Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

December 2021

and Alverta Green Museum

THE MAGIC OF A MASON CHRISTMAS

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

It's hard to believe that December is here, and Christmas is knocking at our door. The holidays bring traditions that we look forward to with childlike excitement and anticipation. They conjure up visions of Christmas past, and most are anxious to relive them. Traditions, always a part of the holiday season, continue from year to year.

Parties, dinners, entertainment, gift-giving, and "holiday cheer" flourished during the season. In 1875 it was reported,

"We have promise of lots of fun during holiday week. Our accomplished young townsmen, Mr. J.T. Cunningham and S.C. Bennett commence the season by a "light fantastic" in Bennett's Hall Friday evening, Dec. 24. The boys have spared no pains to make this an occasion enjoyable to all who may see fit to attend. Our German fellow-citizens, not to be outdone, give a regular German ball sometime during the week. Plenty of beer will be on hand to make the German heart glad, and everything will be conducted on the style of our "faterland." ¹



Bennett's Hall/Drug Store was the scene of the "light fantastic" on Christmas Eve in 1875. Located on the NE corner of E. Main and Kings Mills Rd. Later the Masonic Lodge, it was destroyed in the 1974 tornado and is now a vacant lot.

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established over 40 years ago, the Society's aim is to create, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

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Join the Mason Historical Society at Masonhistoricalsociety.org or Call 513-398-6750

One newspaper report in 1871 revealed a rowdier side of holiday parties.

"Christmas is among the things of the past, and it is well for our place that it is so. A few days of debauchery as yesterday, would I think, prove very disastrous to many of our citizens. The "Ball" last evening under the management of Prof. Bursk, proved a grand success. Almost all in attendance was from abroad, very few of our "young folks," participated. It is said it was a "pretty hard crowd," but I should think not so, from the fact there was but one fight, and only one so far as heard from, that had to be carried home, he having become weak in the knees."²

Apparently, the bar was set pretty low, as a party with only one fight and one person (they knew of) who had to be carried home was considered a "grand success"!

Aside from public events, private gatherings of family and friends were often mentioned in Rose Marie Springman's book *Around Mason*. On Christmas Eve, 1875, Eliza Nixon served an oyster supper to the Bursk, VanHorn, Miller, Coulson, Roosa and Shurts families. The love of oysters, a popular European dish, was apparently imported with our early settlers.

Churches played an important role in the Christmas celebration. In 1882 the Universalists had a Christmas tree display in Dodds Hall while on Christmas day the Presbyterians served a dinner at the church for the Sunday School children. "All the churches in Mason will give some kind of treat and entertainment on Christmas Eve", reported *The Western Star* in 1902.

Between 1927 to 1943, Mason's Mother's Club exercised a heavy hand in making Mason's holidays bright. The Mother's Club was the precursor to the PTA and their main focus was always the welfare of the children. Their first organized holiday celebration on Christmas Eve, promoted a community Christmas party at the school and the firemen chipped in \$10 to cover the cost of the entertainment and a visit from Santa. This began a long,

story continues next page

→ Holiday Museum Hours → Thursdays, December 23 & 30 - 1-4 pm. Regular Museum hours - Thursdays from 2-8 pm. Museum tours outside these hours will still be available by appointment.

The Magic of a Mason Christmas, cont.

endearing tradition of community Christmas parties in the village, cosponsored by the fireman. As part of the Christmas tradition, the fireman would also plant a community Christmas tree on the public lawn and the Mother's Club would take charge of trimming the tree.

Gift giving, eternally a part of the Christmas tradition, was usually meager (by today's standards) but had meaningful exchanges. The Mother's Club would wrap

packages of Cracker Jacks for the students, and the firemen thrilled the children with gifts of candy and fruit. The Mother's Club members also indulged in a 10-cent gift exchange among themselves.

Beginning in 1988, Mason's Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the City of Mason presented "Christmas in Mason." This was the beginning of a holiday tradition that continues today. That first year, Santa arrived on a firetruck, but the following year the organizers changed his transportation mode. A horsedrawn sleigh accompanied by "rein-dogs" brought Santa to town. "Stocking stops"



Friday, December 1st, 2006 from 6 pm to 9 pm Downtown Mason

Poster advert for Christmas in Mason in 2006

distributing treats were located throughout downtown Mason businesses. Stage entertainment featured local groups like the Mason Community Players and school children singing carols and staging plays. The main street, decorated with twinkling lights, featured vendors supplying hot beverages, treats and other culinary delights. Children's story time at the library was a standard and the main event, lighting of the town Christmas tree, was the highlight of the evening.

This year's Christmas in Mason is scheduled for Friday, December 3 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, with tree lighting at

6:30 pm. Join your neighbors for holiday music, activities, FREE photos with Santa, food and refreshments, adult beverages provided by the American Legion, ice-less skating, trackless train rides, a mechanical snowboard and more!

The Mason Historical Society will host an open house that evening from 6-9 pm. Join us for some hot chocolate, home-baked cookies, and good company. Come and see our new wall mural and enjoy the Museum Christmas décor. See old friends and maybe meet some new. It will be a great way to kick-off the season. See you there!

¹The Western Star, December 23, 1875 ²The Western Star, December 28, 1871 Around Mason: A Story, Rose Marie Springman

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming the following new members to the Mason Historical Society

Dave & Karen Baysore

Brack Martin

Dan & Beth Jeffers

Mark Jeffers

Patricia Murray

Gretchen Osner

Trudie Pringle

Mary Ann Watrous

2022 MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD MEMBERS

Jay Meibers - President Jeff Raines - Vice President Cindy Meibers – Secretary Larry Jeffers - Treasurer Missy Courts - Membership Perry Denehy - Trustee Sue Erbeck Rapp - Trustee Ray Mueller - Trustee Maureen Campbell - Trustee Lou Rapp - Trustee

NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL STAFF

Gina Burton Arens, Editor Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor



The following positions are currently open. Anyone interested should contact Jay Meibers at jmeibers1@zoomtown.com

> Historian – Board position Curator – Paid position Program Coordinator





Jay Meibers, President

Christmas Eve or Christmas Day? Growing up we always celebrated Christmas on Christmas Eve. Dec. 24 was always a long day of waiting as time slowly passed by. After dinner time finally arrived and we finished eating, some of the adults would drive the kids to see Christmas lights across numerous Mason neighborhoods. Amazingly, Santa showed up every year while we were out looking at the lights! Upon returning home we were informed that Santa had come, then we would head to our back room and begin the gift opening process. It was nice being the youngest of six boys because I got to open my gifts first as my brothers anxiously waited their turn. Christmas music would be playing in the background with laughs and smiles aplenty. There were periodic frowns when we expected a toy in a package only to find a pair of socks or underwear!!

With our children we always celebrated Christmas on Christmas morning. Our kids would line up ready to run downstairs anxiously waiting for the OK to see what Santa brought. I can still see the excitement in their faces as they rushed down the stairs and turned the corner to the family room where their gifts awaited. Great memories and I'm sure each of you have your own Christmas memories to look back upon and cherish. Nov. 16 was a busy night at the museum. We had our elections, annual MHS report, our Reach-Out Raffle drawing and also put-up Christmas decorations. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the evenings activities. Congratulations to our newly elected Board members and also to our lucky raffle winners! The Reach-Out Raffle was a big success.

I want to thank Darlene Henn who is stepping down this year as Trustee for her dedication in serving on the Board. I also want to thank Maureen Campbell for joining the Board as a Trustee in October.

In November we had the front porch of the museum replaced and it looks very nice. We are also looking to put in a new area rug in the addition before the end of this year. Combined with the mural and numerous display enhancements our investments in the museum have been robust this year. We could not make these modifications without the tremendous support of our members!

With your Newsletter this month you will receive the 2022 membership renewal form. We ask that membership renewals are returned by no later than Feb. 1, 2022. This timing helps MHS with our cash flow early in the calendar year. Also consider buying a membership for a family member or friend for the holidays!

In closing, I want to wish all of you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a safe and joyous New Year. Safe travels if you are heading out of town and hopefully everyone can enjoy time with family and friends over the holidays!

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpted from Around Mason, Ohio: A Story, Rose Marie Springman, ©1982.

1881: The Universalist Church had an oyster supper on December 2 and that same day someone broke into Cort Dodds' store and took a silver pitcher, a teapot and sugar bowl, Cort's overcoat and some money.

1892: In mid-December council "decided to advertise for sealed bids for the disinterment of all bodies in the old Mason cemetery*, the same to be removed and reinterred in the Deerfield Township cemetery and the grave markers in the old cemetery to be put in proper place in the township cemetery. On December 23 the bids were opened and read "for the removal of the dead' and William Jackson's bid of \$2.90 each was accepted. Jackson was required to be bonded for \$425, He was told to begin on the southwest corner of the old cemetery and work north.

1918: On December 10, Mary Rebold, the wife of Jack Rebold, purchased a lot on the north side of Main Street between Section and East Streets from Virginia Failor. The new store featured a stairway on the inside west part of the building which could be used without Mr. Rebold having to be there to oversee the activities.

He continued the grocery business on the first floor of his new structure.

1928: By late December the corporation was organizing its own fire department. Ordinance 201 allowed the mayor to appoint a chief, an assistant and 14 firemen. Another ordinance was passed to sell bonds for \$2,500 to purchase new fire equipment.

1933: James E. Dwire, whose parents had come from Ireland, died on December 26 at the age of 73. He had been a local saloon keeper for many years. His saloon sometimes had to be closed when the council voted the town dry, (which they did, on and off for years) but he would simply move his business to his auxiliary place of business, the Blue Goose on Kings Mills Road, just outside the town limits, and wait for the furor to die down before returning to his saloon in town.

*The old Mason cemetery was located where the old Mason Central School is today, currently Mason Schools administrative offices.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story (Bicentennial Edition) is available for purchase at the Alverta Green Museum.

MASON'S EARLY SUBDIVISIONS

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

When millions of veterans came home from WWII, the GI Bill enabled them to jump-start a devastated housing market. The loan terms favored new construction, so cheap land in the suburbs was highly sought after by developers for their 800-1,000 square-foot Cape Cod homes. It provided just enough room for the GI, his wife, and a couple of kids.

The Mason of today has more subdivisions than you could likely count. When we think of the first subdivisions that were built in the town, our mind naturally goes to the ones from post-war 1950s. But as I looked into this further, I found that this was not the case. There were actually several others which came before.

1890 - Houseworth Addition

Cynthia Houseworth was William Mason's second daughter by his second wife, Sarah. During the late 1880s, land that Cynthia owned on the west side of downtown, just west of the railroad, was subdivided into several dozen small lots. This area was not technically a subdivision as it was folded into the village of Mason and a formal survey of the entire town was done.

1925 - Dilley Subdivision

Ardon Agnes Houseworth Dilley was the daughter of Cynthia Houseworth. In 1877, she married James B. Dilley and they had 3 children: Frank, Gertrude and Flora (later Gorsuch). When Cynthia died in 1891, Ardon was bequeathed her mother's land, part of which was known as the Houseworth Addition. The Dilley homestead was located at 600 W. Main, just north of this addition.

When Ardon died in 1913, her husband and children had a survey done of all of the Dilley land; a subdivision of 87 parcels; most being a very narrow 25' wide. There were 15'-wide alleys that ran through the area between the backyards of the lots. Two years later in 1915, the mayor and council approached the Dilley residents about being annexed to Mason, but they refused.

That changed in 1925 when the subdivision officially became a part of the village of Mason. Dilley homeowners today own multiple lots, giving "breathing" space between houses. No original homes remain, but according to the Warren County auditor, the alleys are still there. You would be hard pressed to be able to visually identify them, though, as they've been incorporated into the landscape.

1931 – JM Stewart Subdivision

In early 1931, a Cincinnati real estate developer, Frank Stange and his wife Clara, had a survey completed for property on the west end of W. Church St. This was an area of land that had been owned by Mary Victoria Houseworth Frank and her husband. Mary was the sister of Ardon Dilley, and Frank St. is named for them.

At this time it was owned by another real estate builder and developer, Jesse M. Stewart. Stewart had been born to a pioneer family in Licking County, Ohio. In 1911, at the age of 48, the bachelor with just an 8th-grade education, married 16-year-old (nope, not a typo) Ethel Wolever. They moved to Cincinnati soon after.

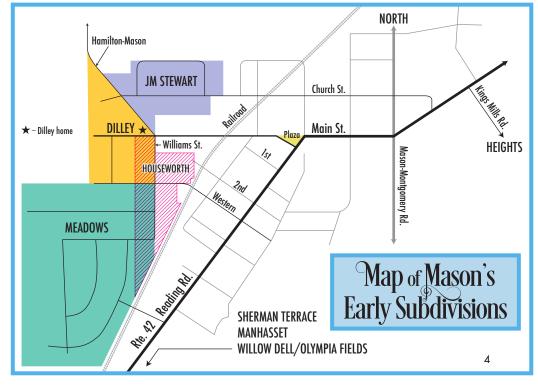
He annexed his subdivision to the village of Mason in May of 1931, and the man with no ties to the area, named it for himself. He and his wife ended up moving to Deerfield Twp. in the 1930s, but not to his subdivision.

Stewart spent a lot of time in court, either suing someone or being sued. In April of 1930, before the annexation was accepted, he battled with the Mason Lumber Co. over survey lines of his subdivision.¹ In 1948, at the age of 85, he sued the executor of his nephew's estate, claiming the will was fraudulent; a will which left almost \$30,000 to the Newark Hospital for Crippled Children. He lost.

JM Stewart died at the age of 90 in 1953, leaving his child bride of 42 years, and a subdivision in a town that, until now, had no idea who he was.



Allas Map of Licking County, Ohio, by L.H. Events, 1875 JESSE STEWART. JM Stewart as a young boy in Newark, Ohio



1952 – Mason Meadows

In 1950, Ohio Homes, Inc. planned a 50-home subdivision just south of the Dilley Subdivision, and approached council about possible annexation.

The Meadows became Mason's first planned housing development. A model home was built and large advertisements ran weekly in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* touting the state-of-the-art features of these "super-thrift" homes. Three styles of three- and four-bedroom homes were available. These post-war homes went up quickly and because of that, had more function than beauty. But what they lacked in originality, they made up for in sturdiness and dependability.

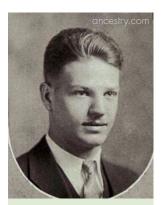
The area was plagued from the outset with sewage problems that lasted for many years. Despite this, the Meadows became a catalyst for Mason becoming known as a "bedroom community" – residents left in the morning for work and weren't seen again until the evening. The Meadows was officially annexed to the village in June of 1952.



This 3-bedroom "Fenton" from Ohio Homes was a popular model in the Meadows. House prices in this subdivision ranged from \$9720-\$13,300 in 1952.

1955 - Sherman Terrace

At almost 30 acres, this was the largest subdivision in Mason to that point. A year later, over 13 more acres were added. It was developed by Solomon



Sherman Terrace developer, Sol Sherman, who as a high school senior was known as "Red."

"Sol" Sherman and his wife, Rose. Sol had been a Mt. Healthy high school graduate who later got into real estate development. (*He is no relation to the author; and though he had no local connection I always did love the name of this subdivision...*).

On April 3, 1974, Sherman Terrace was nearly wiped out by one of the "Super Outbreak" tornados that devastated our area. But the persevering residents built it back even better.

1956 – Mason Heights

Fast on the heels of the Meadows, homes began sprouting up in the Heights, which was along the "upper reaches" of Kings Mills Rd. It was an area of just over 10 acres, developed by Clair Smith and his wife, Lela. The Smith's had been seeking annexation to the city since 1952. By 1954, council still had not voted on it, so Heights residents got into the game and signed a petition, but there was still no movement. Houses continued to be built (64 more in just 1955), but annexation continued to be delayed. Council wanted the streets paved, and storm sewers, curbs and gutters to be installed before they supported the measure.

Finally annexation was approved and the Heights became Mason's newest subdivision. It continued to grow over the years to be one of the largest, if not the largest, with five additions.

1957 – Manhasset Village

This community north of Western Row and east of Snider was developed by Robbson-Middendorf. It saw an influx of Meadows residents making the move to these larger homes with more amenities. The name "Manhasset" comes from the native word "Manhanset" which roughly means "the island neighborhood."

1959 – Olympia Fields/Willow Dell

This 12+ acre subdivision with steel homes off Western Row and Rte. 42, hoped to entice buyers with their "cool, fresh, air-conditioned comfort." In 1958, the 400 homes that were to be built here caused concern with the school board over inherent problems of overcrowding. This concern over the town's rapid-growth and its impact on the schools had first been raised as early as 1954 by the PTA. These newer subdivisions were the driving force behind the new high school in 1959, and Western Row Elementary in 1962.

In April of 1960, council put a freeze on any new subdivisions due to continued sewage problems, not just in the Meadows but in the other developments as well. The treatment plant was finally built the following year.

Mason's postwar housing boom increased the population from almost 1200 in 1950 to almost 4800 in 1960, a 400% increase. This is a trend that hasn't stopped to this day. Oh, and when I mentioned earlier that the city had more subdivisions than vou could count... Well, I tried, and gave up when I got to 60.



¹Dayton Herald, April 4, 1930 Around Mason, Ohio: A Story, RM Springman Warren County Auditor/WC Engineers ancestry.com

MASON'S FIRST TV

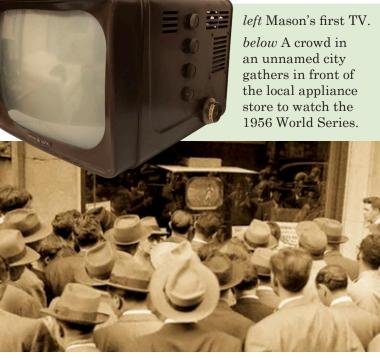
Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

When television was first introduced to the world in the late 1940's, the sets were large, heavy and very expensive. They cost upwards of \$300 (about \$3500. today). This was a whole lot of money in 1948, especially when you consider the following: average house cost was \$10,000; average earned wage was \$3100/year. The expense of a TV was a luxury that was beyond the means of most Americans at the time.

It took a few years for TV technology to advance and produce smaller, cheaper sets for more people to be able to afford. In 1956, Whitenack's Appliances in Mason stocked the (above) TV and put it front and center in their display window. It has a 14" black-andwhite screen and retailed for \$99.95 (\$1000. today).

Whitenack's was soon THE place to be. Crowds would gather in front of the window and watch this very small screen (with no sound, mind you). On Saturday evening they brought chairs and really made themselves at home! These impromptu sidewalk audiences laughed, applauded and even heckled the entertainment. New viewers joined and left the group at intervals. They were shocked by Elvis Presley's hip gyrations on The Milton Berle Show, and they watched in amazement as Don Larsen pitched the first (and to this date, only) perfect game in World Series history. They witnessed history as it was happening, and were treated to a whole new world.

These appliance store "viewing parties" were a short-lived era in the history of the country...



This Mason street scene from the 1950s shows Whitenack's Appliances, located at 110 W. Main St. (far left of photo, now Dixie Union Terminal). The building with 6 windows across the street is now the Subway parking lot.



A CHRISTMAS BLAST FROM THE PAST From the Mason Times, Dec. 19, 1962



SANTA CLAUS WILL BE GREETING THE CHILDREN AT. HIS LITTLE WHITE HOUSE AT YOST'S PARKING LOT THIS SATURDAY AND SUNDAY FROM 1 TO 5 P.M. AND FRIDAY NIGHT FROM 5 TO 9. MASON JAYCEES' HAVE CHRISTMAS TREES FOR SALE TOO...DON'T FORGET WITH EACH TREE PURCHASE YOU GET A CHANCE ON A HAM OR TURKEY. NEXT DRAWING IS SUNDAY, THE 23RD... PHOTO BY JUNE HILL since by 1965, nine out of 10 American households owned their own television.

Mason's first TV, in the Whitenack's display window, was enjoyed by many. It was subsequently purchased by Marvin "Streaky" Conover for his family. He later gifted it to his daughter, Donna, and her new husband Ron Pennington in the late 1960s. Now, Donna and Ron have gifted it to the Histoical Society (but without its "rabbit ears" and ever-present tin foil!). Stop in and see our Comet Room at the Museum and check out this fun, and very historical, artifact.

"Television in the Antenna Age: A Concise History" Marc & Thompson, 2005. Many thanks to Donna and Ron Pennington for their generous gift (and their stories).

The photo shows the view to the south – the VFW on W. Main St. can be seen at the back right. The beautiful house behind the trees belonged to Erma and Harley Cummings, and was razed in the early to mid-1970s to enlarge the Yost parking lot.

MASON'S WATER TOWERS

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

Elevated water towers have been around for quite a while. They've existed in various forms since ancient times. Thanks to gravity, these water towers utilize hydrostatic pressure to push the water into our homes and businesses. These towers never stop working. Every day during peak hours, the water level drops. Every night, the pump fills it back up. This process is also what keeps it from freezing during cold weather.

Installing a town water system had been discussed in Mason as early as 1908. This was the start of a decadeslong battle among town council members. The fight really came to a head in 1930 when the east end of town was devastated by a tremendous fire (featured in July 2020 newsletter), and there was not enough water in the town's cisterns or in Muddy Creek to adequately contain the blaze. Mason's pro-water faction had had enough and the town finally got their first water tower in 1934.

LOCATION	BUILT	GALLONS
West Church St	1934	100,000
Kings Mills Road	1956	100,000
Snider Road	1967	500,000
Bethany Road	1982	750,000
Mason Road	2001	2,000,000
Kings Mills Road	2004	2,000,000



The first two towers built are no longer standing. The 1934 West Church St. tower (left) was dismantled in 2004. The 1956 Kings Mills tower (right) was also dismantled the same year, following the completion of a new tower, 20 times its predecessor's size.

WANT ADS FROM A BYGONE ERA

This humorous real estate ad is from *The Cincinnati Enquirer* dated March 15, 1931.

MASON, OHIO, 125 ACRES

For sale, brick house: buildings for all stock, tools, grain; mostly rolling land; on Road 42; bus passes each way every hour; electricity; suitable for trucking and dairying; schools, churches; boys like to work on this farm as it adjoins WLW Station and they lean on house most of time listening to music, and when old-time fiddlers come on boys get excited and tramp down the corh; now, if any person buys this farm who has boys and does not want field next to WLW. I have a farmer adjoining who will buy this field, as he wants black soil to help sell his farm, and WLW makes no difference to him, as he never Was known to work. Have three farms. 70, 90 and 100 acres, for trade; will take in one-family house.

Hard to believe that Mason needed to actively market businesses to come to town in this real estate ad from *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, dated February 26, 1933.

MASON, OHIO wants a dry cleaner, tailor, bakery, florist, monument dealer; no local opposition; excellent adjoining territory; Mason is looking up with WLW building one of the highest radio towers in the world. Get in on the ground floor. G. L. MORRISON, Phone 67, Mason, Ohio.



Make your shopping easier this year by giving one-of-a-kind gifts from the Alverta Green Museum to friends and family.

Mason history books, cookbooks, gift memberships and commemorative bricks are perfect for those hard to buy for on your list.

Call or visit our website's E-Commerce page located under the "Support Us" tab.



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We urge you to support our wonderful business members and partners, who have been so generous with their support of the Mason Historical Society.

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Warren County Historical Society

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First Place – \$500 Janet Slater

Second Place – \$250 Jim Voyles

Third Place – \$100 Barbara Koch

Fourth Place – book prize Mason, Ohio, A Photographic History Peoples First Savings Bank

> Fifth Place – book prize Mason Ohio: A Story, Bicentennial Edition Pam Kelly

Congratulations to all our winners and thank you for your support!

