the digital archive, clear ownership of the image must be established, and the owner must complete and sign documentation giving WCDPL permission to post the photographs online.

This is required for both photographs gifted to WCDPL and loaned to WCDPL.

Criteria for inclusion of a photograph within the digital archive will include:

•WCDPL reserves the right to decline inclusion of any photograph for any reason.

•Photographs should be from before 1980.

•Photographs of families or individuals will not be included, unless the rest of the photograph substantially documents a public event in some way (i.e. a photograph of a child participating in an event at the Wood County Fair).

•Highest priority will be given to photographs that are of: public events such as parades, fairs, political rallies, groundbreaking ceremonies, ribbon-cuttings, BGSU events, sporting events, etc.; public buildings, churches, schools, businesses, libraries, etc; public officials, civic leaders, business leaders, etc., and views of streetscapes, factories, farming, tilling of fields, quarries, parks, railroads, public improvement projects.

•Photographs that have identifiable individuals are preferred.

•Photographs that focus on early life in the county (before 1920) are strongly preferred.

Questions regarding photograph submissions should be directed to Marnie Pratt, local history librarian at the Wood County District Public Library, by calling 419-352-5050 or sending an email to marniepratt@wcdpl.org.

Help preserve Wood County history!

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New life breathed into old county jail

Wood County's Records Center and Law Library

In 2002, the Wood County commissioners unveiled the Wood County Records Center and Law Library in the old county jail behind the courthouse in Bowling Green.

While the exterior of the old jail remains the same, the interior of the 19,157-square-foot building was completely gutted and redesigned for its new occupants.

County administrator Andrew Kalmar described the remodeled structure as primarily "utilitarian" in nature.

The basement, first and second floors can accommodate up to 10,500 cubic feet of boxed records.

The boxes are on "Space Saver" floor-to-ceiling movable wall shelves in large rooms on each of the lower levels.

The boxes are bar coded, and the code entered into a computer.

The bar code system allows records center employees to quickly access a particular box of records. Because of the enormous weight involved in storing the records, the building required a special design to support the weight of the boxes. A new steel structure was built within the old jail's shell.

The walls and ceilings were constructed using steel I-beams, and the floors were made of poured concrete.

"We basically built a building into a building," Mr. Kalmar explained.

Each room is designed specifically for the type of document being housed. An evidence room on the lower level is kept locked, and the room is climate controlled to preserve the documents.

In addition to storing boxes of records, the records center preserves documents using microfilm or digital imaging services. Many of the older historic documents have been preserved on microfilm.

To ensure preservation of microfilm documents, duplicates are kept at an off-site location in Pennsylvania. Iron Mountain, formerly a mine, is an underground environmentally sound storage facility. Many entities in northwest Ohio store records at Iron Mountain.

The highlight of the building is the Wood County Law Library located on the third floor. Years ago, the third floor served as the home for the sheriff and his family.

Visitors entering the law library are greeted by a white fireplace in the entryway. The fireplace, orignally in the family room of the old jail, was painstakingly restored and relocated.

Two large rooms are situated on either side of the entry. The brightly lit yellow rooms feature arched brick entries and walnut-stained ceilings.

The pitch of the roof made the third floor unsuitable for storage, but created an ideal atmosphere for the library.

The facility is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Attorneys can access the library 24-hours a day by using a remote key provided by the county.

Numerous law books line the shelves, and the library is equipped with computers which can access more than 100,000 legal volumes.

Built in 1902 at a cost of $49,551, the old jail was renovated at a cost of nearly $3 million.

Because the jail is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the commissioners made every effort to maintain the integrity of the exterior, right down to the bars on the windows.

–Jane Maiolo

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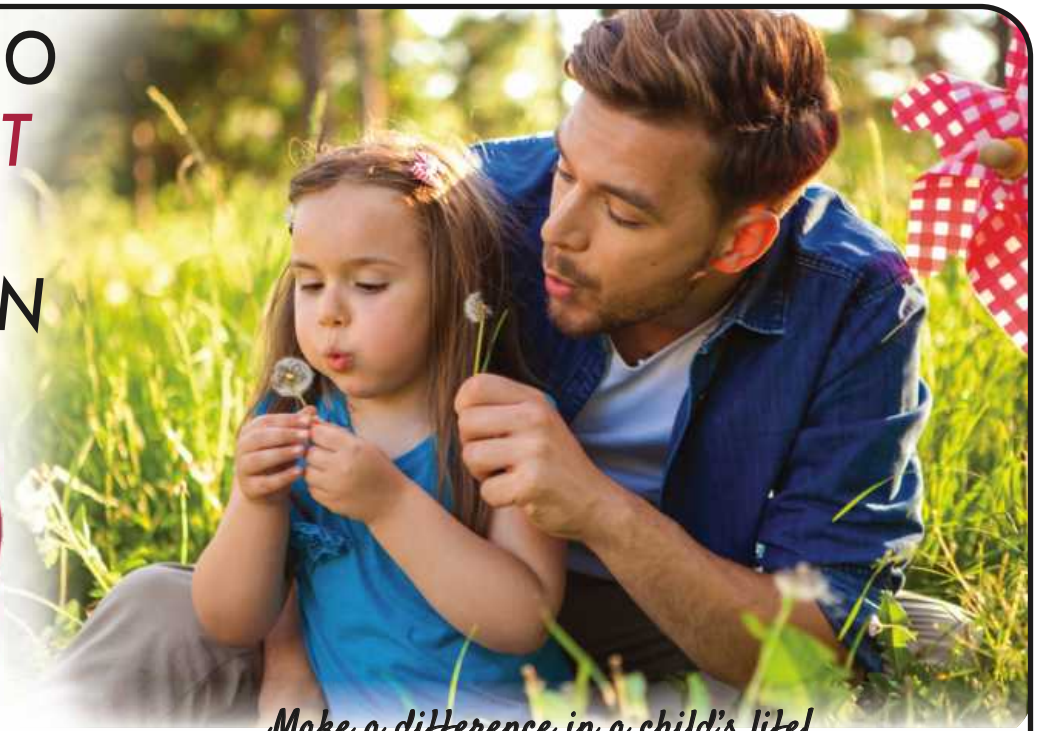

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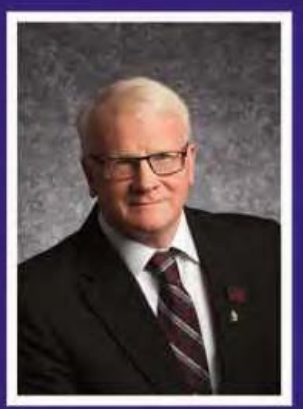

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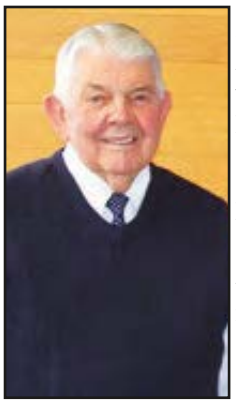

Alvin L. "Alvie" Perkins had the distinction of being Wood County's longest serving commissioner.

Mr. Perkins, who passed away in 2016, had become synonymous with the county, serving nearly three decades as a commissioner.

He grew up in Perrysburg during the middle of the Great Depression. Although the town had a hospital, he was born at the family's Louisiana Avenue home. The first of four children, he graduated in 1951 and went to work at Libbey-Owens-Ford's East Broadway plant.

He also went to Bowling Green Normal School (now Bowling Green State University) for a short time before being drafted during the Korea War. Mr. Perkins was sent to Germany and was discharged in 1955. In 1962, he married Gail Studer.

A plumber by trade, he entered the world of politics in 1972 after being approached by Al Newlove who suggested he run for Bowling Green City Council.

Well-liked by the community, he became popular for his ability to communicate, willingness to treat everyone as an equal, dedication to the public and genuine care for people.

Mr. Perkins served on council until 1976, when he became the Bowling Green mayor, a post he held until 1982, when he was elected county commissioner.

He held that position for more than 25 years.

"Alvie will always be known as one of the most popular and respected commissioners in Wood County history," Randy Gardner, former state senator, recalled.

"He was a fine gentleman who personified the best in public service. He always reached across the aisle to do what was best for the people of Wood County."

Mr. Perkins was known for his sense of humor and storytelling ability. Perrysburg Township Trustee Bob Mack said he once asked the commissioner about his party affiliation.

"In typical Alvie fashion, he explained to me how he became a Democrat at a time when political parties were not so evenly split in Wood County: 'The Republican primary lines at the poll were much too long for my patience–I decided it was so much quicker to be a Democrat.'"

And Mr. Perkins was known, on occasion, to take charge literally. Once following a storm, he received a call about a roof leak at the courthouse.

The commissioner responded, climbing to the roof and assisting with repairs.

Mr. Mack summed up the long-time commissioner, "Alvie was a well-respected leader. He had great ability to bring an occasional comic relief to the otherwise serious business of politics and government and was a legendary and long-standing commissioner."

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From the

Wood County Commissioners

RESOLUTION NO. 19-00622

In the matter of appointing members to the Wood County Bicentennial and Courthouse Quasquicentennial Committee.	)))	County Commissioners' Office, Wood County, Ohio June 4, 2019

WHEREAS, on May 23, 2019 the Board of County Commissioners, Wood County, Ohio, established the Wood County Bicentennial and Courthouse Quasquicentennial Committee to plan the celebrations of both of these monumental occasions; and

WHEREAS, per resolution 19-00600, appointment of members shall be made by the Wood County Commissioners with representation from county elected officials, the Historical Society, Wood County Libraries, Genealogical Society and Wood County citizens; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the following persons are appointed to serve on the Wood County Bicentennial and Courthouse Quasquicentennial Committee:

Matthew Reger, Wood County Common Pleas Judge
Michael Sibbersen, retired Wood County Auditor
Doris Herringshaw, Wood County Commissioner
Kelli Kling, Wood County Historical Center and Museum Director
Marissa Muniz, Wood County Historical Center and Museum Marketing & Events Coordinator
Millie Broka, Wood County Genealogical Society
Dick Martin, Wood County Genealogical Society
Hal Brown, Wood County Genealogical Society
Michael Penrod, Wood County District Public Libraries Director
Marnie Pratt, Wood County District Public Library Local History & Reference Librarian
Becky Bhaer, retired Wood County Clerk of Courts
Jim Carter, retired Wood County Commissioner
Mark Wasylyshyn, Wood County Sheriff
Dave Steiner, Wood County Planning Director
Brad Gilbert, retired Wood County Emergency Management Agency Director
Sandy Long, Wood County Clerk of the Board of Commissioners
Alex Aspacher, Wood County Health Department Community Outreach Coordinator
Kami Wildman, Wood County Health Department Outreach & Enrollment Specialist
Doug Wickard, Village of North Baltimore Street Department Supervisor
Deb Buker, Welch Publishing Company
Carol Bailey, Council Member, Village of Pemberville

and be it further

RESOLVED, the Wood County Bicentennial and Courthouse Quasquicentennial Committee shall disband on December 31, 2021; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the provisions of this resolution shall remain in full force and effect unless otherwise provided for by the said Board of County Commissioners.

Wood County Spirit Awards a Tradition

In celebration of the bicentennial of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the Ohio Northwest Ordinance and U.S. Constitution Bicentennial Commission developed the Spirit of '87 Awards Program.

The awards were established to recognize and honor citizens at the local level whose daily actions embody the principles set forth in the Northwest Ordinance.

Nominations were taken in six different categories directly related to the Ordinance. Every Ohio community was able to participate in the program and local Spirit of '87 Award honorees qualified for statewide recognition.

In 1988, the Wood County Commissioners decided to continue the awards to honor services rendered by Wood County citizens. Although the names of some of the awards have changed over the years, the spirit of the awards thrives.

Recipients of the 2019 awards were Rossford resident Bradley Gilbert, self-government; Middleton Township resident Collette Dickey, agricultural leadership; former Bowling Green resident Father Mark Davis, religion and liberty; Perrysburg Township residents Reeve Kelsey, liberty through law/human freedom; Julie Danko, education for civic responsibility; Philip Rudolph Sr., industrial/economic development, and Weston Township resident George Stossel was selected for the Lyle R. Fletcher Good Citizenship Award.

The awards, are presented annually to current and former citizens of Wood County who show outstanding qualities in bettering the county as a whole.

The nomination process can be found at the website, commissioners@co.wood.oh.us.

Wood County Population

2010 Census: 125,488
2000 Census: 121,065

Cities	*2010*	
Bowling Green	30,028	29,636
Fostoria (Wood County)	1,038	842
Northwood	5,265	
Perrysburg	20,623	
Rossford	6,293	
Villages		
Bairdstown	130	
Bloomdale	678	
Bradner	985	
Custar	179	
Cygnet	597	
Grand Rapids	965	
Haskins	1,188	
Hoytville	303	
Jerry City	427	
Luckey	1,012	
Millbury	1,200	
Milton Center	144	
North Baltimore	3,432	3,361
Pemberville	1,371	
Portage	438	
Risingsun	606	
Tontogany	367	
Walbridge	3,019	
Wayne	887	
West Millgrove	174	
Weston	1,590	

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Wood County Park District is Rich in History

Established as places to escape the urban landscape, public parks began to grow in popularity in the mid 1800s. Advocated by the American Medical Association, the first parks were large gardens with walkways, ponds and a lush green landscape.

The concept of an organized city park system began in Chicago in the 1870s, and, in 1893, the Massachusetts legislature expanded the idea to create the first regional park system.

It wasn't until 1917 that Ohio created special park districts, the first of which was established in Cleveland. Akron followed suit in 1921.

In Wood County, the idea did not catch on until the 1930s when Wood County Park District–the sixth oldest park district in Ohio–was formed.

Formally established in 1934, the park district was charged with the responsibility of acquiring and preserving open space for the conservation of natural resources for future generations.

Ironically, its first charge proved to be the only park that is no longer in the district's possession. In 1928, Mary Jane Thurston, a Grand Rapids schoolteacher, bequeathed 14 acres of land to be used as a park.

The park district was created to administer that land along the banks of the Maumee River in Grand Rapids.

To care for the acreage, the Wood County commissioners set aside a small millage for the park district to cover expenses.

In 1937, several years after acquiring the Mary Jane Thurston property, the district purchased its second holding, Otsego Park.

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The roots of All Saints Catholic Parish and School in Wood County date back to 1903. Saint Mary Magdalene Parish, which largely served Polish Catholics, was established in 1905. Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish was established in 1915 as a home for Slovak Catholics in Rossford.

The two parishes merged their schools in 1973 to create Alter Catholic Elementary School, named after Archbishop Karl Alter, a native of the diocese. In 1991, both parishes merged to create All Saints Roman Catholic Church, and Alter Catholic Elementary School became All Saints Catholic School. In 1997, a new school building opened on its current site on Lime City Road, and a new Church was dedicated in 2002.

A rectory is currently being built on the site to be completed soon. All Saints Parish continues the legacy of faith established by the many Catholic immigrants in northern Wood County, and prays that Almighty God will continue to bless our county and nation.

Located north of Grand Rapids on the banks of the Maumee, it is now the oldest park in the district.

The word Otsego means "meeting place" or "place of rocks," but the name may be credited to a small town that stood on the location in 1834.

However, the town did not survive for long, meeting its demise with development of the Maumee-Erie Canal and subsequent dam upstream in Grand Rapids.

At the turn of the century, the area saw new life when an amusement park was built complete with a dance hall, camping, ballpark and other activities.

A small road on the west side of the park earned a reputation for smuggling as it was used to bring whiskey to and from the county during prohibition.

The Great Depression brought an end to the park, which went bankrupt and was subsequently remanded to the state.

Today, the 21-acre site considered to be the most picturesque of the county parks– includes 10 acres of islands and features Thompson Stone Hall (formerly known as Otsego Stone Hall) and the Otsego Canoe Livery.

The district's third acquisition did not occur until 1951, when William Henry Harrison Park was created.

Pemberville Gun Club sold the 12 acres along the Portage River for $1.

In 1990, the district purchased 10 more acres bringing the park system to 22 acres.

It was named after President William Henry Harrison who during the War of 1812 marched his troops toward Detroit.

Learning of the American defeat at Frenchtown, then General Harrison retreated to Pemberville and the banks of the Portage where they waited for additional supplies and the freezing of the swamp before establishing Fort Meigs in present day Perrysburg.

Over the years, the parks were developed with shelters, picnic areas and playgrounds, but costs associated with maintenance continued to rise and became more than the small millage set aside for park operations.

This resulted in the park district donating the Thurston acreage to the state in 1969.

With its additional responsibilities for maintenance of the former Wood County infirmary site, potential operation of the proposed Cedar Creek Preserve and increased demand for park land, the board realized the need for a levy to cover park operations.

In May 1988, Wood County voters approved the first park levy, a 10-year millage request, breathing new life into the system.

Facilities were improved and programs expanded.

At the time the levy passed, the district only had two parks and 33 acres.

During the subsequent 10 years, the park district grew to 513 acres and 11 parks.

In 1989, park district headquarters were established on Mercer Road with the purchase of 0.86 acres from Dan Long for $65,000. Seven years later, an additional 2.5 acres was purchased from Martin and Margaret Mikhail for $8,355.

In 1990, just one year after acquiring the Mercer Road parcel, the district accepted a donation of five acres from Dewey Fuller, creating Fuller Preserve at 12153 Cross Creek Road, Bowling Green.

Other parks soon followed.

Cedar Creek Preserve in Northwood came to the park district in 1991.

The 19.7-acre park, previously owned by the Wood County commissioners was adjacent to the old Northwestern Regional Water and Sewer District office.

The park expanded by 22.5 acres in 1998, when John and Loretta Grieshaber sold their acreage for $77,000.

Cedar Creek received its name from Big and Little Cedar, creeks which flow through the preserve.

Continued on page 52

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Wood County Park District is Rich in History

This lookout on nature is at Otsego Park.

Continued from page 51

In 1992, the park district added a park and trail acreage. Buttonwood, situated along the banks of the Maumee River in Perrysburg Township, was purchased from Dr. George and Betty Black for $52,000.

Already known to local residents as Buttonwood, the name remains unchanged.

The 13-mile Slippery Elm Trail was established after purchasing the old rail line from CSX transportation for $100,000. Slippery Elm runs from Bowling Green to North Baltimore.

"It received its name because the original rails of the railroad were made of slippery elm logs," explained Neil Munger, park district director. Growth continued in 1993 when Bradner Preserve in Bradner was acquired for $209,400.

The 124-acre site formerly belonged to Dan and Connie Molter.

The park saw two expansions over the years with the purchase of 58 acres from the estate of Eleanor Huffman for $56,000.

This pavilion at William Henry Harrison Park attracts picnic goers and is one of several in the park district.

Voters again came through for the park district, approving a 1-mill levy.

During the past 10 years, the district has continued to add acreage, acquiring in 2014 Sawyer Quarry Nature Preserve on Lime City Road in Perrysburg Township.

Donated by the Sawyer family, the nature preserve brought to 20 the number of parks in the system.

And in 2016, Doug and Mary Ellen Pratt donated nearly 160 acres at Hull Prairie near Roachton Road in Perrysburg Township to the district. The acreage will revert to public property upon the couple's demise. The Pratt family's roots in northwest Ohio date to 1819, when William Pratt became interested in the region. He subsequently received a land patent on 80 acres around 1825, and over the years the family added acreage. There have been other smaller acquisitions over the years, including the five-acre Cricket Frog Cove in Cygnet and Rudolph Savanna in Rudolph. Both are accessible directly along the Slippery Elm Trail. The park district also maintains Adam Phillips Pond on Gypsy Lane in Bowling Green.

"The pond provides catch and release fishing opportunities," Mr. Munger said.

–Jane Maiolo

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Murder Case Ends in Hanging

Wood County history is full of colorful stories and others, well, not quite so much. Take the tragic and gruesome story of Mary Bach, a Bowling Green resident, whose life ended abruptly when she was murdered by her husband Carl in autumn 1881.

In the wake of her death, her husband left behind evidence. That evidence has been stored in a jar at the Wood County Historical Center and Museum in Bowling Green. The jar contains a few of Mrs. Bach's fingers. The appendages proved to be key evidence in a murder trial that ultimately led to the county's last execution by public hanging on the front steps of the county courthouse on the last day of the 1883 county fair.

According to local lore, the couple had a history of domestic violence, and Mr. Bach, a farmer, had been relegated to living in the barn.

He had hoped to move back into the house before winter but apparently, Mrs. Bach did not agree. Her response infuriated him, and he snapped, slaying his wife.

Mr. Bach turned himself in the following day after taking the couple's children and all of his money to a neighbor's house where he requested that Mrs. Bach receive a proper funeral.

Police went to the family farm to investigate Mr. Bach's claim and discovered that he had killed his wife, cutting her into numerous pieces.

At the crime scene, the fingers were collected as evidence for the trial.

The fingers are not the only artifact from the murder.

There also is a souvenir postcard from the trial and the rope used in the execution.

Historic Perrysburg Inc. on a Mission

Why should we want to learn about Commodore Perry, Fort Meigs or the Great Black Swamp? Furthermore, why does it matter that Wood County is home to many historic buildings, landmarks and famous people?

By knowing more about the people who built our cities and county and lived and worked here, we become connected to that heritage.

If you understand the history, it changes the way you view the homes and buildings around you. These "old" things help create a sense of community and shared identity.

To preserve and foster that sense of community with the history and culture of Perrysburg, a group of individuals founded a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in 1977 with the name Historic Perrysburg Inc.

The organization is committed to the preservation and appreciation of Perrysburg's local history and architecture.

Founding members were supporters of the Historic Perrysburg District and later campaigned for the creation of the East River Road Historic District.

Historic Perrysburg Inc. is sometimes confused with two other organizations–the City of Perrysburg's Historic Landmarks Commission and the Perrysburg Area Historic Museum (PAHM).

Both are separately functioning entities.

To fulfill its mission, Historic Perrysburg Inc. has done much to provide the community with educational information, lectures, projects, activities and events:

Informative literature–numerous free pamphlets for individuals to learn more about the history of the city.

Historic Perrysburg Lecture Series–various speakers each year present historic topics, including at Ladies' Teas with historical presenters.

Streetscape project–eight themed signs were created through funding from Historic Perrysburg Inc. and local businesses.

The signs now line the sidewalks of downtown Perrysburg and present a pictorial and written history of "The Way We Were" and "History Happens Here."

The group was honored for this project with the 2014 Achievement Award from the Ohio History Alliance.

Civic projects–We have published written opposition to the desecrating plans for our waterfront, the demolition of the 1895 Perrysburg Union School (Commodore Building), and the historic Fuller and Mather township homes.

We also encouraged the formation of the Perrysburg Area Historical Museum, Inc. in 2001. The 1823 Spafford House Museum opened in 2014 at 27340 West River Road.

The organization also was very involved in the Perrysburg Bicentennial (1816-2016) celebration.

Historic tours–Historic Perrysburg Inc. published a driving tour brochure of rural Wood County; conducted walking tours of the Perrysburg Historic District during First Friday events; organized bus tours of Toledo's Old West End neighborhood, a tour of old historical mansions, and a tour through old churches on Collingwood Avenue.

Financial Contributions–Historic Perrysburg, Inc. has funded four Ohio Historical Markers; donated more than $2,000 to the City of Perrysburg toward the replication of the Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry statue; contributed $1,000 to construction of the Fort Meigs Visitor Center; and funded a program at Bowling Green State University to perform an inventory of many historic homes and buildings. In addition, each year we donate funds to support historic programming at Ft. Meigs Memorial State Park and Way Public Library.

Historic plaques–are available to owners of a historic property at least 100 years old in Perrysburg or Perrysburg Township. The property owner must verify the year of construction and meet the criteria established for the plaque. Visit historicperrysburg.org for details. Other projects include a student art contest, the Bentley Historic Preservation Award and an annual Architectural Scavenger Hunt. Historic Perrysburg Inc. encourages area residents to get involved and learn more about the role of historic preservation in Perrysburg and other communities in Wood County.

To become a member, visit historicperrysburg.org.

Whether you live in a historic home, visit the downtown frequently, or are just passing through, there is a role for you to play in ensuring that future generations can enjoy the same historic fabric that we have today.

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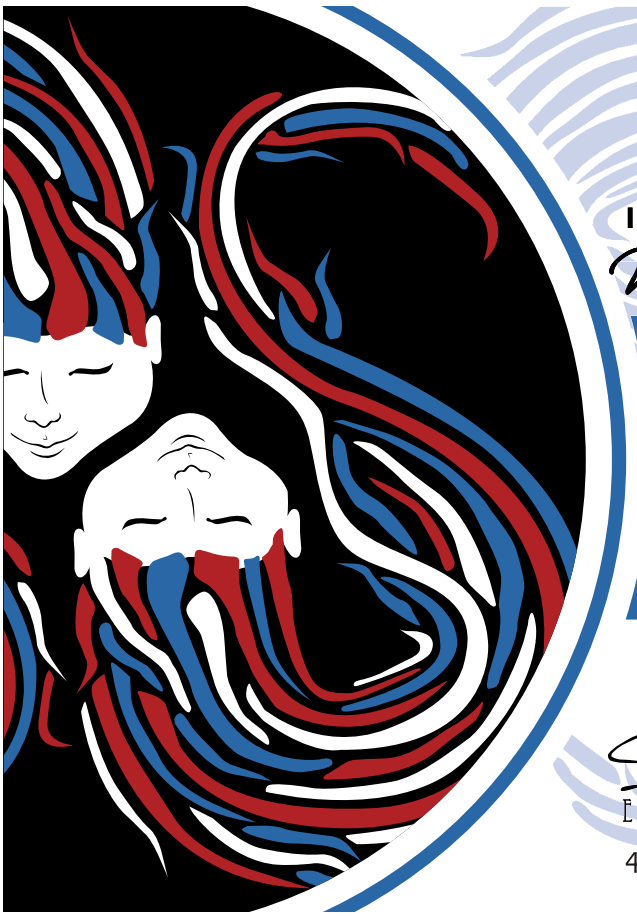

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Wood County elected officials are

Proud to serve you!

2019 Wood County elected officials, front row, from left: Sheriff Mark Wasylyshyn; Recorder Julie Baumgardner; Clerk of Courts Cindy Hofner; Judge Matthew Reger; Auditor Matthew Oestreich. Second row: Commissioner Craig LaHote, Treasurer Jane Spoerl; Judge Mary “Molly” Mack; Engineer John Musteric; Prosecuting Attorney Paul Dobson. Third row: Commissioner Dr. Ted Bowlus; Judge David Woessner; Judge Alan Mayberry; Commissioner Doris Herringshaw and Coroner Douglas Hess.

Congratulations Wood County!