

Feature Facility: The Meeker Story

Two thousand and sixteen was the year the Meeker Homestead Museum was first introduced to the community.

This beautiful, historic Federal style house and its six acres were gifted to our Delaware County Historical Society by the Porter family in 2010. The home's history to the Stratford area, which was once a thriving mill town, and to the city of Delaware, has unfolded since then as we learn more about the life of Forest Meeker who built this house, and helped develop the community in which it stood.

The Meeker Museum is unique in that it is a "museum in a house." Visitors not only have the opportunity to see how the Meeker family and others in the early 1800s lived by viewing our three period appropriate rooms, but can also explore exhibits of local and state interest in our other rooms.

One of these rooms, The Delaware Gallery, has rotating exhibits, such as the previous *2020 Connecting Threads* exhibit,



with its pre-Civil War Barn Loom. Exhibit rotation allows for fresh displays to be presented to the public throughout the year. This means that our museum always has something exciting and educational to offer.

Presently we are continuing the restoration of this historic property, both outside, and in its period
continued on page 2

We Have New Name!

The winner of our name-the-newsletter contest is Mike Yohe. Although Mike and his wife Nancy live in Valparaiso Indiana, Mike's roots lie in Delaware County. He was born in Delaware County some 85 years ago, but as he says, the story goes back more than 200 years, to fourth great grandparents. A mere dozen years after Delaware County was formed, Joel and Susanna (Phelps) Cowles are said to have come to Ashley from New York about 1820, and several of their (then adult) children, including Jabez, wound up in Delaware County. The family surnames include: Yohe, Tryon, Dunlap, Cowles, Chamberlain, and Converse. When asked how he came up with the name he responded "It popped into my head unbidden" and he felt he had to send it to us. Mike told us it made his day to learn that he had won the contest. Thank you, Mike, and to all that entered our contest.



Volunteers assemble our pre-Civil War Barn Loom.

Since We Last Met

■ Programs

Our Programs Committee prepared a diverse and wonderful series of presentations and walking tours for 2021. Since we last met, in August we enjoyed “That’s Entertainment: Opera Houses in the City of Delaware” presented by Benny Shoults. In October participants were guided through downtown by the Society’s Brent Carson for the “Young and Old Rutherford B Hayes Walking Tour.” Re-enactor Devon Hardwick portrayed Rutherford

Continued from page 1.



rooms. This restoration stays true to the period in which the house was built. Much work has been done, but more still remains. We hope to return the period Drawing Room and central hall to its former glory. This means adding the furnishings, carpet, and period appropriate wallpaper that once graced these areas in the early 1830s.

(Story and Photos By Roxann Newton, Benny Shoults and Steve Frazier, Volunteers)



as a young attorney returning to his hometown. As young Hayes drifts away, the tour took us to the Historic Courthouse Hill. There we were greeted by Rutherford B. Hayes, re-enacted by Bill Rietz, as he returns to Delaware in the last year of his life. At our Annual Meeting in November, we learned of the many homes and public building designed by Delaware native Frank Packard.

■ Annual Meeting Presentation on Frank Packard

The Annual Meeting (November 17, 2021) was a huge success! We had about 100 people at the event, who enjoyed a presentation by architectural historian Barbara Powers speaking about the architecture of Delaware

native, Frank L. Packard. She noted that while working with Joseph Yost, Packard designed many of the buildings on the OSU campus as well as many homes and buildings in Delaware. These buildings included Asbury Methodist Church, the Steeves block in downtown Delaware, OWU’s University Hall, and Gray Chapel, Sanborn Hall, and Edwards gym.

Numerous accounts of Packard’s life mention that he was involved in over 3,400 designs, many of which were public buildings such as courthouses, hospitals, libraries, and schools.

■ Jailhouse Rock

We had a great turnout of patrons and LOTS of fun at our annual fund raiser. This year’s theme was appropriately **Jailhouse Rock**.



Coming Events

■ A Thank You for the Society's Adopt a Memory Guardians



The Delaware County Historical Society was given a rare 1847 Rosewood Square Grand Piano which is on display in the Meeker Homestead Museum's Drawing Room.

We have wanted to say thank you to all **Adopt a Memory Guardians** and could not think of a better way to do that than to host a free recital performed on the Meeker House Square Grand Piano followed by a reception. Slated to delight us with their musical talents are Mary Alice Dillman and the Society's President, David Hejmanowski.

Invitations and reservation cards are currently being sent to all of our current and past Guardians for our March 6th event.

■ Coming to Meeker

Coming in April, the Meeker Homestead Museum will be presenting a new exhibit titled, "**Journey to Delaware.**" This three-part exhibit will explore the people who settled into Ohio, specifically the Delaware area. Volunteers begin assembling artifacts for our new exhibit.

Interactive displays that



Volunteers begin assembling artifacts for our new exhibit.

feature artifacts from the 1800s will highlight how these people migrated, the challenges they faced, and the communities they built. This exhibit was made possible through the Delaware County Foundation by the generous donations of the Ron Sabatino Family Fund and Charles H. and Betty J. Sheets Family Donor Advised Fund.

This special exhibit is free of charge to visitors and school groups. We invite everyone to come this spring and journey with us!

(Story and Photos By Roxann Newton, Benny Shoultz and Steve Frazier, Volunteers)

■ Arena Fair Theatre

The Arena Fair Theatre in partnership with the Delaware County Historical Society will offer a dinner program in The Barn at Stratford on April 9, 2022 including the celebrities of the Titanic. This program will nearly coincide with the 110th anniversary of the departure of this magnificent ship on her maiden voyage. Your Captain and staff will greet you and attend to your needs reflecting the commitment of the British White Star Line to provide comfortable passage for its upper-class travelers.

Reenactors will be seated at each table portraying a notable individual on the Titanic - such as John Jacob Astor or Molly Brown - and will share their stories with you. Period music will be provided by the Arena Fair Singer and a string quartet. Along with the music, costumes and narratives of the Arena Fair troupe, you will further enjoy the evening with an up-scale dinner catered by All Occasions, making this a most entertaining and memorable evening. To obtain information about tickets please email info@delawareohiohistory.org or call 740-369- 3831.

■ A New Strategic Plan

We are delighted to announce that the Delaware County Historical Society has received two grants that will allow us to move forward with the development of a new Strategic Plan for the Society. Grants of \$5,000 each were received from the Ohio Arts Council, Capacity Building Program and the required matching funds provided by the Delaware County Foundation, made possible by a generous grant from an anonymous donor.

Jackie Barton, Principal, Birch Wood Planning: Strategy, Story, Engagement will be leading this effort. She will be conducting multiple focus groups for those in the Delaware area. Anyone who cannot make one of our Focus Groups but is interested in providing comment on the future efforts of the Historical Society, should send their name, email address to jackie@birchwoodplanning.com or call the DCHS Office at 740-369-3831 giving us your name and postal address and telling us that you would like to participate in this very important effort. The deadline for contacting us is February 18th, 2022.



■ Our Next Program

Delaware County Industrial History: Foundries will be presented by Steve Schmitt, Society Volunteer on Tuesday, March 15 at 7 p.m. at The Barn at Stratford.

There have been foundries in Delaware County since the mid-1800s. Liberty Castings Company on Liberty Road continues the tradition today. Steve will discuss what a foundry does and the history of foundries in Delaware Ohio.

For more information, go to www.DelawareOhioHistory.org where you may also register for the program.

■ In Case You Missed It...

From Slavery to Freedom, and Underground Railroad Sites

The February 15, 2022 free program featured the history of African Americans who lived and worked in Delaware County and northern Franklin County.

Attendees learned about the history of Africa Road, the Underground Railroad, the Lucy Depp Settlement, the Alum Creek Quaker abolitionists, and more.

This program was presented by DCHS Volunteer, Watson Walker,

Jr. Watson has been a member of the Delaware County Historical Society since 2007 and serves as the Chair of the DCHS Diversity and Inclusion Committee. He has authored three books on the Underground Railroad and six volumes of "dime novels" - Black History stories.



Delaware County Historical Society

Our History, Our Heritage

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