

THE VILLAGE PIONEER



Journal of the Sheffield Village Historical Society

Holiday Greetings



Autumn foliage frames the new Ford Road Bridge over Black River. The new bridge was dedicated and opened to traffic on November 15, 2013.

Sheffield's Centennial Reunion—100 Years Ago

In 1915, on Wednesday and Thursday, August 11th and 12th, the residents of Sheffield Township celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the settlement of the township. The celebration took the form of a homecoming at Sheffield Center [Burrell & Day Homesteads] and all old and new residents together with their families were invited to the celebration.

Printed invitations were mailed to distant friends and old residents of Sheffield. Those living nearby were notified by Elyria and Lorain newspapers, asking them to accept this as their invitation to be present. The following program for the celebration appeared in the August 3, 1915 addition of *The Elyria Evening Telegram*:

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11

At two o'clock in the afternoon

Boat Ride up Black River

Stage Ride from Island [Bungart Island] to French Creek Hollow [James Day Park]

At five o'clock

Camp Fire Supper (Basket Picnic)

Story Telling, Music, Dancing on the Green

THURSDAY, AUGUST 12

At ten o'clock in the forenoon

Assembly and Greetings at the Burrell Home

At twelve o'clock noon

Chicken Pie Dinner

History of Sheffield, First Fifty Years

History of Sheffield, Second Fifty Years

Music and Short Addresses

Rains in the afternoon of August 11th caused the program to be adjusted somewhat and other features were added. The following description of the celebration was assembled from accounts in *The Elyria Chronicle* (August 12, 1915), *The Elyria*

Democrat (August 19, 1915), and Professor G. Frederick Wright's *A Standard History of Lorain County, Ohio* (1916, pages 160-162).

River Pilgrimage

The Centennial Celebration began on Wednesday with a launch ride from Todd's Boat House [near today's Black River Landing] in Lorain, up the river to a landing near the Hyer Farm [at Bungart Island]—a short distance downstream from the mouth of French Creek. They followed the same course as Jabez Burrell did when he brought his family to the then wild and heavily wooded section of land he had chosen. The trip was far different than the original trip as the party were enabled to view from the water the many big plants and manufacturing enterprises that line the river almost to the mouth of the creek.

One hundred years earlier Captain Jabez Burrell, Isaac Burrell, Captain John Day, and Captain Joshua Smith left Massachusetts to find a suitable place to locate on the land they had purchased without seeing it and then return home for their families. Captain Smith and his son Douglas returned to Sheffield in the fall and were soon joined by Asher Chapman and Samuel Fitch. They remained on the land during the harsh winter. The following spring the first family of settlers arrived—Captain Henry Root and his wife Mary [Day] Root, and their six children. In the summer, Captains John Day and Jabez Burrell arrived with their wives and nine and eight children, respectively.

Picnic in French Creek Hollow

Some 75 passengers enjoyed the river pilgrimage in honor of the way some of Sheffield's founders arrived. At the top of the river bluff, jitney buses met the pilgrims, taking them to French Creek Hollow [today's James Day Park] for an outside program. A basket picnic was the first thing on the program, 100 or more enjoying this feature. In the early afternoon a light rain began to fall and it was decided to postpone the pageant until the next afternoon. All were taken to the nearby old Congregational Church, built in 1854, which had been and faithfully restored for the event. Here County Auditor Orville Root, a grandson of pioneer Henry Root, called the assembly to order for the reading of letters by lamp light sent by distant friends of Sheffield. Short addresses were made by many of the old time friends, telling many things of interest which happened in those pioneer days. Celia Durand read a paper, *The Sheffield Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve* and Asaph Jones sang, *One Hundred Years from Today*, thus closing the day's exercise.

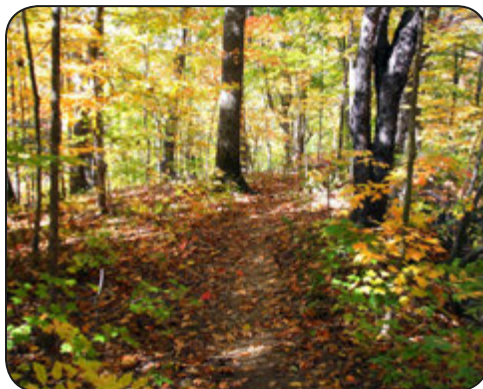
Homecoming at the Burrell Homestead

On Thursday August 12, 1915, the Sheffield community and friends assembled on the spacious lawn of the old Jabez Burrell home, where time was spent in visiting and recalling old time experiences. Six long tables, seating 50 each, had been arranged on the lawn and were soon filled with the many people in attendance. The first 300 were seated at the tables, while many others waited their turn. The chicken pie dinner, with all the other fixings, were very much enjoyed by all present.



Panoramic photograph of the gathering at the Burrell Homestead to celebrate Sheffield's Centennial. Noted Lorain photographer, Willis Leiter, took the picture on August 12, 1915. Note the gentleman in the dark suit at the far left side of the photograph also appears at the far right side.

In the old brick house, which Jabez had constructed in the early 1820s from bricks he fired on the farm, his great grandson Harry and his wife Tempe [Garfield] Burrell had prepared an exhibit of Sheffield relics, a number of which were brought into Sheffield when the first families arrived. This “curio room” was arranged in the front part of the house and was open for visitation by those attending the celebration. Among the relics were a shawl owned by Tempe that was worn by Lydia [Austin] Day, Captain John Day’s wife when she came to Sheffield, a 100 years earlier; Captain Day’s silk hat; a 75-year-old bundle of flax grown on the Day Farm; a 1790 map of Connecticut; a scarf worn by Leonora Burrell 75 years earlier; a dress made in 1790 by Lydia Day and one fashioned by Rhoda Maria Day in 1811; a yarn weaver made by the Shakers and sold to Milton Garfield’s son, Halsey, in 1865; and many other curios.



French Creek Hollow, now known as James Day Park, where Sheffield’s Centennial Celebration began on August 11, 1915.

Assembly in the Old Church

After dinner the company again assembled at the old church, where the afternoon’s program was carried out, Orville Root acting as chairman. Ray Cogswell gave the first fifty years of the history of Sheffield, which had been prepared by Norman Day (1803-1880). He spoke of the coming of the first settlers, Captains Jabez Burrell and John Day, from New England in 1815 where they had purchased the township from General William Hart of Saybrook. The coming of Captain Joshua Smith and his son Douglas in November 1815 by ox cart from Massachusetts marked the first permanent settlers. Next came the arrival of Freeman Richmond, Henry Root, Oliver Moon, Milton and John Garfield, A. R. Dimmick, and Henry Austin—some coming by boat as far as Niagara Falls and then by stage, others by ox cart, and many walking. At the end of the first year in Sheffield the population of the settlement reached 50 persons. The first white woman was Mrs. Freeman Richmond, who came in February 1816, and the first family with children was Henry and Mary Root in April 1816. In 1824 when Lorain County was formed, the organization of Sheffield Township was the first order of business. The trustees were Captain John Day, Isaac Burrell, and A. D. Dimmick. Milton Garfield was the first treasurer and Nathan Stevens served as the first clerk and magistrate of the new township.



Sheffield Congregational Church across the road from the Burrell Homestead where County Auditor Orville Root presided over an assembly to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Sheffield’s 1815 founding.

Wilderness Pageant

The pageant, which was to have taken place Wednesday evening, was carried out Thursday evening, and began by a dozen little fairies appearing from a distance, dancing to music of a Graphophone. Then the music died away and Indians appeared on horseback. Halting, they started a fire and began getting their evening meal. Soon afterward a covered wagon drawn by two horses was seen coming down the road. It represented the coming of the first family to Sheffield. The campfire was started, lighting the whole hollow. Dancing of many of the younger and some of the older ones followed, with music by Mr. Clark Cox and Mr. Boyd, two of the old fiddlers. This was one of the happy features of the evening’s entertainment. Mr. Jones sang *The Perfect Day*, which closed one of the most successful and interesting gatherings that Sheffield has ever witnessed.



This double image was possible by running behind the crowd as the panoramic camera slowly swung from left to right exposing a long, narrow photographic plate.

St. Teresa's Sister Blandine

Sister Mary Blandine was a teacher at St. Teresa School for some 13 years—1947 to 1959. She passed away at an advanced age in 1961 at the Order of Notre Dames' Mother House in Chardon, Ohio. But there is much controversy, possibly adventure, concerning her early life.

Tom Smith, the Law Director of the Village of Sheffield and a long-time member of the Historical Society, recently brought a book to my attention, *Sister, Billy the Kid and Me: Sister Blandina Segale and Old West Discipline in the 1950s*. The book was written by James P. Mesker and published by Burd Street Press of Shippensburg, Pennsylvania in 2011. James was a student at St. Teresa School in the late 1950s and in fact he rode to school in Brookside's Bus No. 7, while was I serving as bus guard on the Sheffield Lake run.

James had moved from Cleveland to Sheffield Lake and entered St. Teresa School as a second grader. His teacher, Sister Blandine, was a strict disciplinarian, yet he was enthralled with the possibility that she had known Billy the Kid and had even sheltered him from a vigilante posse—in her words, “merely giving sanctuary to an oppressed person.” After hearing Sister Blandine make occasional reference to her encounters with Billy the Kid in New Mexico, on the last day of class he finally

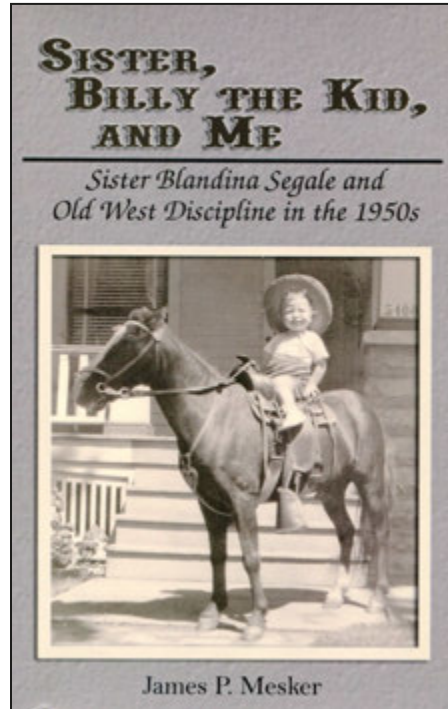
got up enough nerve to ask her the question, “Did you really know Billy the Kid?”

The last day of school was devoted to an outdoor picnic and softball games. James' strategy was to engage Sister in a conversation about the picnic food or the weather, well away from the other

students, then spring the question on her. His plan going awry—he jumped off the school bus and spotting his teacher, he immediately blurted, “Good morning Sister Blandine...did you really know Billy the Kid?” All turned silent! She got him in a headlock and dragged him away from the other students, who turned and quickly vanished so as not to witness “his demise.” Sister released him, smiled, and asked that he repeat the question. Asking again and expecting a blow to the head, he was surprised to hear, “Yes...I did.” She went on to say one must “always, always” tell the truth when asked a question.

They went on walking and talking about the Old West. Her references to “the Kid” were like parables that focused on justice. She believed that God's law was all that mattered in human behavior. About hiding the Kid from a posse, she dismissed any accusation of misconduct—she considered most of the posses as vigilante mobs, not representing true legal authority.

At the time Billy the Kid was rampaging New Mexico, General Lew Wallace was serving as Territorial Governor. Earlier,



James P. Mesker's 2011 book, *Sister, Billy the Kid and Me: Sister Blandina Segale and Old West Discipline in the 1950s*.



Students and faculty of St. Teresa School (1947). Sister Blandine is standing at the far right (Jean Ackerman).



Billy the Kid circa 1881 (Hydragyrum).

during the Civil War, General Wallace had served in the Union Army. He was given a memorable assignment at the end of the War—appointed as presiding officer at the war-crimes trial of Major Henry Wirz, the commander of the Confederate prison at Andersonville, Georgia. During the 14 months that the prison was in operation, 45,000 Union soldiers were imprisoned there, behind a wooden stockade with no shelter and little food and water. In that short span of time, 13,000 Union soldiers died, several being shot by the commander himself. Major Wirz was found guilty and hung in Washington, D.C. on November 10, 1865 in sight of the Capitol Building—the only Confederate officer to be hung for war crimes.

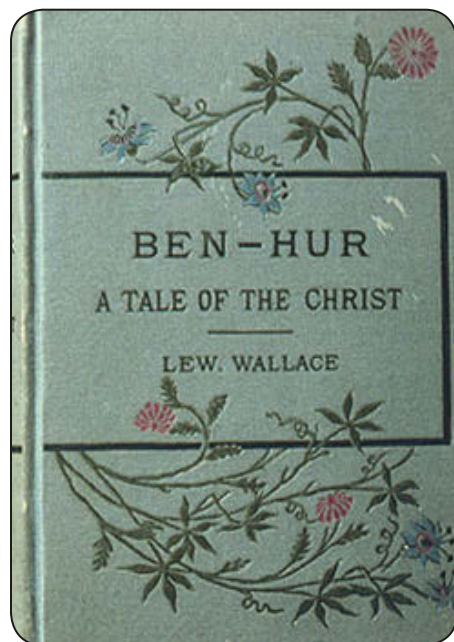
General Wallace apparently has similar feelings as Sister Blandine. While serving as Governor of the New Mexico Territory, he came face-to-face with Billy the Kid in 1879, advising him to give up his “perilous career.” The Kid’s actual name was Henry McCarty. He was born November 23, 1858 in New York City and shot to death by Pat Garrett, Sheriff of Lincoln County, New Mexico in July 1881 after not heeding Wallace’s advice. A year after meeting the Kid, Lew Wallace went on to write perhaps the most influential religious story of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Ben Hur—A Tale of The Christ*. His writings show that men are subject to a “Higher Authority,” perhaps in reference to his encounter with the Kid.

As James and Sister Blandine walked, she confided that most of her work, and the deeds she felt to be true adventure, were her efforts to improve the daily lives of people with whom she interacted while conducting mission schools in New Mexico. She inspired the townsfolk of every community she visited to build lodging and schoolhouses for the benefit of Hispanic and Indian children. James walked and listened as the rest of the students played softball. He said thanks to her, boarded the school bus, and was gone for the summer, keeping Sister’s story a secret.

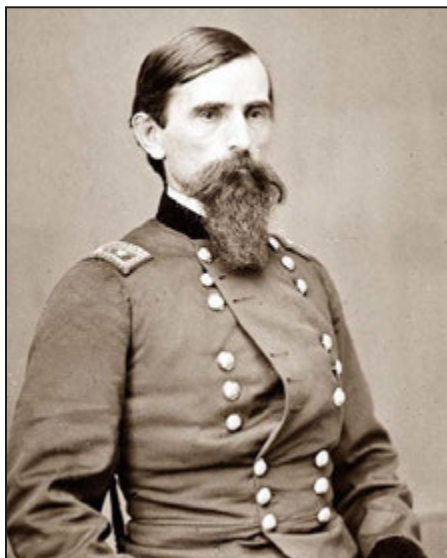
James Mesker’s book is a charming read. It is only 54 pages long, but packed with amusing anecdotes of school days and humorous church duties at St. Teresa. I am sure you will find it fun, but perhaps a bit puzzling—there is still much mystery surrounding Sister Blandine’s identity.



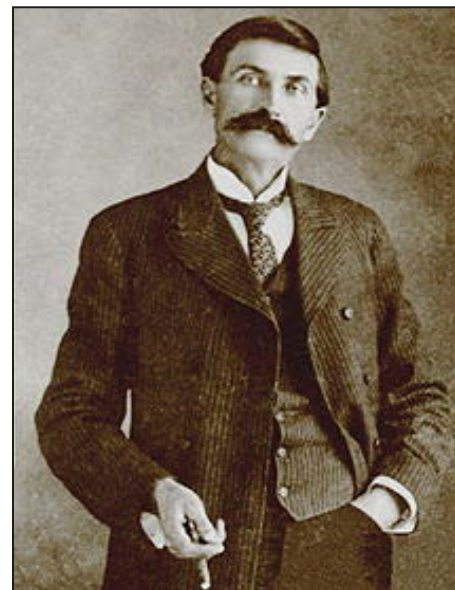
Sister Mary Blandine in her classroom at St. Teresa School in 1953 (Jean Ackerman).



Lew Wallace’s epic tale of the Christ, *Ben-Hur*, published in 1880.



General Lewis Wallace, Civil War officer and Governor of New Mexico Territory from 1878 to 1881 (National Archives).



Pat Garrett, Sheriff of Lincoln County, New Mexico, the man who killed Billy the Kid.

So what was it like to be a Brookside bus guard? First, one would have to get up very early and find a way to the bus garage at the corner of Colorado Avenue and Harris Road by the time the drivers arrived. If it had not been done the afternoon before, the seats would have to be brushed off and the floor swept. The buses would pull out about 7:15 a.m. and start the first of two runs. In my case, Bus No. 7 with my hero, Al Frankovich as driver, would pick up students from Sheffield Lake first, deposit some at St. Teresa School, drop off the rest at Brookside, before heading south to Sheffield Village. This was in the mid-1950s. Years later, at the 50th reunion of my class, the topic of “Who did you learn the most during your years at Brookside?” came up. Without hesitation my answer was “Al Frankovich”—after all, for three years I spent over three hours with him each day, more than with any teacher.

Aloysius Frankovich was a handsome man in his 30s with a well-manicured, thin black mustache. He was tall, slender, and very fit. His black hair was combed back and he looked quite the “dude” in his typical dark attire and low boots. Al worked the night shift as a truck driver at U.S. Steel’s National Tube Plant in Lorain. He made arrangements so that he could punch out of the mill in time to drive the school bus. He taught me a lot about driving, but even more about life and the management of people—lessons that paid great dividends when most of my career, from age 24 on, was in supervisory positions. I also learned logistics. At the start of each year new students would usually come to the road in front of their homes unless they learned from older pupils where we had set up stops the year before. So, Al and I would make head counts on a map and select stops that would make the run efficient without requiring the students to walk too far—never making them cross the highway on their own.

There were certain requirements to be a bus guard. You had to be an upperclassman, at least a sophomore and in good physical condition—able to jump out of a moving bus, run up to the railroad tracks, look both ways, signal the bus to advance, and catch the door with your right hand propelling you back into the moving bus as it crossed the tracks. Sorry, at the time girls need not apply. At each stop I would again jump out as the bus slowly came to rest. If the students were on the opposite side of the road, I would station myself in the center of the road with my yellow caution flag displayed until I was sure traffic in both directions was stopped, then I would signal the students to cross.



Brookside school bus in 1944. A high school student bus guard is standing at the side as elementary students board the bus.



Brookside School bus in 1956. Al Frankovich is the third driver from the left, standing at Bus No. 7.

We only had one instance where this plan failed. It was an afternoon run in the spring of 1956. Coming from the west, the bus was rolling to a stop on Colorado Avenue in front of St. Teresa Church. The students were gathered across the street on the sidewalk leading to the church. I was just rounding the front of the bus to take my position in the center of the highway when a car flew by from the east, nearly clipping me. I had preached to the students never to start across the street until I gave the signal and this edict was religiously followed, except on that day.

Not waiting for my signal a young girl, Karen Krasienko, dashed out in the street just as the car zoomed passed the front of the bus. The car didn't hit her head on, actually Karen ran into the side of the car and ended up a crumpled heap at the side of the road. When I got to her I could see she was battered, but unbelievably not seriously injured. Fortunately, Sheffield Village police officer, Joseph Temkiewicz, was following the bus that day, as he often did, and was able to apprehend the driver of the driver of the transgressing automobile. *The Lorain Journal* reported the incident this way:

SHEFFIELD—A nine-year old child escaped serious injury yesterday when she was knocked down by a car which police said passed two stopped school buses and skidded toward a group of children at a crossing. The child is Karen Krasienko of 4576 Linda Lane, Day Allotment. She was treated for brush burns and bruises on her legs at St. Joseph Hospital.

The girl was struck by a car driven by Mary Bucci, 24, of 453 Oberlin Ave., Lorain. Deputy Marshal Joseph Temkiewicz, who was stationed near the intersection where the accident occurred, charged Mrs. Bucci with passing two stopped school buses. Police said both buses were eastbound on Rt. 611 about 3:30 p.m. The first, driven by Michael Hanko, was about to turn left onto Abbe Rd., police said, and Hanko had the bus' flashing lights and turn signal operating.

The second school bus, operated by Al Frankovich, was stopping across Rt. 611 from St. Teresa Church to pick up about 15 children from church school who were on the other side of the road. The second bus was 50 feet behind the first, also had its flashers in operation.

Police said Mrs. Bucci, a clerk at Avon Lake Drug store who was driving a store car, came from the opposite direction and went by the turning bus. Then the driver realized that she should have stopped and applied her brakes, police said. The car slid 52 feet toward the group of children. It knocked the young girl down. Officer Temkiewicz took Karen to the hospital. Police said a bus guard, Eddie Herdendorf, a junior at Brookside High School, was in the middle of the road at the crossing with his signal flag when the accident occurred.

On the Sheffield Lake run, Al had a particularly difficult maneuver to perform. At the east end of Sheffield Lake the bus had to pull into the 103rd Ohio Voluntary Infantry camp ground and pick up several students before heading back west to the school. Unfortunately, there was no way to turn the bus around in the narrow drive, so I had to stop traffic on Lake Road (at the time a very busy U.S. Route 6), then signal Al to back out onto the highway. All went well for months until an icy day in February. I half skated to the center of the road. No traffic was coming from the west, but several cars were down the road to the east.



Brookside majorette, Karen Krasienko of Linda Lane, Sheffield Village in 1964. Eight years earlier, while a student at St. Teresa School, she was struck by a car while she was waiting to board a Brookside School bus.



(2012)

Karen [Krasienko] Verespe and her former bus guard, Eddie Herdendorf, meet for a Brookside luncheon reunion at The Legacy in Avon Lake.

I successfully got the first car stopped okay, but the next two were traveling too fast. Crunch, crunch—the cars collided. The first car slid toward me, but halted at a safe distance away. There wasn't much I could do at that point—no one seemed to be hurt—so I signaled Al to back out. As he swung backwards on the highway, I jumped onboard and we were on our way to school with our precious cargo.

Al was quick to let me know when I was not at my best, but just as quick to let me know when he was pleased. One warm fall day we were cruising up River Road with the side windows open. All of the sudden a hat went flying out the window from somewhere toward the back of the bus. Al, with his ever-watchful eyes, caught a glimpse of it fluttering to the pavement. He pulled the bus to the side of the road and like a shot I was out the door, down the road, and back in a flash with the rescued cap. Al smiled, “Yeow...you run like a jack-rabbit.”

Special events were great and a chance to get out of class. I particularly liked the field trips to the Cleveland Art Museum where the display of Medieval armor and weapons was outstanding. Sport events were fun too, especially the spring track meets at Oberlin College where the buses had to transport both the track athletes and the school band. And for all this, the bus guards even got paid—as I recall, something like 90¢ at day.

There was something very special about bus No. 7—it was the only Brookside bus with a radio. In the mid-1950s *Rock-n-Roll* was just bursting onto the scene and the kids were all talking about the new music on the radio station. Al and I had an idea—let's put a radio on the bus, but how are we going to finance it? “Milk money,” I said. It wasn't really extortion, but close to it. I made a pitch to the kids on both runs and in a few weeks Al said we had enough to buy the radio. The next weekend I met Al at the garage and we got it installed. It was a smash hit and I had to control dancing in the aisle.

One problem though, it crackled like crazy. Al pondered awhile then said, “We need to mount noise suppressors on the spark plugs.” You guessed it—another round of contributions was needed. The problem was solved and all of the students on bus No. 7 took pride in ownership, knowing they had a part of bringing music to their ride. Years later I was talking to Jeff Warnicke, the student who took over the bus-guarding duties with Al after I graduated. Jeff mentioned, “You know, we were still the only bus with a radio.”

It was May of 1957, the school year was over and I would soon be graduating. We had dropped off our last students on Detroit Road and heading back to school for the last time as a team—to me a special team.

Al pulled into the SOHIO station at the corner of East River Road. I was surprised because we had just filled the tanks the day before at Johnson's Store. Al looked over at

me and said, “OK, take it back to the barn!” I could scarcely believe it; I was going to get a chance to drive a school bus. Struggling a bit at first with double clutching, soon I was humming down East River Road. Al played bus guard at the railroad tracks. I carefully turned onto Colorado Road, sped past my dad's new fire station, and rounded the Harris Road corner at Brookside. A little too timid, I stopped outside the bus garage and let Al finish the job of backing old No. 7 into its stall. So ended my career as a Brookside bus guard, but not my enduring memories!

Sometime in the 1960s, Brookside abandoned the practice of placing student guards on school buses. The interurban trolleys were gone and gates had been installed at the major railroad crossings. Then to, the School Board must have been concerned about their liability for the tasks the guards were expected to perform. All I can say, it was a golden time for me and I hope for Al. He could concentrate on driving while I maintained order onboard the bus and did my best to see the students got safely to school and home again.



Valentine card made for bus guard Eddie Herdendorf by Bridget Tichaur, a student at St. Teresa School in 1956.

Massive Mushroom on East River Road

Barbara “Bobbie” Sheets, emeritus member of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society, was mowing her lawn in early May a few years ago when she noticed a huge mushroom-like growth at the base of an old box elder tree at the southeast corner of her property. The mushroom had a wide funnel cap over 18 inches across composed of overlapping clusters of shelf-like brackets with sunken centers. It had whitish to dingy brownish color. A series of tubes or pores could be seen on the underside of the large caps.

This organism belongs to group known as polypore fungi—the name coming from the numerous pores that compose

the mushroom's tissue. In particular, this fungi is known as Dryad's Saddle Polypore (*Polyporus squamosus*). In the spring it seems to explode out of stumps, trunks, and wound areas of deciduous broad-leaved trees to become very large (up to 2 feet). When young, the white flesh is soft and smells and tastes like watermelon rind—yes it is edible, but only when very young. Also one needs to get to quickly because it is soon devoured by hordes of insects. This parasitic or saprotrophic [taking nourishment from dead organic matter] fungus is widespread in temperate climates and is common in our region.



Dryad's Saddle Polypore (*Polyporus squamosus*), a large mushroom fungus growing on the trunk of an old box elder tree on the Barbara Sheets property, East River Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio (May 8, 2012).

The Village Well

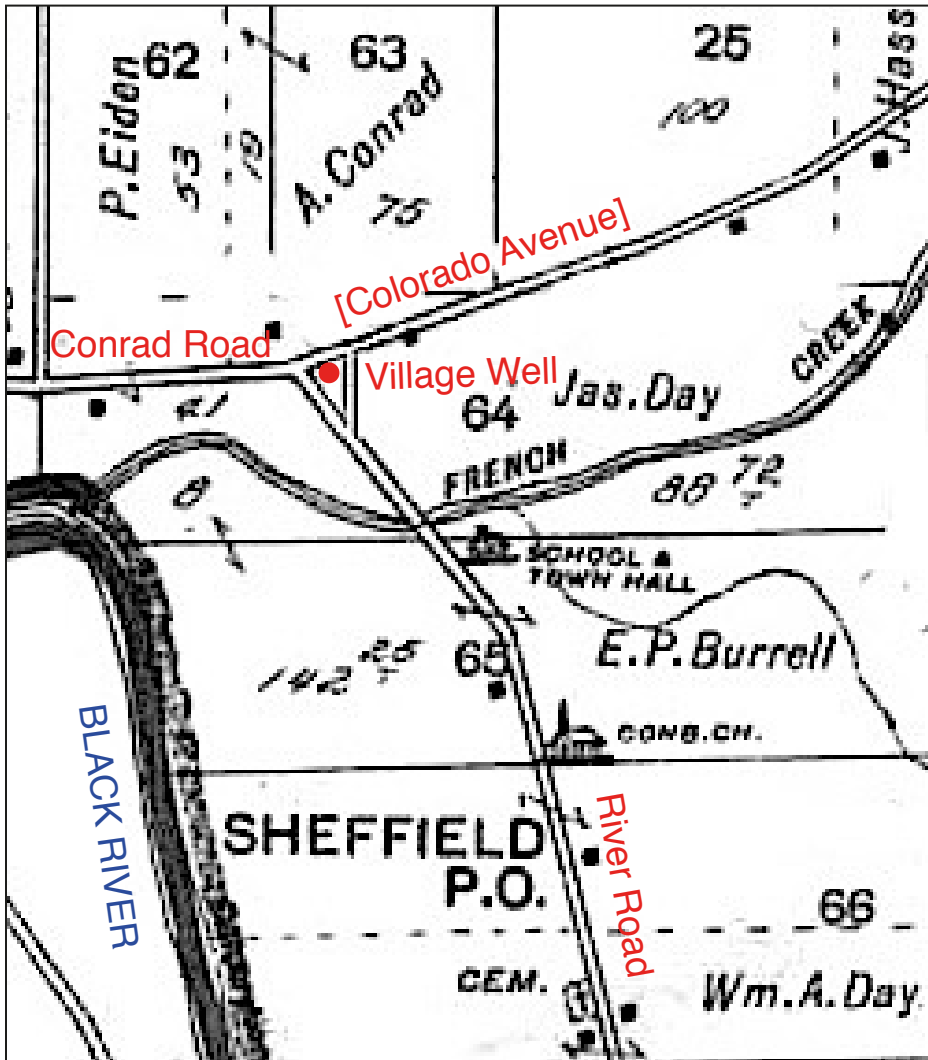
Marian Quinn, in her charming book about her grandparent's life in Sheffield more than a century ago [*Harvest of Memories: Andrew and Emma Conrad*], makes mention of the *Village Well*. At that time Colorado Avenue was known as Conrad Road and it was not as straight as today. In the early days it had a gentle

curve at the East River Road intersection. The intersection was "Y" shaped with River Road branching to the east and west and Conrad Road extending across the top. The Conrad family lived on the old James Day homestead as resident managers. The James Day house was located on Conrad Road, east of the intersection—near where the

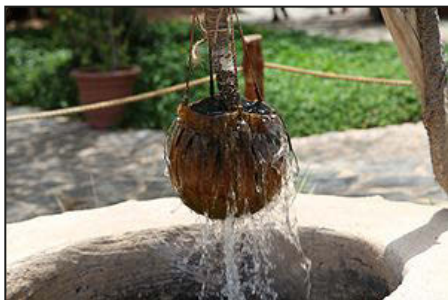
present-day French Creek Nature & Arts Center stands. To the west on Conrad Road was the homestead of Samuel Fitch, near the Lake Breeze Road intersection.

When I asked Marian if she could describe where the Village Well was located, she put it this way, as her mother, Theresa [Conrad] Klingshirn, who was born in the James Day house, had told her, "If James Day were riding in his buggy from his home to go down River Road at the same time Samuel Fitch was coming from the other direction to River Road, they would outline a triangular area at the intersection. That is where the well stood, on the south side of the firehouse corner, but right there. You can visualize this maybe as a grassy patch where horses could be watered, and early residents could fill their containers."

Given this description it is easy to imagine a convenient place where folks would gather to water their animals and collect water for household use. Today this intersection is still a gathering place—the location of the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex, housing the mayor's office, council chambers, and the fire and police departments. The exact location of the old well is unknown—based on Theresa's description it may have been at the northeast corner of the fire station.



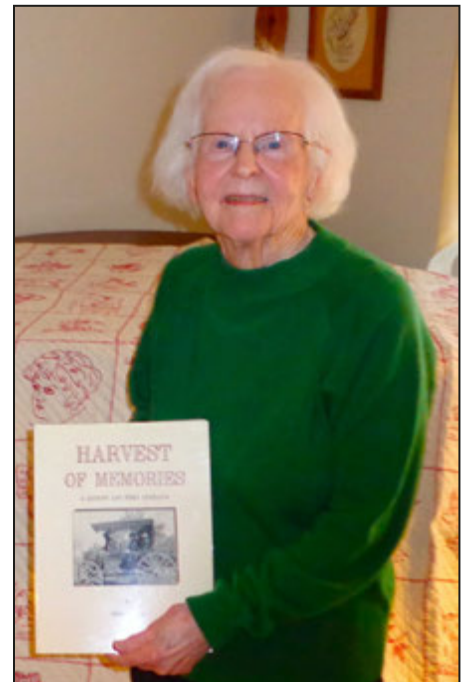
Probable location of the Village Well at the intersection of Conrad Road [Colorado Avenue] & East River Road shown on this 1896 map.



The old Village Well may have looked something like this English stone well with a leather bucket. A pump was added later.



The Village Well of the late 1800s was most likely located near this corner of the Fire Station, at the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex.



Marian Quinn, author of *Harvest of Memories: Andrew and Emma Conrad*.

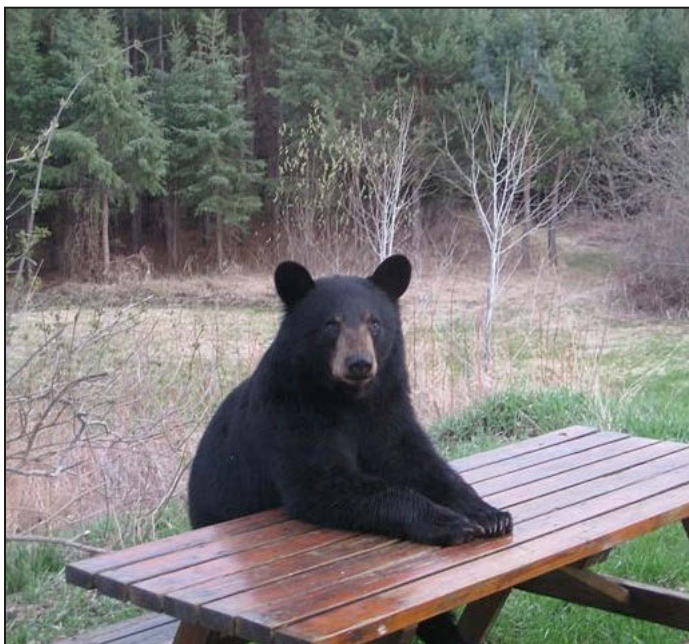
Sheffield's Natural Resources In Pioneer Days

In 1960, Merrill C. Gilfillan of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) visited Lorain County and prepared an article for the *Ohio Conservation Bulletin* (February 1961), which traced the changes that had taken place in the county since the pioneers arrived in the early 1800s. His research provides us with insight as to the natural resources of Sheffield and the surrounding land some two centuries ago. As an intern with ODNR at that time, I had the pleasure of knowing Merrill and sharing stories of Lake Erie and its coast. The following are some of the highlights of Merrill's observations. The editor is pleased to acknowledge Mike Conrad for bringing this article to my attention.

To the early settlers, about the only enemy was NATURE, more of a threat than Indians most of the time. The Indian population was sparse in pioneer days, but a century earlier the Iroquois and their predecessors found a rich hunting ground because of the extensive swamp forests and the presence of Lake Erie, rich with fishes. The first white settlement was in 1787 when Moravian missionaries and Christian Delaware Indians settled in the Black River valley near the mouth of French Creek. Soon they were chased away by hostile Indians.

In 1807 Nathan Perry set up a trading post at the mouth of the Black River and in 1815 Captains Jabez Burrell and John Day selected homestead lots on French Creek. They, and fellow settlers from New England and New York, cleared the land, built log houses, and planted the first crops. By 1824, the Black River valley was settled well enough so that Lorain County was established with 21, five-mile-square townships.

Despite the fact that the county was settled relatively quickly, the wet nature of the land resulted in slow economic development and for many years the pioneers were marginal farmers. Money was scarce and one of the best sources of income was the hardwood forests, both swamp and upland, that covered the county. Potash production provided the settlers a way to obtain badly needed cash



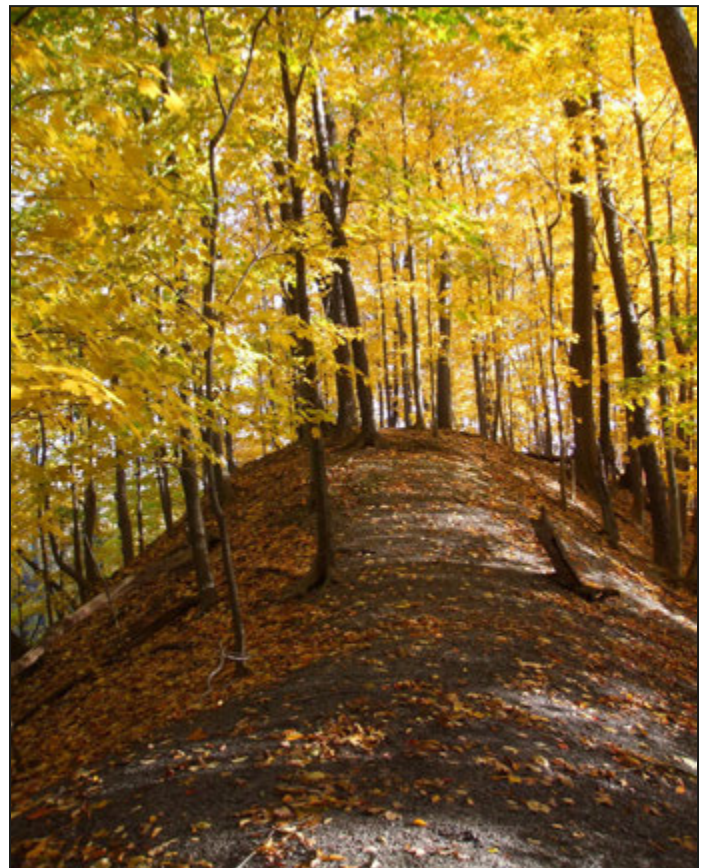
Black Bears (Ursus americanus) were often unwanted guests of pioneer families (Edwards).

and credit as they cleared wooded land for crops. To make full use of their land, settlers needed to dispose of excess wood. The easiest way to accomplish this was to burn any wood not needed for fuel or construction. Ashes from hardwood trees could then be used to make lye, which could either be used to make soap or boiled down to produce valuable potash, used in the preparation of wool for yarn making. Hardwood could generate ash at the rate of up to 100 bushels per acre—a value of about \$6 per acre when hauled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The primary need for cash by pioneers was for taxes and salt—ashes paid for most of the taxes. Salt as a meat preservative was an important commodity on the Ohio frontier that was in scarce supply. Realizing its need by settlers, Jabez Burrell loaded the boat that carried his family from New York to Ohio with as much salt as it could carry.

Early transportation in Sheffield tells much about the nature of the area. Travelers used the sand beaches of Lake Erie and the abandoned beach ridges of the glacial lakes for wagon roads until they came to places where they needed to turn inland. Then they followed trails through the swamp, staying on high ground as much as possible. The three glacial lake ridges running east and west across the county remained dry most of the time and proved to be some of the best roadway and homestead sites.

Like the Burrell family, many of the pioneers and later travelers arrived by boat. Most were coming from the East, thus it was convenient to board a vessel at the east end of Lake Erie and sail



Bear Knoll, in the Black River valley at the Gulf Road hills, is reported as the place where Indians killed a black bear in 1815.

to the mouth of the Black River, where settlement of Lorain County began. Even in winter, travel on the frozen lake by horse-drawn sled was possible. By comparison to lake travel, throughout the record of early settlement runs the struggle with wet roads and the impenetrable swamps on either side. There was always the fear of getting bogged down and being at the mercy of large and dangerous swamp wildlife, especially bears and wolves.

The journal of James Smith, a young captive of the Delaware Indians in the 1750s, provides the earliest record of wildlife in the Black River valley and along the lakeshore. He describes fish that were so abundant in the lake that after a storm many were stranded by receding waves while bald eagles fed on them. Raccoons were thick and fat and there were many deer traversing the valley. The Indians ate rough brown potatoes, which when dipped in “coon” fat tasted to him like sweet potatoes. During a harsh winter the women and children of the tribe were sent out to hunt red haws and hickory nuts to sustain the encampment. In the spring they had good luck hunting—killing many bears. Smith was disturbed by the Indian practice of eating only what they could of the fresh meat and leaving the rest to rot. The site of one of the camps was in the river gorge at present day Elyria were the sandstone cap rock forms Cascade Falls. Here, hemlock and pine groves were located on the cool valley floor.

Likewise, the severe winter of 1816 brought hardships to the pioneers in Sheffield. Volcanic ash in the atmosphere from an eruption in Indonesia screened out much of the warmth of the sun, cooling the temperature to the point that snow fell and frosts occurred each month for an entire year. Crops failed and if it were not for the abundant woodland game, the early settlers would have perished. Even as the county became well settled by the 1820s, wildlife persisted and even the large mammals, such as deer and bears, remained common for many years. Bears were so thick in 1830 that they made hog-raising a hazardous occupation and the story of a bear chasing young Peter Miller up a tree in Sheffield made its way into a *McGuffey Reader*. Other tales of a bear romping through a schoolyard in 1832 and being chased from the dooryard of a log cabin on French Creek attest to their abundance.

Wolves were numerous until 1837, howling in the woods every night. The last wolf in the Black River valley was observed in 1844. The settlers near Elyria reasoned that the wolf was so lonely that it tried to fraternize with a farmer’s dog and had to be shot. Deer, too, were thick until 1835. Large herds of 30 deer were not uncommon. The settlers noted that deer came out in the farm fields to avoid the black flies in the woods. The last historic report of a deer in the county was in 1841, the decline attributed to intense hunting pressure and the lack of habitat as the woodlands were cleared. Wild turkeys were an important source of food and were so numerous they were sold on the street for 25¢ each. The Terrells of Ridgeville and Sheffield were described as “a family of great hunters,” indicating the high regard the public had for hunting skills.



Gray Wolves (Canis lupus) were common in the woods as late as the 1830s, howling every night (Quartl).

In the early days of settlement, wild meats and wild fruits harvested from the woodlands were supplemented by a mush made of crushed corn or stewed pumpkin with milk. As agriculture gained in importance, grain was produced in large quantities. The harbor at the mouth of the Black River became an important port for the shipment of grain and other agricultural commodities. Not all of the grain was shipped, however, and distilleries sprang up throughout the county. Whiskey was in demand and it could be more easily transported than bulk grain. Chester Wright built and operated Sheffield Township’s first distillery in 1822. Early accounts show that by 1840, distilleries were as prevalent as cheese factories were four decades later. The mention of cheese also indicates the shift of farming practices from grain production to dairying. Even with the cutting of the woods and the draining of the swamps with field tile developed by

Dr. Norton Townshend of Avon, much of the county was still characterized by wet, heavy soil, often to wet for tillage and best suited for pasture. A robust dairy industry thus emerged with the abundance of grazing land. Some of the lake plain soils in northern Sheffield Township proved ideal for grape production and were exploited by the German emigrant farmers who settled there in the 1850s. On the sandy beach ridges at the southern end of the township, fruit and vegetable farms were established on the drier soils. A century later these ridges became the home of a flourishing greenhouse industry producing tons of tomatoes.



White-tailed Deer (Odocoileus virginianus) were an important food source for the pioneers, as well as the Native Americans for several thousand years earlier (Bauer).

When Merrill Gilfillan visited Lorain County in 1960, all of the deer, bears, and wild turkeys in the county had been extirpated. The only game available to hunters when I was growing up in Sheffield during the 1950s were rabbits, ring-necked pheasants, woodcocks, raccoons, and squirrels—all of the large game were gone with the exception of an occasional red fox. But even in the 1960s, a change was taking place in the landscape that would be a harbinger of their return. Much of the agricultural land was going out of farming. From 1955 to 1960 there was a 13.5% decline in agricultural land. As woodlots were reestablished on abandoned farm fields, the deer moved back into the county and have become so abundant that they are now a serious nuisance and highway problem in many communities.

In Memoriam

Over the last few years we lost several members and friends. The Historical Society wishes to remember them here and offer condolences to their family and friends. Although they are gone, they are not forgotten.

Elva Jean [Garfield] Behr

(January 27, 1935–September 14, 2014)

Elva was the daughter of Edward M. and Portia [Allen] Garfield and great, great granddaughter of Sheffield founder Milton Garfield. She graduated from Lorain High School in 1952 and attended Bowling Green State University. She was employed by the Lorain Public Library for 10 years and served as manager and chef for the First Lutheran Church's Meals-on-Wheels program for many years. She was a long-time member and benefactor of the Sheffield Village Historical Society. Elva is survived by her daughters Judith A. Sabbaghzadeh of Naples, Florida, Joan Seink of Sagamore Hills, Ohio, and her sons Jeffrey and Richard, both of Lorain, Ohio. Her husband, Richard T. Behr, to whom she was married on February 14, 1957, died in 1994. Elva's remains were buried in Garfield Cemetery in Sheffield Village.

James Carstensen

December 8, 1951–February 27, 2014)

Jim was the son of Eileen [Brown] Craven and was responsible for saving her life last February. Eileen was living at Jim's house and she was asleep when the house caught on fire. When Eileen froze in fright, Jim picked her up and carried her outside, put her in her car, and backed the car away from burning house. After calling 911, he backed his own car away from the house, and then collapsed with a heart attack that took his life. Jim was retired from the Ford Motor Company's Lorain Assembly Plant. He was a talented craftsman and gifted landscaper who was proud of his home, yard, and garden and enjoyed sharing his skills to help friends.

Eileen [Brown] Craven

(November 22, 1929–August 22, 2014)



Eileen, a Sheffield Village native, graduated from Brookside High School in 1947. She grew up on the family homestead at the corner of Abbe and Detroit Roads with her brother Edward "Bud"

and four sisters Marilyn, Sally, Joan, and Nancy. She was the oldest of the five children in the Edward and Leona Brown family. Eileen was a strong supporter of the Sheffield Village Historical Society and participated actively in Society events. She received Associate Degrees in both Art and Business. In addition to being an avid reader, she had a life-long interest in music, playing the piano and the organ in the church where husband, the Rev. Carl Craven, served as pastor. She is survived by daughters, Lynda and Janice; sons, David and Larry; brother, Edward "Bud" Brown of Sheffield Village; and sister, Nancy Brown of St. Louis, Missouri. Eileen was buried in Garfield Cemetery.

Keith Eastin

(January 16, 1940–January 3, 2014)

Keith, a Sheffield Lake native, graduated from Brookside High School in 1958 and was one of the initial honorees named to its Alumni Gallery of Success in 2010. After receiving BA and MBA degrees from the University of Cincinnati and a Law degree from the University of Chicago he had a distinguished career working as a private attorney and serving with several federal agencies including the Departments of Defense, Interior, and State, as well as advising several foreign governments. One of the projects he was most proud of was managing the restoration of the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island. He is survived by his wife Susan, who accompanied him back to Ohio in 2010 to receive the Brookside Award.

Edgar Day Gates

(December 1, 1925–November 22, 2013)

Ed was most likely the oldest descendant of the Day family, founders of Sheffield, when he passed away and was an ardent supporter of the Historical Society. In May 1943 the U.S. Navy selected him for their musician program and he graduated from the Navy School of Music. He was stationed aboard the U.S.S. *Pennsylvania* in the South Pacific as first trombonist when a Jap plane torpedoed the ship in August 1945. After the war he attended Miami University (BA), Ohio University (MA), and University of Maryland (PhD) in psychology. Ed held many administrative and executive positions over the years, including Director of Personnel for General Foods, Bird's Eye, and Maxwell House. He retired to Florida, where he and Sue Dauphin made their home in Lantana.

William "Bill" Kretchman

(November 19, 1925–September 16, 2014)

Bill was a long-time member of the Historical Society who lived on the lakeshore on the east side of Lorain. He was born in Akron and graduated from Garfield High School. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was buried with full military honors at Ridge Hill Memorial Park. After the war, Bill served as general superintendent of construction for the Land Development Company. He served in this capacity during the construction of Knickerbocker Knolls, in Sheffield Lake during the 1950s. Bill survived by his daughter Rebecca and his son David.

Harry Lloyd

(1923–January 18, 2013)

Harry graduated in 1940 from Brookside High School. Knowing that he would soon be drafted, Harry volunteered for the Army Air Corps where he flew a P-47 Thunderbolt fighter/bomber on 60 missions supporting the British 8th Army in the battles to liberate Italy. Harry owned the Lloyd-Maxwell Ford dealership for 33 years after having worked as a salesman for 21 years. Harry is survived by his wife Dorothy of Avon, daughters Carol Price and Barbara Nelson, and sons Robert Cifranic of Sheffield Village and Richard Cifranic.

William “Bill” Morano

(August 10, 1930–July 7, 2013)

Bill was born in Lorain, Ohio and served in the U.S. Army from 1948–1950. He was employed by the City of Lorain, Street and Water Departments. Bill was a member of the Sheffield Village Historical Society for several years before his death. He is survived by his wife Shirley (née Ferguson) of 56 years and his children Michael, Jolene, Mark, Jon, and Pamela. He is buried at Ridge Hill Memorial Park, Amherst, Ohio.

Richard “Chick” O’Connor

(December 1, 1920–January 22, 2013)

Richard was born in Boston, Massachusetts and passed away at the New Life Hospice Center at St. Joseph. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and was employed for 32 years at B. F. Goodrich as a chemical operator. Richard was a resident of Sheffield Village and a member of St. Teresa Church. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Nancy; and sons, Tim of Sheffield Village and Terry of Lorain. Tim is an artist with his studio in the Village, a member of the Historical Society, and the designer of the Sheffield Bicentennial Seal.

June O’Neil

(May 3, 1918–February 3, 2014)

June and her husband Elmer built their home on East River Road in Sheffield Village in the late 1940s. Elmer worked in the Lorain steel mill, but also sold topsoil from the river bottom and delivered water to replenish domestic wells in dry weather before the Village had a water system. June raised vegetables, lambs, and made tasty turtle soup from snappers caught along the river. In later years she operated a stall at Jamie’s Flea Market in Amherst and lived at Kendal at Oberlin. Elmer died in 1991. They are buried together in Garfield Cemetery.

Glenn D. Owens

(February 27, 1957–August 25, 2014)

Glenn was born in Freeport, Long Island, New York and died at University Hospitals’ Elyria Medical Center. He lived in LaGrange and was employed as the Safety Director at the NASA–Glenn Research Center in Brook Park. He was a U.S. Navy veteran, serving as a medic with the Navy SEALs. Glenn was a family member of the Sheffield Village Historical Society and enjoyed reading the Society’s journal. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Linda; son, Joseph; sisters, Lynda and Sandra; and brother, Robert. When giving advice to his son, Glenn would say, “Change is inevitable, but growth is optional.”

Raymond Perry

(August 7, 1932–January 18, 2014)

Ray and his wife Joan [Brown] lived on Abbe Road near the intersection with Detroit Road. Their home once stood on Detroit Road, but was moved down Abbe when Route 254 was widened in the 1960s. Joan passed away in 2009. A veteran, Ray served in the U.S. Navy from 1954 to 1956. Ray retired from Oberlin Farms Dairymen Company in Cleveland where he worked for the plant maintenance department. Ray and Joan were long-time members of the Sheffield Village Historical Society.

Thomas Walther

(July 25, 1930–July 11, 2014)

Tom made his home with his wife Lea on Harris Road. He graduated in 1948 from Avon Lake High School and in 1951 he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, serving with a radar detachment during the Korean War. As youth Tom operated a Cletrac tractor on the Nusdorfer farm in Avon Lake [see September 2012 issue of *The Village Pioneer*, Vol. 7, No. 3, page 10] and later was a 2-time Lorain County Speedway Stock Car champion. Tom was Chief of Police in Sheffield Lake for 18 years, where he was highly regarded for his public service. He is survived by his wife Lea, daughters Cynthia Petrucci and Jill Camp, and sons James and Daniel. James, a member of the Historical Society, is Probate Judge for Lorain County.



Marilyn [Brown] Wilson

(October 15, 1934–June 20, 2014)

Marilyn grew up on the Brown family home at the corner of Abbe and Detroit Roads in Sheffield Village with her brother Edward “Bud” and four sisters Eileen, Sally, Joan, and Nancy. She was born the same year as the Village of Sheffield, Ohio came into existence. Marilyn graduated from Brookside High School and was a long-time member of the Sheffield Village Historical Society. She is survived by two daughters, Donna Schafer and Denise Johnson and was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Edward Wilson.



Marilyn Brown with her little sister Nancy in 1941.

John Bernard “Woody” Wood

(September 13, 1923–January 20, 2011)

Woody was raised in Sheffield Village and graduated from Brookside High School in 1942. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving in World War II. As a private first class, he was in the second wave of troops who landed on the Normandy beaches. He was awarded three bronze stars for bravery. He was preceded in death by his brother Sterling Wood, who drowned in November 1940 when the lake freighter he was working on sank during a violent storm on Lake Michigan [see March 2011 issue of *The Village Pioneer* (Vol. 6, No. 1, pages 6-8) for more details]. Both Sterling and Woody (laid to rest with full military rites) are buried in Garfield Cemetery.

Sheffield Bicentennial

The three Sheffields (Sheffield Lake, Sheffield Township, and Sheffield Village) have joined together to proudly celebrate their common founding 200 years ago.

At least 25 events have been scheduled to commemorate our heritage. The Sheffield Bicentennial Commission, created by the three communities, plans to publish a series of *Bicentennial Bulletins* on topics that illustrate the rich heritage and fascinating diversity of our communities. The Commission will release one every week of the Bicentennial year, the first of which is a schedule of celebration events, accompanies this issue of *The Village Pioneer*. This and future *Bicentennial Bulletins* can be viewed or printed from the Commission's website, www.sheffieldbicentennial.org


Collect them all!



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) or Patsy Hoag, Secretary (440-934-4624 phoag@me.com).

Society journals can be found on the Village of Sheffield, Ohio official website: www.sheffieldvillage.com (click on the Sheffield Village Historical Society decal , then Pioneer newsletters, and 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 on Tuesdays 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and Thursdays 6:00 -8:00 p.m. and by appointment—please call (440-934-1514) or email Kathy Yancer at kathyyancer@gmail.com.

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

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