

# THE VILLAGE PIONEER

*Journal of the Sheffield Village Historical Society  
& Cultural Center*



***Spring has arrived in Sheffield Village!***



*Sheffield Village Service Department crew chips fallen branches on Detroit Road in April.*



*Weeping cherry tree in full bloom on North Ridge.*



*Spring at the Sheffield History Center on Detroit Road.*

## The Greenhouse Murder

It was October 1945 and World War II had come to an end in the Pacific. Paul Duffield would soon be on his way home to Lorain, Ohio after serving in the U.S. Navy as Radarman 1<sup>st</sup> class. His wife, 25-year old Helen [Ireland] Duffield, was busy preparing their home on North Jefferson Boulevard for his expected return in November. Born in Scotland, Helen was an attractive brunette who had come to Lorain with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ireland, when she was four years old. She graduated in June 1940 from Lorain High School and was working in the office of the Lorain Products Company while her husband was in the service.

On the evening of October 24, 1945, Ellis "Bud" Hoag left his home on Abbe Road in Sheffield about 10:30 to drive down a farm lane to his greenhouse where he intended to leave a note for the driver of his produce truck. Driving down the lane he came upon a black club coupe stopped in the center of the roadway with its engine running. The coupe was blocking his passage. Suspecting the car contained "spooners," Bud blinked his lights, but got no response. Fearing a possible "raid" on the tomatoes in his greenhouse, he left his own vehicle parked behind the strange car, set the brakes, and locked the doors. He walked to the greenhouse. Seeing no intruders, he called the County Sheriff in Elyria to report the incident.

Sheriff Deputies William Larson and Charles Mack were dispatched to the greenhouse to investigate. They discovered bloodstains in the car. Nearby in a ditch completely hidden by tangled underbrush, they found a trace of blood in the water at the bottom of the ditch. Continuing their search, they found the body of a young woman who had been shot several times. The deputies reasoned that Hoag must have walked within a few feet of the slayer, who in all likelihood was crouching in the ditch hiding the body of his victim, when Hoag's appearance interrupted his escape plans. County Coroner S. C. Ward, who was summoned to the scene, said that the

body was so cleverly hidden that if attention had not been directed to the spot by the parked car, it might have gone undetected for days.

While her husband was serving overseas, to save money, Helen Duffield rented out their house on North Jefferson to another couple. She had taken a furnished room on California Avenue. Now the renters had moved out so that the Duffields could move back home. On the evening of October 24, 1945, after spending several hours cleaning



Helen [née Ireland] Duffield's Lorain High School graduation photograph, June 1940 (courtesy of Nancy Meyers).

her house, Helen Duffield drove her car to Helmann's Sandwich Shop at the corner of California and East Erie Avenues. She parked on the north side of the street across from the shop. She had often stopped in for a snack and knew the owner, William "Bub" Helmann. It was shortly before Bub's closing time at 10:00 pm. Helen sat down to have a sandwich and coffee. She told Bub how excited she was that Paul would be coming home soon and of all the work that had to be done to get the house ready for his homecoming. She wanted to buy a loaf of bread, but Bub was out of wrapped loaves, so he fixed her up a small package of bread from one of the loaves he used to make sandwiches. As she left the shop she

passed 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Councilman Jim Romoser and his brother Paul Romoser who were on

### *Jim thought he heard a woman scream!*

their way to see Bub about a hunting trip the three were planning for November. Helen crossed the brightly lighted street to her car, unaware of an unseen assailant.

A minute or so after the Romosers entered the shop, Jim thought he heard a woman scream. Neither Paul nor Bub heard it, but they stopped talking to listen. The scream came again. All three men rushed out the front door and looked up and down East Erie Avenue. At first they didn't see anything, then they noticed the driver's door of Helen's car was open. Her hair was in a mess from struggling with someone and she was trying to get out of the car. As the men tried to race to her aid, they were prevented by a stream of traffic that zipped in front of them, released by the opening of the drawbridge a few blocks to the west. As Helen struggled from behind the wheel of her car, her assailant raised a gun. In the darkness there was flash as he shot her in the head. The struggle ceased! The gun-wielder boldly got out of the passenger side. The witnesses could see that he was wearing a light tan topcoat and a dark snap-brim hat. He walked around to the driver's

side, pushed Helen out of the way, and instantly started the car. In his mad dash to escape, he careened off another car as he cut through a gas station and rounded the block, headed down Kansas Avenue, turned left onto Colorado Avenue, and sped toward Sheffield.

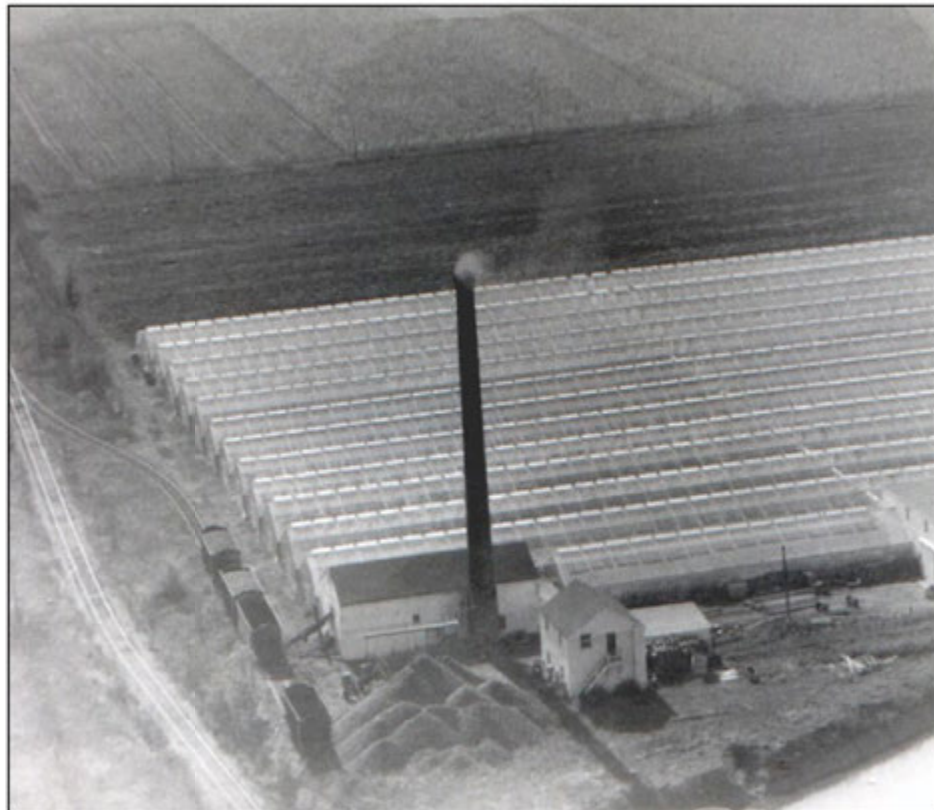
Councilman Romoser was in shock as he ran back into the shop to call the police, at the same time yelling to his brother Paul to get in his car and pursue the assailant. Paul was able to stay with the black club coupe in the city, turning corners on two wheels, but on the open road, going 85 miles an hour the coupe began to pull away. The cars shot through Sheffield and into Avon.

By the time the coupe got to French Creek, it was about half-a-mile ahead of Paul. At the Detroit Road intersection Paul couldn't tell whether the coupe had turned or went straight on. He stopped at French Creek Tavern and telephoned his brother Jim back at Helmann's. Jim relayed this information to the police along with the license number that Bub had written down.

While the chase was underway, the Lorain police had notified the State Highway Patrol and the Lorain County Sheriff's Office, and a road patrol in search of the suspected murder car was underway. Unbeknownst to Paul, the coupe had turned west on Detroit Road, entered Sheffield Village, and turned south on Abbe Road. The driver spotted a secluded farm lane and parked alongside a thicket-lined ditch, well out of sight of the main road. He knew he had to act quickly. Leaving the car running, he dragged Helen through the brush and dumped her in the ditch. Helen was still alive, but gravely wounded. Not wanting to leave a witness to his crime, he fired more bullets into her body. While he was attempting to cover the body with brush, another car pulled up behind the coupe and blinked its lights. Suspecting it might be the police, he crouched in the ditch until he could hear footsteps moving farther down the lane away from the cars. Discovering that his escape route to Abbe Road was blocked by the other vehicle, and not wanting to confront the unknown driver, the assailant made his escape on foot across the farm fields.

After discovery of the body, city police and state patrolmen converged on the scene in an attempt to halt the escape of the killer by patrolling the nearby roads and highways. At least eight "off-duty" policemen also joined in the hunt. Investigation of the scene produced a topcoat and scarf left behind by the slayer, footprints in the mud where an attempt was made to hide the body, and scores of bloody fingerprints on the interior of the car. Cleveland police scientists, David Cowles and Frank Story, were at the scene and made casts of the distinct footprints.

Helen's body was taken to the Thompson Funeral Home where Coroner Ward performed a post-mortem examination that disclosed that the killer had fired three or four shots into her body. Three brass-jacketed bullets from a 25-caliber automatic



*Aerial view of the Hoag Greenhouse as it appeared at the time of the murder (courtesy of Jack Hoag).*



*Ellis "Bud" Hoag was the first to discover the automobile where the murder was committed (courtesy of Jack Hoag).*

pistol were removed from her body, and a fourth was believed by the coroner to still be imbedded in her neck. Dr. Ward concluded that she was shot once in the back of the head and in the upper back, and twice in the chest. The police suspected that Helen was shot to silence her screams. *The Lorain Journal* headline read—**DRAGNET OUT FOR GUNMAN-SLAYER.**

Gordon Wellman did come home that night. He roomed in the home of Glenn Murphy at 507 East Erie Avenue. For the past two years, the 23-year-old Portsmouth, Ohio native (born March 29, 1922) had lived in Lorain, working at the steel mill.



*Interior view of the Hoag Greenhouse in the 1940s (courtesy of Jack Hoag).*

Mrs. Murphy was up early the next morning and saw Wellman arrive at his room around 6:00 am. He hastily packed two suitcases and wrapped up another package in paper. He quickly departed and walked to the bus stop where he caught the Lake Shore Bus to Cleveland. En route, Wellman inquired of the driver, Wayne Campbell, as to a bus to Canton, Ohio. The driver noted he carried two suitcases and a paper-wrapped package.

Wellman was known to the police. He had once roomed with Ralph Brown and figured prominently in Brown's murder trial. Brown was convicted in January

1945 for the murder of his 28-year-old sweetheart. The police established that Wellman owned and constantly carried with him an automatic pistol. Mrs. Murphy positively identified the light tan camel's hair topcoat, with bloodstains that was found at the scene, as belonging to Wellman. She did this by pointing out moth holes Wellman had complained to her about. Wellman left muddy shoes behind that were sent for soil testing to an FBI laboratory, along with samples from the greenhouse ditch. A witness told police that he seen Wellman standing in an East Erie doorway near California Avenue the evening of the shooting, "waiting for a girlfriend." The police interviewed a former girlfriend of Wellman and were told that he had threatened to shoot her if she was unfaithful to him. Police also learned that Wellman had quit his job at the National Tube Company two days before the shooting and collected his final pay the next day. Wellman's current 18-year-old girlfriend was located. She said Wellman had called her from Cleveland to apologize for breaking a date with her the night before and that he would not be back in Lorain, but would write to her. Weaving all of this circumstantial evidence together, Detective Vernon Smith and Sgt. Maurice Mumford were able to convince City Prosecutor Austin O'Toole to issue a warrant for Wellman's arrest on an affidavit signed by Police Chief Theodore Walker.

What still perplexed the police was the connection between Gordon Wellman and Helen Duffield. In an interview, Smith and Mumford disclosed, "We have all the evidence that we need to convict Wellman of first degree murder before any jury in the land. So far we have no motive in the murder, but we know it was Wellman." County Prosecutor William Wickens prepared to take the case before the Grand Jury. If he could obtain an indictment, federal law enforcement officers would be permitted to join in the search for Wellman. Prosecutor Wickens praised the detective work by Smith and Mumford as, "...nothing short of a stroke of genius."

### *"I made a mistake in telephoning my father. . ."*

Lorain police alerted Portsmouth police and those of Columbus and other southern Ohio cities that Wellman might be heading

for his former home and requested their assistance in apprehending the murder suspect. The break in the manhunt came on the night of October 26 when the Columbus police received a call from Portsmouth with information that Wellman may be at his sister's house in the capital city. His capture took place on October 27 as he walked along Broad Street with his two sisters. Sgt. Mumford transported Wellman back to Lorain, arriving at 1:30 am on October 28. When reporters asked him what led to his apprehension, he said, "I made a mistake in telephoning my father from my sister's home in Columbus." Then he started to sob, "He never had much use for me anyway. I'll bet he won't even come to the trial."

Gordon Wellman told his version of the incident to the police on October 29. He said he only wanted the car that belonged to the sailor's wife. He needed a car to take an 18-year-old girl to Georgia and marry her. On the night of October 24 he was walking along East Erie Avenue and spotted Helen Duffield's car parked across from Helmann's Sandwich Shop. The car was locked. He liked the look of the coupe and loitered near a service station at the intersection, waiting for the owner to return. Wellman related that when Helen got into the car he came up and ordered her to slide over. In the struggle for the ignition key, his gun went off "accidentally." She fell out of the car through the open door on the right side. He got out, walked around the car, shoved her back inside on the floor, went around the car again, and got behind the wheel. In his desperate attempt to get away, he crashed into a taxi, but kept on going when he saw someone from the sandwich shop was following him.

After the chase through the east side streets, Wellman managed to elude his pursuer in Avon and turned south on Abbe Road just inside Sheffield. He found Hoag's greenhouse lane and turned off. He pulled Helen from the car to a grassy patch. She was still breathing and moaning. He sat in the car for a while smoking a cigarette, trying to think what to do. "The breathing bothered me and I decided to do something about it. I stood over her and shot two bullets into her. Then I dragged the body across the cinder path and put it in the ditch. I saw the lights of a car coming down the road, so I started to run across the field. I didn't have time to get my coat and scarf in the car."

In the mad dash across the muddy plowed field, Wellman ran into a barbed wire fence and cut himself and tore his clothes. He kept running across Sheffield until he reached the railroad bridge leading into the steel mill, just north of East 31<sup>st</sup> Street. He entered the pipe mill where he used to work and proceeded to burn his clothes in a "salamander" [space-heater, usually fueled by propane] and buried his gun, nine loaded 25-caliber cartridges, and a plastic, cloverleaf lucky charm. Police later retrieved these articles. He sent an "old-timer" steel worker to the mill's cafeteria to buy him some milk and sandwiches, then broke into a locker and stole clothing to replace his own. While at the mill, Wellman related his whole story to two steelworkers. The two employees informed the police while Wellman was on the run. The police later said that their testimony would have "clinched" the case against Wellman without his confession.

Even so, Wellman pleaded "not guilty" to the charge of first degree murder and was held without bond. The Grand Jury began the probe of the Helen Duffield murder in mid-November 1945. A surprise witness was Paul Duffield, husband of Helen who was brutally shot to death on October 24. Paul was just back from the war in the Pacific. He had been on continuous duty as a radarman for the past 22 months and had five battle stars. He was unable to get air transportation after he learned of his wife's slaying via a radio message while on duty. He was released to take a cargo ship to the West Coast then a train to Ohio. Paul and Helen were married in September 1940 and he went into the Navy in 1943. Reluctant to discuss the tragedy, which struck while he was away, Paul would say little about his wife. He did say that she never mentioned Wellman or "anyone else" in her letters. Ironically, he had sufficient points for discharge on September 15, but had agreed to stay on for two months longer. If he had come then, she would still be alive. On November 21, Gordon Wellman was indicted by the Grand Jury for the first degree murder of Helen Duffield.

The trial was held in January 1946 as crowds up to 300 packed into the Lorain County Courthouse in Elyria. The defense attorney Edward Conley attempted to imply that the shooting was the result of a lover's quarrel between Wellman and Helen Duffield. Wellman himself later

# WELLMAN PLEADS NOT GUILTY AFTER CONFESSING SLAYING

## CIVIL WAR IN CHINA GRIPS 11 PROVINCES

Million Troops Clash in Fight for Control of Areas

### BATTLES RAGING

Central Government and Communists Engaged in Undeclared War

**HUNGKING** — Undeclared civil war gripped China today with more than 1,000,000 central government and Chinese communist troops fighting it out for control of 11 key provinces in north, east and central China.

Both governments and communist sources admitted that several weeks had resulted in a high death toll in Hunan province with no definite outlook yet.

**Flighting Refugees** — The Communists charged that the New China daily that said

## He's Tired of Peeping Tom Role

By Lorain Press

### NORTH HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — Capt. Kenneth Ramsey, 30, who spent three years in a big prison camp and came home to find the home quarantined, appealed to city health authorities today to remove the ban before his 15-day term expires.

Ramsey was stopped from seeing his wife and seven-year-old daughter Patricia Daise by a "keep out" quarantine — called "fever" — set posted on the door. He wishes the health department would advise the wife instead of getting his wife thru a window.

## THREE DAYS LEFT, \$45,000 NEEDED TO MEET FUND QUOTA

\$81,706 Raised Toward \$120,000 Need for War, Home Needs

## STRIKE HALTS PRODUCTION OF PIPE AT MILL

Union Officials Report 2,000 Men Idled by Work Stoppage

### CONFER TODAY

Labor Conciliator Called in as 250 Maintenance Men Leave Jobs

Pipe production at the Lorain National Tube Co. was at standstill today as a result of an unannounced strike which commenced at 1 a. m. Sunday when 200 maintenance men walked out. Most officials said 1,000 men were idled by the walkout, but union officers today said nearer 2,000 were affected by the work stoppage. A session of maintenance men concluded production by operators. It was pointed out.

Constance Caird, Paul Scherer, president of the CIO local 1164, said that a labor conciliator from Cleveland would confer with management men at 1 p. m. today. He made it clear that the strike was without approval of the union.

## AS WELLMAN TOLD STORY



Gordon Wellman confers regarding Lorain case.

## RALLY TO OPEN LORAIN'S 8TH BOND DRIVE

Campaign Workers Join in Session Tonight at Headquarters

### SCHOOLS MAP PLANS

Solicitation to Start Tomorrow; All Goals Not Yet Set

Lorain victory volunteers today were among the million showed the nation who went to work today on the 11 billion dollar victory bond. But while the eighth has done ably since it opened this morning, Lorain campaign officials announced that they would complete their organization work, meeting tonight and that a general solicitation would begin tomorrow. Campaign headquarters have been opened at 810 Broadway, according to Campaign Chairman H. H. Wrenn and will again be staffed by Mrs. Alex Wrenn, who served in the city's Research War Unit. 8 Withers Ave. County Board of Education is scheduled tonight's meeting is scheduled.

## RELATES HIS OWN STORY OF BRUTAL MURDER, ESCAPE

Says He Only Wanted Car Belonging to Lorain Sailor's Wife; Waits Prosecution in Jail Cell That Held Brown

Staring fixedly at the judge's bench and with his handcuffed hands limp in front of him, nattily-attired Gordon Wellman pleaded innocent to a charge of first-degree murder for the slaying of 25-year-old Helen Duffield at arraignment in municipal court this morning.

The 25-year-old suspect appeared nervous as he stood before Municipal Judge Malcolm Thomson, with a small crowd of spectators in the room behind him. After Judge Thomson pointed out he was entitled to counsel and a preliminary hearing, Wellman asked to see Duffield's picture. A few moments later, in a low voice, murmured, "The quality of the evidence against me was not represented by an attorney, the released evidence

## BLOODY FIGHTING FLARES IN JAVA

Headline from The Lorain Journal, October 29, 1945.

testified that they had been intimate on several occasions. This argument was dispelled by several rebuttal witnesses and her husband's testimony. Wearing his Navy uniform Paul spoke of the love between Helen and himself, "During my years of service we corresponded regularly and my wife never mentioned going out with other men, or even made mention of getting a divorce."

Testimony was heard from all of the eyewitnesses to the shooting and other events surrounding the incident. Ellis Hoag told of discovering the coupe on his greenhouse lane and the Romosers recounted their experience. In all, some 30 witnesses testified as to the guilt of Wellman. In his closing arguments, Prosecutor William Wickens demanded a guilty verdict without mercy, stating, "Wellman defamed Helen's character to the jury to save his own vicious soul." He pointed at Wellman and shouted, "Gordon Wellman is a liar, a cheat, and a fraud."

On January 18, 1946, after seven days of testimony, Judge D. A. Cook charged the jury in a 27-minute presentation of instructions. He outlined the law and

gave them possible verdicts they could return: (1) first degree murder, as charged, with death in the electric chair, (2) first degree murder with a recommendation of mercy, (3) second degree murder, (4) manslaughter, and (5) not guilty. While the jury deliberated Wellman's fate, Paul Duffield stood in the hallway outside the courtroom. Tears came to his eyes as he told *The Lorain Journal* reporter, "I feel that the state has completely vindicated my wife's reputation." Paul sought out Detective Vernon Smith and Sgt. Maurice Mumford to thank them for their work in the case.

At 8:50 pm on January 18, after nine hours of deliberation, the jury of eight women and four men returned a verdict of guilty of first degree murder, but recommended mercy. Because of the mercy recommendation, Wellman was sent to the Ohio State Penitentiary for "life." Under Ohio law passed in 1945, a person sentenced to life imprisonment on a first degree murder charge becomes eligible for consideration for parole after 15 years. The judge was clearly not pleased with the verdict. In an unusual comment from the bench, Judge Cook looked at

Gordon Wellman and said, "The jury has been very generous to you. The evidence clearly exonerates Mrs. Duffield of any wrongdoing whatsoever." Asked by the judge to stand and speak, Wellman's only comment after urging by his attorney was, "I thank the jury and the judge." Off the record he told newsmen, "I'll tell you frankly, I expected the electric chair."

In 1960, after serving 15 years in the penitentiary, Gordon Wellman's petition for parole was denied. Records appear to indicate that Wellman was released after serving 55 years in prison. In March 2000 he applied for and received an Ohio driver's license. On June 5<sup>th</sup> of that year he died in Portsmouth, Ohio at the age of 78.

The Editor wishes to acknowledge the contributions of Jack Hoag, son of Ellis Hoag, for bringing this fascinating, but very sad story to the attention of the Historical Society and those of Thomas Greenwood for compiling newspaper articles relating to this case. Sheffield Village Police Chief Larry Bliss and Police Dispatcher Lola Smith researched the final year of Gordon Wellman's life. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

## July 4<sup>th</sup> Flood of 1969

A relentless rainstorm hit northern Ohio on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1969, dumping a foot of precipitation across the region. The night of the storm was a fearful experience. The constant thunder was deafening. Lighting strikes were so frequent that the sky was continually illuminated as the rain pounded down throughout the night. Your Editor was aboard a research boat on Lake Erie that safely made port at Catawba Island that evening, but there was no chance to leave the protection of the vessel during the stormy night.

Virtually every stream in this part of the state overflowed its banks causing severe damage to farms, homes, bridges and even marinas at the mouths of rivers on Lake Erie. Sheffield was not spared. Village Administrator Leo Sheets took some photographs of French Creek and the Black River in flood, which he has graciously shared with the Historical Society.



French Creek in flood following the 4<sup>th</sup> of July storm: East River Road at James Day Park—view toward the south (left); East River Road at James Day Park—view toward the north (right). Photographs courtesy of Leo Sheets.



Black River valley at the river's confluence with French Creek—U.S. Steel Plant in the distance.

The U.S. Geological Survey operates a stream gaging station on the Black River in Elyria's Cascade Park about a mile downstream from the confluence of the East and West Branches of the river. At this station, the Black River has an upstream drainage basin of just under 400 square miles and an average annual flow of 336 cubic feet per second (cfs). On July 6, 1969, the station recorded the highest instantaneous peak flow of 517,000 cfs, following a record high rainfall in the drainage basin on July 4, 1969. This peak was over 1,500 times greater than the average flow of the river.

## *Harriet Root—A Life of Public Service*

Harriet Root was a remarkable woman. Born in Sheffield on August 27, 1885, her life and career accomplishments can serve as an inspiration to all. For 68 years she dedicated her life to unselfish service to her community and to her country. On her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Harriet was interviewed by Rich Bloom of *The Lorain Journal*. When asked how she decided to undertake a career of service, she reflected, "I guess I became interested in community work while I was a senior at Wellesley College and taking a course on immigration. We would go down to the port of Boston to talk with the many immigrants coming to the United States." She speculated that it is very possible that some of the people the young schoolgirls spoke with eventually settled in Lorain, a city peopled with immigrants and their descendants. From these conversations, Harriet found within her the desire to help others whenever and wherever it was needed.

Harriet traced her family history back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. "In the 1630s my ancestors got in trouble in England and it was a case of either getting their heads chopped off or leaving the country. They chose the latter. The Roots, along with other families, left their home in Sheffield, England and began the tedious journey which ended with the founding of Sheffield Village near French Creek."

Her branch of the Root family had one more step to go before the journey was finally completed. They moved closer to the lake." At the foot of Root Road, her grandfather, William Henry Root (1803-1889), built a grand Greek Revival-style home in the 1840s. Her father, Orville Root (1837-1919), was raised in this house as was Harriet, who lived here all of her life except when she was on missions of mercy throughout the world. Harriet's great uncle was Capt. Aaron Root, noted for his heroic efforts to take escaped Underground Railroad slaves to Canada in his Great Lake ships.

When Harriet was 9 years old, Tom Johnson constructed the first steel mill on the Black River in land annexed by Lorain from Sheffield Township. At the same time Lorain also annexed a portion of Sheffield along the Lake Erie shore, extending from about Kansas Avenue eastward to Root



*Portrait photograph of Harriet Root in the 1920s (courtesy of David Hibbard).*

Road, leaving the Root Homestead just inside Sheffield. Then in 1920 Lorain acquired an additional 330 feet east of Root Road—thus, Harriet's home was no longer in Sheffield and she became a resident of the City of Lorain.

Harriet's charity work began in 1907 after she graduated from Wellesley College. Returning home, she started a sewing class for daughters of steel mill workers in South Lorain, teaching over 100 girls how to sew. Soon after, she started a settlement

house—an institution in Lorain's inner-city that provided educational, recreational, and other social services to underprivileged residents of the community. In 1910 she joined Associated Charities, Lorain's first formal welfare organization that was founded that year. When the first rumblings of war in Europe were heard, Harriet lost no time in starting a class in surgical dressings. During this time Harriet was also busy managing the 120-acre family grain and stock farm on the lakeshore.



Lorain High School graduation photograph of Harriet Maria Root, June, 1903 (courtesy of David Hibbard).

When World War I came, Harriet went to France with the Wellesley unit of the Red Cross. She served 18 months in Bordeaux caring for displaced refugees and wounded service men. She recalled, "In France we worked with refugees in trying to keep the families together and finding a place for them to live. Later we were transferred to an American Army evacuation point just outside Bordeaux to aid injured soldiers in adjusting to their return to the United States."

After the war, she returned home and was named secretary of the Lorain Chapter of the American Red Cross. In 1924 she played an outstanding role in the rehabilitation of Lorain following the devastating tornado of June 28. This work gained her a national reputation, resulting in her appointment to the National Disaster Staff of the Red Cross. She served in several major disasters, including Mississippi River floods, Florida hurricanes, the California dam tragedy, Midwest tornados, and the Kentucky drought.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Harriet helped distribute food to the needy and organized women of the community in canning and preserving thousands of jars of fruits and vegetables for this cause. As times improved, Harriet spearheaded a beautification program in Lorain by chairing the Lilac Tree Committee and she was instrumental in the original Rose Garden at Lakeview Park. Modesty was one of Harriet's outstanding characteristics. When given *The Lorain Journal* "Best Citizen Award" in 1931 for her work during the Depression, she didn't think she deserved it.

Washington, DC recognized Harriet's abilities. Representatives of President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked her to direct the newly founded U.S. Government Information Service in 1934. The Office started in a few upstairs rooms, but under Harriet's leadership it grew so rapidly that a whole building was constructed to house the agency. As World War II raged in the Pacific, she traveled to Australia



Harriet Root's father, County Auditor Orville, in his buckboard in front of the family house on the Lake Erie shore as it appeared in the late 1800s (courtesy of David Hibbard).



and New Zealand to set up U.S. Information Libraries to help their citizens better understand America. One of the interesting aspects of the job was advising foreign war brides what life is like in the United States and preparing them for the transition. She remained in Australia for three years, where she also helped Jewish refugee families find new homes when the war ended.

Returning home in 1946, Harriet jumped back into civic activities without taking a breather. She was an active member of the Community Chest, United Appeal, YWCA, and Salvation Army, to which she was named life board member in 1963. In 1967 she was honored by Lorain's Quota Club as its "Woman of the Year."

Although her seemingly perpetual reservoir of energy was somewhat curtailed when she entered her eighties, Harriet continued to spend much of her time reading, entertaining guests, and keeping abreast of current issues. In 1968, when asked what she thought of the Vietnam War, she commented, "We're in it and we've got to stop it. I hope the next administration finds a way to stop it." Harriet Root died on February 28, 1975 in St. Joseph Hospital at age 89, following a brief illness. She is buried in the Root Family Plot in Garfield Cemetery in Sheffield Village.

The Editor wishes to acknowledge the Black River Historical Society for the use of file material on Harriet Root, and especially the gracious assistance of Sheffield Village Historical Society members David and Elaine Hibbard for sharing photographs, newspaper articles, documents, and most of all memories of David's great aunt "Hattie" Root.



MISS HARRIET ROOT (second from left), who is in charge of the U.S. Library of Information in [redacted] showing MRS. S. SAUREZ, MISS JOAN MAURER, and MISS BERYL TOOTH, who will shortly make their homes in America, a map of the United States. Mrs. Saurez will make her home in Detroit. Miss Maurer, who will leave for America at the end of the month, will live in San Francisco after her marriage, and Miss Tooth, who is only 18 years of age, will live in New Jersey after her marriage to William J. Holmes, of the Marine Corps.  
*Sydney Morning Herald 28-3-45*

Harriet Root (second from the left), director of the U.S. Library of Information in Australia during World War II, is shown advising three young Australian women about their new homes in America after their marriage to U.S. servicemen. This photograph was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on March 28, 1945.



Harriet Root's home on the lakeshore at the foot of Root Road. This house was built by her grandfather, William Root in the 1840s. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Brianne McLaughlin Day in Sheffield Village

Brianne McLaughlin started ice skating when she was four years old. Some 18 years later her dedication to the sport of ice hockey culminated in a Silver Medal as goaltender on the U.S. Women's Hockey team at the 2010 Winter Olympics held this February in Vancouver, British Columbia. Brianne has a phenomenal 3,809 career saves as a goalie. In recognition of her accomplishments, Mayor John D. Hunter declared April 13, 2010 as Brianne McLaughlin Day in Sheffield Village and presented her with a framed proclamation in the Village Council Chambers on April 12. At the celebration, Brianne was kind enough to let well-wishers try on her dazzling Silver Medal—its actually quite large and heavy! Brianne and her parents, Briant and Susan McLaughlin, live on Sturbridge Court in Sheffield Village. Brianne is pursuing a degree in pediatric nursing at Robert Morris University and plans to graduate next year. We can all be proud to have an Olympic Medalist in our Village and we wish Brianne continued great success.



Brianne McLaughlin, Silver Medalist.



Brianne's Silver Medal.



Mayor John D. Hunter presenting proclamation to Brianne McLaughlin.

## Avon Isle National Register Nomination

On April 9, 2010 the Ohio Historic Preservation Advisory Board unanimously voted to recommend approval of the Avon Isle nomination for National Register of Historic Places status. The final step in the procedure is to send the Ohio Board's recommendation to the National Park Service for approval. This two-year-long process has been another joint project of the Avon and Sheffield Village Historical Societies. The Avon Isle Dance Pavilion, located on French Creek just northwest of the intersection of Ohio Routes 254 and 611 in Avon, has been an important facet in the history of both communities.



Entrance sign to Avon Isle Park. The nearby bridge to the park over French Creek is scheduled to be replaced this summer.



Avon Isle Pavilion, built by F. J. Roth in 1926, was a popular dance hall and recreation center in the mid-1900s.

We are gratified that the Ohio Board was very complimentary of the nomination documentation. The nomination was prepared by Ralph White, Vice President of the Avon Historical Society and Eddie & Ricki Herdendorf of the Sheffield Village Historical Society. Susan Tietz, National Register and Survey Manager of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, assisted our Societies in the effort and made the presentation to the Board. The future of Avon Isle looks bright. This summer the bridge to the Isle will be replaced with the help of a \$50,000 grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The City of Avon plans to develop the site as a community center/park, and has also applied for an \$175,000 energy grant from NOPEC to renovate the dance pavilion.

## North Ridge Guidebook Available

The Sheffield Village Historical Society and the Avon Historical Society are pleased to announce the publication of a *Guide to the North Ridge Scenic Byway*. The 284-page guidebook contains some 290 full color and 125 black & white illustrations. In August 2007, the Ohio Department of Transportation designated the entire 9-mile segment of State Route 254 within Lorain County as the *North Ridge Scenic Byway*. The guidebook is designed to first familiarize travelers along this corridor with the natural and historic setting and then to provide a mile point by mile point illustrated description of the most noteworthy features, both natural and cultural, that can be seen while traversing the *Scenic Byway*.

Publication of the guidebook was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byway Program. The guidebook is available to members of the Sheffield Village and Avon Historical Societies for a \$20.00 donation and to non-members for a \$25.00 donation.

It can be obtained by contacting the Historical Societies at 440-934-1514 (Sheffield Village) or 440-937-5516 (Avon) or email at [herdendorf@aol.com](mailto:herdendorf@aol.com) or [tjs11@centurytel.net](mailto:tjs11@centurytel.net) or visit [www.frenchcreekmedical.com/byway](http://www.frenchcreekmedical.com/byway) for credit card orders.

## Calendar

**May—Restoration of 1946 Fire Truck** at Garfield Farms, 4921 Detroit Road. If you would like to help with this project, call Ron Forster, Historical Society Vice President, at 440-949-7638 to schedule a time.

**May 17 (Monday 7:00 pm)—*Treasures of a Lost Voyage: Shipwreck of a Gold-Rush Steamer***, an illustrated lecture presented by Eddie Herdendorf, Historical Society President, at the American-Croatian Club, 4846 Oberlin Avenue, Lorain, Ohio. Sponsored by the Black River Historical Society. For more information call 440-288-4557.

**June 5 (Saturday 9:00 am or when ever you can make it)—Work Party at the Sheffield History Center**, 4944 Detroit Road. Come and help get the History Center ready for the summer season. Dust, paint, file, inventory, and lots of other fun jobs. For more information call the Sheffield Village Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

**July 8 (Thursday 7:00 pm)—Summer Quarterly Meeting of the Sheffield Village Historical Society Board of Trustees** at the Sheffield History Center, 4944 Detroit Road. **All Historical Society members are welcome to attend.** For more information call the Sheffield Village Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

**July 10 (Saturday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm)—Sheffield Village Historical Society Open House** at the Sheffield History Center, 4944 Detroit Road. Come and get your local history questions answered, book signing for *Guide to the North Ridge Scenic Byway*, see historic displays, bring artifacts, documents, and

## GUIDE TO THE NORTH RIDGE SCENIC BYWAY LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO



photographs that you would like to donate or have scanned for the Society's files, and enjoy talking about Sheffield's heritage. Free and open to the public. For more information call the Sheffield Village Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

**August 7 (Saturday 10:00 am to 3:00 pm)—Burrell Homestead August Picnic** at 2792 East River Road. Tours of the Jabez Burrell Homestead (built in 1820), pioneer games, stories of Underground Railroad escapes to Canada, and much more. Sponsored by Lorain County Metro Parks. For more information call 800-526-7275.

**September 11 (Saturday 11:00 am to 4:30 pm)—Sheffield Village Family Pride Day** at the French Creek Nature Center and Sheffield Village Municipal Complex on Colorado Avenue. Come and enjoy music, games, food, nature walks, arts & crafts displays, exhibits by local organizations, fire trucks & police cruisers, and much. Free and open to the public. For more information call the Sheffield Village Mayor's Office at 440-949-6324.

**October 14 (Thursday 7:00 pm)—Fall Quarterly Meeting of the Sheffield Village Historical Society Board of Trustees** at the Sheffield History Center, 4944 Detroit Road. **All Historical Society members are welcome to attend.** For more information call the Sheffield Village Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

## *Just What Happens to my Recycled Trash?*

This past spring virtually every household in the Village received an olive-green, 68-gallon recycle container cart into which each week we stuff all manner of bottles, cans, cardboard, newspapers, junk-mail, and plastic refuse. Have you ever wondered how *they* deal with all that trash jumbled together in those carts? Quite simply—they sort it by hand! At least that's pretty much what happens after some huge machines take a crack at it. To answer the question more fully, the Editor had an opportunity to visit the facility in Oberlin that deals with recyclables from a 10-county area stretching from east of Cleveland to west of Sandusky and to south of Mansfield. With an impressive name—*Lorain County Resource Recovery Complex*—the facility was equally impressive in the quantity and efficiency of the operation. Each day a staff of 30 employees processes 150 tons of material, but the plant could handle up to 400 tons if operated at full capacity. They really want your trash!

Operated by Allied Waste/Republic Services Company, the facility was opened in 1992 at a cost of \$8.5 million. The tract of land upon which the plant is located comprises 1,400 acres, of which 250 acres are being utilized as a solid waste landfill and 10 acres for the recycling facility. The attractive building that houses the recycling plant occupies 60,000 square feet (20,000 for the tipping/loading area, 30,000 for processing, and 10,000 for offices). Operations Manager, Dan Schoewe, made the visit pleasant by kindly explaining each stage of the process and leading us on a tour of the entire operation.

Trucks continually arrive and unload materials in two basic categories: commercial/industrial cardboard (35%) and residential curbside refuse (65%). The facility is running at a 75% recovery rate, meaning that about three quarters of the waste received is recycled for useful products, while one quarter is not suitable for recycling and must therefore be disposed of in the adjacent landfill. One of Dan's goals is to keep the latter number as low as possible.



*Allied Waste truck picking up recycle cart in Sheffield Village.*



*Lorain County Resource Recovery Complex in Oberlin.*



*Processing building at the Recovery Complex.*

## Recycling Process

Truckloads are dumped, graded into basic categories, and fed to different lines depending on the category. Cardboard requires the least hand sorting and is directed to a Harris baler where approximately 76,000 individual pieces are compressed into 40 bales per day. Each bale weighs about 1,400 lbs, resulting in an annual production of approximately 10,000 tons.

Curbside refuse (newspaper, metal beverage and food cans, glass bottles, and various plastic containers) is more complex and requires a variety of processing techniques. The first machine in the line is a “debagger.” Refuse has to be removed from plastic bags before the sorting process can begin. Dan Schoewe strongly recommends against placing refuse in plastic bags—it slows down the process. The loose material is then conducted up a unique conveyor system called the “Star Screen.” The stars are actually, rubberized cog-like wheels that rotate at high speed allowing newspapers and other paper products to shoot up the system on top of the star wheels, while bottles, cans, and other heavier objects fall between the wheels and onto a conveyor belt. The paper material is then directed to the baler, while the glass, metal, and plastic items continue on for further separation.



*Trash materials being loaded on conveyor to the Star Screens.*

Next, magnets remove ferrous (iron & steel) cans and other steel scrap. Air knives are used to blow off liquid or debris from materials as they travel on the conveyor belts. The knives consist of high intensity, uniform sheets of laminar airflow. Along with vacuum systems, they separate lighter or smaller particles from other components, reducing the need for hand removal.

Then comes the hand sorting by a team of seven to ten workers. All plastic items are picked up and sorted by hand. Each person has an assigned type of material, be it white plastic, colored plastic, plastic with recycle Nos. 3 to 7 (only Nos. 1 & 2 are preferred for recycling), glass jars and bottles, or items not removed in the presort process, such as plastic bags and paper products.

A special process known as “Eddy Current” or “Rare Earth Magnets” removes aluminum containers. In this process aluminum cans are literally levitated by inducing a magnetic field in the cans, which allows them to be separated easily from other recyclables. Another device used to remove recyclable material from large scrap items is known as a “trommel”—a large, rotating, screened cylinder used to separate materials by size. It has circular openings in the screen only large enough to allow beverage and food containers to pass through, while scrap metal is conveyed to a hopper for sale to local scrap dealers. Material that is not a candidate for recycling is left on the conveyor belt, where it falls into a hopper and is transported to the nearby landfill for burial.



*Operations Manager Dan Schoewe holding a Star Screen wheel.*



*Sorting line in the processing building.*

## Plant Production

All materials, excluding glass, are baled for shipment to factories that can utilize recyclables in their manufacturing process. This plant has a single Harris baler that can make bales that weigh about 2,000 lbs. All recyclable material, except glass and scrap metal, is baled for shipment. Increasingly, domestic and foreign manufacturers are modifying their production lines to accept recycled materials. The Lorain County Resource Recovery Complex has a marketing team that is continually searching for companies that can utilize the plant's production. If a local market for bales of recycled material cannot be found, then the bales are shipped to the Coast in containers bound for China. The price received for recycled material is highly variable, ranging from \$100/ton down to as low as \$10/ton. Annually, the plant produces about 25,000 tons of recycled material, in approximately the following categories:

Cardboard	10,200 tons
Newspaper	10,200 tons
Glass	1,300 tons
Plastic	1,300 tons
Steel	1,200 tons
Wood	350 tons
Aluminum	250 tons
Plastic bags	200 tons

## Value of Recycling

Here are some reasons for recycling that were enumerated by Dan Schoewe. Recycling 125 aluminum cans saves enough energy to power an average home for a day and one ton of aluminum saves 37 barrels of oil. Because it takes glass about a million years to breakdown in a landfill, it never wears out and can be recycled over and over again. Recycled glass saves up to 30% of the energy to make new glass. Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 trees, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, 2 barrels of oil, 7,000 gallons of water, and enough electrical energy to power a home for 5 months. Containers classified as No. 1 & No. 2 are the most common plastic materials in community recycling programs (95% of all plastic bottles in the United States market). Recycling one ton of plastic can save 1,000 gallons of gasoline. Every ton of steel recycled saves the energy equivalent of 3.6 barrels of oil, 2,500 lbs of iron ore, 1,400 lbs of coal, and 120 lbs of limestone.



*Sorted plastic (right) being loaded on conveyor (left) for transport to baler; bales of aluminum cans in background.*

## Unusual Items in the Recycling Mix

As one might expect, the sorters come across some items in the trash that probably were not intended—for example an IRS refund check for over \$4,000. Lucky, Dan Schoewe was able to track down the recipient who happily gave the sorter a \$50 reward. Cash is not unusual; another sorter found a \$100 bill, but there was no way to determine the owner! When wallets, keys, or other personal items are found that have some form of



*Bales of plastic ready for shipment; Harris baler at upper right; cardboard bale on forklift (center).*

identification, Dan does his best to see that they are returned. Occasionally, someone will show up at the plant believing an item of value was inadvertently dumped in the trash and they want to know if they can look for it. After taking one look at the tons of debris, they usually give up on the idea. But Dan does alert the sorters to the possibility and they do what they can to try to spot missing items.

## In Memoriam

In the last few months we have lost Historical Society members, friends, and residents of Sheffield Village. The Society wishes to express our condolences to the family and friends of these noteworthy citizens.

**Jessie Mildred [née Mittelstead] Root (1914-2010).** Jessie Root, age 95, died at her home on Detroit Road in Avon on March 22, 2010. Jessie was a Charter Member of the Sheffield Village Historical Society. The daughter of Rudolph August and Mabel [née Waite] Mittelstead, Jessie was born on August 10, 1914 in Cleveland, Ohio. The Mittelstead family, originally from Ironwood, Michigan, moved to Avon around 1920 and farmed land on North Ridge. In 1922 her father took Jessie and her sister, Marie, on their first airplane ride. One Sunday the family was out for a ride and came across a sign: *Aeroplane Rides \$5/Person*. While dad and the girls went up in the sky, mom stayed behind thinking she'd never see her family alive again. Jessie graduated from Avon High School and earned a teaching certificate from Bowling Green Normal School at the time the school was in transition to Bowling Green State University. She was pleased to recall being a student in Professor Edwin Lincoln Moseley's science class. The eminent, and somewhat eccentric, Professor Moseley comprised the entire science department at that time and also held the position of president of the Ohio Academy of Science. Jessie taught grade school in Avon for a few years then married Frank A. Root of Sheffield Village in 1937.



Jessie and Frank Root at their winter home at Jensen Beach, Florida in the 1980s.

Together they operated a 60-acre truck farm on Detroit Road for 40 years, eventually constructing a 2-acre tomato greenhouse on the farm. They had two sons, Frank A. Root, Jr. (1939) and Jack Dallas Root (1944-2009). Frank Root, Sr. died on June 15, 2006. Both Frank and Jessie, and their son Jack, are buried in the Milton Garfield Family Plot of Garfield Cemetery.

**Roy E. Wilhelmy (1925-2010).** Roy Wilhelmy of Detroit Road in Sheffield Village died on March 25, 2010 at the age of 84. Roy was born on October 10, 1925 in Elyria, raised in North Ridgeville, and resided in Sheffield Village since 1949. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and for many years was a volunteer firefighter in Sheffield Village, where he also maintained

the Village's fire trucks. Roy married Olga Dirdal in 1948 and they had one daughter, Karen A. Rogers of McKinney, Texas and one son, Kurt R. Wilhelmy of Wakeman, Ohio. Roy worked as a milkman and truck mechanic at Elyria Dairies for 43 years, retiring in 1990. He was a member of St. Vincent DePaul Catholic Church in Sheffield Township and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 9871 in Elyria. Burial was in Garfield Cemetery.

**Janean [née Caley] Lujan (1936-2010).** Janean was the third daughter of Fredrick C. "Fritz" and Rachel [née Anderson] Caley. She died on April 8, 2010 while returning from a trip to Peru to visit her daughter Rachel in Cusco. Janean was born on August 5, 1936 in New London and grew up on the family farm on East River Road in Sheffield. She graduated from Brookside High School in 1954 and Hiram College in 1958. After college, Janean joined the Peace Corps and served in Peru. There she met and married Dr. Louis "Lucho" Lujan. They made their home in Peru and later in Lake Orion, Michigan and Huron, Ohio. Janean was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Huron and participated in the Harlequin's Theater Group in Sandusky. Burial was in Garfield Cemetery.



Janean [née Caley] Lujan's Brookside High School graduation photograph, 1954 (courtesy of Fred Scharmann).

**James Anthony Kerstetter (1966-2010).** Elyria Police Officer James Kerstetter of Middlebury Court in Sheffield Village was shot and killed in the line of duty on March 15 on 18<sup>th</sup> Street in Elyria. Jim was born on July 9, 1966 in Elyria. He was a 1984 graduate of Elyria West High School and served as a military policeman in the U.S. Army. Before joining the Elyria Police Department Jim had served as a Lorain County deputy sheriff and as a part-time police officer for the Cities of Grafton and LaGrange. He earned an associate's degree in applied science from Lorain County Community College where he also served as instructor of the College's Police Academy. Elyria Police Chief Duane Whitely called Jim "one of the best" and an "outstanding officer." The man who shot Officer Kerstetter was himself shot and killed by police officers after he lunged at them with a gun. He is survived by his wife Tammy [née Maroney] and three daughters—Misty, Shelby, and Bailey. Burial was in Resthaven Memorial Gardens in Avon. Hundreds of American flags and thousands of people lined the streets to honor Jim as the funeral procession passed. A benefit for the Kerstetter family is planned for May 15 at the Breezewood Party Center (for more information call 440-240-3573).

## Society Organization

The Sheffield Village Historical Society is a charitable nonprofit 501(c)(3) and educational organization dedicated to discovering, collecting, preserving, interpreting, and presenting Sheffield's rich heritage.

Membership is open to anyone who wishes to support the Society's mission. For more information contact Eddie Herdendorf, President (440-934-1514 [herdendorf@aol.com](mailto:herdendorf@aol.com)), Ron Forster, Vice President (440-949-7638 [rforstersv@yahoo.com](mailto:rforstersv@yahoo.com)), or Patsy Hoag, Secretary (440-934-4624 [patsyhoag@roadrunner.com](mailto:patsyhoag@roadrunner.com)).

Society journals can be found on the Village of Sheffield, Ohio official website: [www.sheffieldvillage.com](http://www.sheffieldvillage.com) (click on the Sheffield Village Historical Society decal , then Pioneer newsletters, then download).

Page Layout is by Ricki C. Herdendorf, EcoSphere Associates, Put-in-Bay, Ohio.

The collections of the Sheffield Village Historical Society are housed in the Sheffield History Center at 4944 Detroit Road. The Center is open to members and guests by appointment—please call (440-934-1514). The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is July 8, 2010, 7:00 pm at the History Center. **All members are welcome to attend this meeting.** An Open House for members and guests is scheduled for Saturday, July 10<sup>th</sup> at the History Center.

Society members are encouraged to submit items for future issues. Please send your stories or ideas to the Editor.

Charles E. Herdendorf, Ph.D.  
Journal Editor, Sheffield Village Historical Society  
Garfield Farms, 4921 Detroit Road  
Sheffield Village, Ohio 44054

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## Addendum to Prohibition Article

The pistol belonging to Barbara "Bobbie" Sheets, pictured on page 4 of the March 2010 issue of *The Village Pioneer*, has been identified as a 0.38 Hopkins and Allen Safety Police Revolver. Charter member Matt Bliss found the exact same pistol illustrated on page 153 of *Jane's Gun Recognition Guide*. This variety of pistol was produced from 1907 to 1914. It had an overall length of 7.28 inches, a barrel length of 3.25 inches, and had five chambers. On this model the serial no. is located on the butt frame beneath the grip. The inscription "Hopkins and Allen Arms Company, Norwich, Conn." and the patent date appear on the top barrel rib. Thanks for your detective work Matt.



Barbara Sheets' Prohibition Era pistol.

## Ask Your Friends to Join the Historical Society

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP SHEFFIELD VILLAGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Garfield Farms—4921 Detroit Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio 44054—(440)-934-1514

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- Individual (\$10.00/year)  
 Family (\$15.00/year)—2 Adults & children under 18 years old  
 Business/Corporate & Organization (\$25.00/year)

Family Members (for Membership Cards) \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests in Sheffield History? \_\_\_\_\_