



# Old Tyme Chronicle

Published by Big Walnut Area Historical Society

Volume XXI

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1914 Postcard  
Donated by  
Sherry Carmichael  
Wishing You the  
Happiest New  
Year of All.

(See More in February)

*From the Membership Committee . . . .*

## MEMBER THOUGHTS

by Damon Bower

Our society like all service organizations benefits and suffers from similar factors – benefitting from loyal and generous members but suffering from losing members from natural causes or moving. We do receive new memberships every year but only equal to those no longer on our rolls. Our experience with soliciting new members has shown that paid advertising, posters and social media requests have little impact on recruiting. Our single most successful recruiting tool is referrals from existing members.

### Why Are You a Member?

We all have various reasons for initially and continuing our membership. Not being from this area and living 25 years in Franklin County, I did not have any close associations with our service area or the society. But the “Barn Raising” was the impetus, catching my interest in preservation of historic buildings.

I had passed Myers Inn many times and thought it was a great building, similar to preserved historic buildings I always admired on vacations passing through small

*(Continue on page 2)*

Beginning January 12 . . . .

## Walk Around the Sunbury Square

Polly Horn will conduct the virtual tour which she does for Big Walnut 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Click on the link on our website at <http://BigWalnutHistory.org> .

In 1975, as Children’s Director of Community Library, Horn, carrying an arm load of Sunbury photos - many from The Sunbury News, began walking 3<sup>rd</sup> graders from Harrison Street School around the square. Stopping at the different buildings, she told stories to the students of the building’s history through the years.

It wasn’t long before Souders children scheduled a walk. As Big Walnut schools grew and the truck noise increased, a new format had to be found to give the children the info they needed to add to their community studies. With the opening of the Myers Inn Museum, the program became a powerpoint Horn put on in the classroom before the children visited the museum.

This year the classrooms will be using this YouTube presentation. “It won’t be the same as talking with the children in person but I hope they will learn some love for this community,” noted Horn.

If you were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in a Big Walnut School in the last 55 years, you may remember your walk around the square. See if you remember the stories about the individual buildings.

## Over Eighty Viewers to Date

There is still time to see Dick Doritty’s Program “Military Equipment Connections Between the Wars” which covers personal equipment from WWI to present day. YouTube link at <http://BigWalnutHistory.org> .

*(Continued Membership Thoughts from Page 1)*

towns. I had not thought about membership until I saw where volunteers were needed to erect the barn. I was too late to be part of dismantling or transporting to the site, but was able to join more experienced volunteers in erecting post and beam structure. Using the original wooden pegs rather than modern bolts and screws was really cool, a great testament to early barn construction, The barn was erected in September 2010 and dedicated on July 4, 2012 as a means to display the Blacksmith's Forge and other donated items.

Once the barn was up, my focus gravitated to the Inn itself, where I knew I could at least help in keeping it maintained as one of the "jewels on the square."

### What Can You Do?

As mentioned above, our best way of broadening our membership base is through REFERRALS. We all know friends, neighbors, family members or fellow workers who may have an interest in either local history or preservation efforts – so share a newsletter with them, give them a brochure, invite to see or attend a program or simply give the Membership Committee name and address and we will make contact with information about the society.

Referrals can be emailed to [info@BigWalnutHistory.org](mailto:info@BigWalnutHistory.org).

## Calendar of Events

January 12 at 6:00 BWAHS Board of Trustees via Zoom

January 12 - February Program "Walk Around Sunbury Square" with Polly Horn

February 9 at 6:00 BWAHS Board of Trustees via Zoom

## Histories of the Townships in the Big Walnut Area Will Be Featured in 2021

We will stick with the early histories as we know them. These are to give the reader a feel for life on the frontier in the early days.

If you or someone you know is interested in being a guest writer for a township, please contact the Newsletter Editor, Polly Horn at the info email address at the left. Enjoy **Berkshire History** on page 3.

**Big Walnut Area Historical Society**

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leave a message or  
email [Info@BigWalnutHistory.org](mailto:Info@BigWalnutHistory.org)*

### Joining BWAHS is Easy . . . .

**Circle One:**

*Individual \$20, Family \$35, Business 10 or fewer employees \$50,  
Business 11-99 employees \$75, Business 100 or more employees \$100,  
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**Send with check for dues to BWAHS**

**P.O. Box 362  
Sunbury, OH 43074**

# Berkshire Township, 1806-1906

*Read by Nellie Stark at Centennial Dinner*

What is now Berkshire village and township, was one hundred years ago for the most part a dense forest through which the savage roamed in his civilized state, but "westward the tide of empire takes its way," and to these savage wilds, under such conditions, the pioneer found his way. It is but fitting that upon this occasion, this year being the one hundredth since his advent here, that we pay tribute to the memory of our pioneer fathers who have long since been laid to rest. The men who opened up these forests to civilization were practical men. They came here to better their conditions, and went to work with energy and zeal to clear their land and build homes in these savage wilds. They were also men of culture, and while they labored to better their material prospects, they labored also to bring into the community the highest elements of religion and social life. In this brief sketch I can but touch upon the points of interest, and that but briefly, but I will endeavor to give you an outline of the first settlers with some items of interest connected with their history.

The pioneer of Berkshire was Colonel Moses Byxbe, of Lenox, Berkshire Co., Mass., a man of wealth and standing in his native town. He had come into possession of a large number of soldiers' land warrants, and located them in Sec. 2 of what is now Berkshire township, and in Sec. 1 of the present township of Berlin, 8,000 acres in all. In June, 1804, he fitted out a four-horse team in charge of Orlando Barker, a three-horse team in charge of Witter Stewart, and a one-horse wagon driven by Solomon Smith, and loading with household goods, and goods from his store, the little colony set out, following the track of the Scioto colony, which started the year previous. Byxbe himself led the way with his family in a two-horse carriage, an evidence of his wealth, as carriages were not common in those days. He persuaded Edward Potter, a nephew of his, then a boy of thirteen years, to come with him, promising him a position of clerk in the store he proposed to start. Also Azariah Root, of Pittsfield, Mass, a surveyor, who proved very useful to the colony.

After many perilous adventures they reached Worthington, Ohio, late in August. Leaving his family there, he came on to his land here. He chose his building site on the banks of Little Walnut, where he built cabins for his house and stables. About a half mile

south of where the Corners now are, on the Berkshire road, he built a cabin for Mr. Root. Early in November the first load of household goods reached Berkshire, and soon the two families were established in their new homes, the first in the county. Byxbe then went back to Massachusetts and persuaded other settlers to follow. This they did, and we find the names of Mr. Curtis, a shoemaker, who came early in 1805; John Kilbourne, Ralph Slack, Elam Vining, a Mrs. Harper, and Adonijah Rice, among the first settlers. Then, in 1806, Maj. Brown, with his family, David Prince, and John Patterson, with their families, followed.

In 1807, Ichabod Plumb, with his family, and Dr. Reuben Lamb, with his wife and child, came. Dr. Lamb remained but a short time. Being dissatisfied with the place, he moved to Worthington, but later returned to Berkshire, and was its first physician. In 1811, Maj. Brown built the first brick house in the township, a little north of the corners, at present owned by Mrs. Gibson. During the war of 1812, this house was used as a rallying point, and a place of security for the families of the little settlement.

The first store at Berkshire Corners was started by Col. Byxbe, with Azariah Root in charge. The first tavern was kept by Adonijah Rice, and he was also the first post-master, having the P.O. in connection with his tavern. About the same time, Maj. Brown opened a hotel at his house. The prices for board were not exorbitant, at least we would not think so now. Single meals were from 15 to 20 cts., and board by the week from one dollar to one dollar and a half. The pioneers of this place were a religious people, and among them were those of the Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Methodist belief.



*Major Brown's House*

The first sermon was preached at Berkshire, in Maj. Brown's house by Bishop Chase, in 1818. On Easter Monday, March 23, 1818, the Episcopal Church was organized at the house of David Prince.

About ten years later, 1828, they built a fine brick church or what was thought fine for that day, a short distance east of the comers, on what was then called the Granville road, it having been surveyed in 1805 by Mr. Root. The fate of this church building is well known, it being our present school house. The Presbyterians never

built a church here, but Rev. Ebenezer Washburn, about 1818, came here and held services in the cabins for two or three years. The present Methodist Church was organized with twenty-five members, in 1858, by Rev. Amos Wilson and a church erected in 1860.

Our early pioneers adhered to that principle set forth in the ordinance of 1787, that "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." I could find no authentic account of when the first school house was built, but it was no doubt very early, and was a round log house, built by Col. Byxbe east of the corners on the Granville road. I am told that another was built later near what is now the Dustman home. The first teacher



***Berkshire Episcopal Church  
East of Brick School***

was a Miss Thompson, from Worthington. The Berkshire Academy was the first attempt in the way of more advanced education, and was established about 1840-41. The building was a frame, costing about three or four hundred dollars, and the expense of building was defrayed by the sale of shares at ten dollars each. It was located just east of the Episcopal Church. The first teacher in this school was G. S. Bailey, of Oberlin, and perhaps there are those yet living who were pupils at this school. The building, however, has been graded down and divided, and is at present used as a hennery and woodhouse of our townsman, Newton Smith.

The first white child born in the township was Albert Root, in 1807. The first wedding was that of Dr. Spaulding and Cynthia Root. The first death was that of Mrs. Vining, wife of Elam Vining, in 1806, and from the standing timber, the ax and cross-cut saw were made to supply her casket. She was buried about 40 rods south of the comers, in the forest. The trees have all been cleared away, and she was left with not even a tree to mark her burial spot, but the sound of children's voices at their play, or cattle browsing over her grave disturb not her last repose.

It seems almost incredible to us, who are used to luxury, compared with the life the pioneer led, that they could exist in this wilderness so far removed from the

civilized world. Their nearest mill at first was Chillicothe, about 60 miles away, and to this they carried their wheat, corn and rye, mounted upon the back of the faithful family horse. Going to mill involved a week's time, and very small grists could be carried, and it was necessary to make the trips often. Salt, which we find so necessary in the culinary department, sold in Berkshire at \$3.00 a bushel, and very little could be obtained at that price. About 1808 a mill was constructed on the banks of Alum Creek, about where the covered bridge now stands, by Nathaniel Hull, and this proved to be a great help to the settlement. Here the Indians also brought their corn to be ground. In most cases they were friendly to the settler, and not much trouble arose from that source.

Clothing was made in the homes by the busy housewives, from wool and flax grown on the farms. They had no glass for windows, and greased paper was used as a substitute...

Col. Byxbe remained with the settlement but a few years. Selling his land, he went with the Delaware colony, though from the first he had promised that the county seat should be at Berkshire. While many pioneers were much disappointed, we may be proud of the fact that Delaware is but Berkshire's sunset. Let us strive to emulate the virtues, and profit by the mistakes of the early pioneer.

## **Featured Business Member** **Bry-Air Company**

Bry-Air was founded in 1964 and has been a leader in the field of environmental control systems for over 50 years. The Company is a leading manufacture of desiccant dehumidifier products and services for technically complex applications.

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**BWAHS Trustee Mel Meyers is owner and CEO of Bry-Air and can be contacted at**

**877-427-9247 or at [mmeyers@bry-air.com](mailto:mmeyers@bry-air.com).**

