



Old Tyme Chronicle

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Thank You Delaware County

by *Bill Comisford*

As many of you know, the COVID 19 Pandemic caused the Big Walnut Area Historical Society's Myers Inn to close its doors almost a year ago, on Saturday, March 14th. The Myers Inn hasn't had a visitor since, with all local events cancelled during 2020. To assist the Historical Society through these trying time, Delaware County, through their 2020 Community Enhancement Grant has awarded the Historical Society a grant in the amount of \$8,359. The grant will help provide needed assistance in maintaining the Myers Inn and the additional cost incurred as a result of COVID.

Just a reminder, the Myers Inn is now open by appointment only. To make your reservation, call 740-965-3582. A mask is required, and social distancing will be maintained within the building.

We hope to see you there!

Thanks

To all who donated to our year end solicitation, a very big thank you. As of February 3rd, we have received \$1640. Thanks for your continued support!

Walk Around Sunbury Square

As of press-time, the tour of Sunbury Square has been seen by 653 people. I am so pleased so many people have revisited the past history of the buildings surrounding Sunbury Village Square. Although the program was listed for February, it was originally generated for the third grade teachers to use with their community curriculum. Thus, there will continue to be a link to it on our homepage.

The Battle of Fort Sumter – First Shots of the Civil War

Van Young will present his view of the beginning of the Civil War to BWAHS at 7:00 on Monday, March 15, via Zoom.



Van Young

The First Battle of Fort Sumter began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate artillery fired on the Union garrison. These were the first shots of the war and continued all day, watched by many civilians in a celebratory spirit. The fort had been cut off from its supply line and surrendered the next day. The talk describes the events and decisions Lincoln and other had to make during the most desperate of days.

After the War of 1812, a series of fortifications were designed to protect the United States from naval attack. Named for General Thomas Sumter, a hero of the American Revolution, this fort was built on an artificial island constructed in the channel on 70,000 tons of granite brought in from New England. The five sided brick fort was never finished.

Young, who collects little know facts of the Civil War, will share the events leading to the battle and the results of it.

Young was born and raised in Ohio and has been a resident of Columbus for the last 38 years. When he retired from AT&T in 2012, he made one of his retirement goals to spend time studying about the Civil War. While he enjoys presenting a variety of American history subjects, he is very enamored with the civil war.

A Zoom link will be emailed (Continue on Page 2)

From January's Old Tyme Chronicle. . . .

John Wesley Freeman

By Polly Horn

There was a New Year postcard sent to John W. Freeman in Sunbury from his daughter Lucy in Iowa in 1914. The article was researched but not completed when Hank Aaron died and I followed another story promising to give more background about the card donated to the Myers Inn Museum by Sherry Carmicheal. We are featuring Genoa Township this month so it is the perfect time to revisit the Freeman's.

John was the son of Charles Freeman, born in 1811 in New Jersey and Elizabeth Closson born in 1813 in Ohio. I am guessing they married in Ohio - note other Clossons on the 1849 Genoa map.

Born in 1845, John was the last of at least 12 children born on the Freeman farm. He enlisted in 1861, as a Private in 15 USA Infantry, Company A, served three years and was discharged in 1864. He married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Schultz and became a father to Lucy in Kirkerville, MO, in 1872. The family moved on to Iowa where 5 more children were born and Lizzie died.

John was approved for invalid soldier's pension in 1879. He married Elizabeth Hupp in 1887 and had three more children in Ohio, living first in Berkshire then in Trenton Townships. Elizabeth got widows funds in 1928.

John's brothers Justin, Charles, Phillip, and Frank are on the map. Sisters married into the Overturf, Bennett, Dusenbery,

Big Walnut Area Historical Society

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For Information Call 740-965-1154
 leave a message or
 email Info@BigWalnutHistory.org

Calendar of Events

- March 9 at 6:00 p.m. BWAHS Broad of Trustees meet via Zoom
- March 15 at 7:00 Program, "The Battle of Ft. Sumter- First Shots of Civil War" by Van Young on Zoom (see page 1)
Myers Inn Museum is Open for Tours on Saturdays by appointment. Call 740-965-3582 for details.

Ranck, Cockrell and other local families.

(Program Continued from page 1)

to all who get this newsletter via email a week before the program and a reminder the evening before the program. If you get a paper copy but have access to Zoom programs via computer or smart phone, contact Polly Horn at info@BigWalnutHistory.org so you can receive the Zoom link.

Many thanks to Roger Roberts who finds and secures our speakers for our monthly meetings.

See Township Maps on our website under Local History > Transportation > Delaware County Maps
<http://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, Patron \$100, Other ?

Name _____

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Send with check for dues to BWAHS

**P.O. Box 362
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History Just Down the Road...

By Carol Norris

In 1994, my husband Alan and I moved into our new home in northern Genoa Township. As Alan was raised in Westerville, he had explored the 70 foot cliffs that existed before Hoover Reservoir. But only as far north as the Maxtown Road bridge. Because our little subdivision was so new, we were curious to learn about those who had lived in the area before us.

Turns out, a treasure trove of local history was to be found just down our road, on Yankee Street, on the cusp of the reservoir. Less than a quarter mile long now, before the reservoir was flooded the street crossed Big Walnut Creek on a covered bridge. And a number of early pioneers are there on Yankee Street, resting in Copeland Cemetery.

Five of these pioneers—The Reverend John Williams, Marcus Curtis, Jeremiah Curtis, Eleazer Copeland and Diadius Keeler—are the focus of this article. Much about our early neighbors has been lost over the 200 years of Genoa Township history, but I was able to learn part of these men’s stories and gain a glimpse into the “olden days” of this area.

Genoa Township is located within the “United States Military District”, an area set aside by Congress in 1796 for the benefit of veterans of the Revolutionary War. All five benefited from these land grants, either because of military service, or by having acquired their land from those who had received the grants.

Williams had served as a Private in the Continental Army, according to a government bronze plaque next to his tombstone. Then, during the winter of 1806-07, Rev. Williams left his temporary home in Pennsylvania to erect a cabin overlooking Big Walnut Creek, near the site of the future covered bridge. His wife and their children joined him in the summer of 1807. Williams died in 1814.

Jeremiah Curtis of Connecticut is considered to be the first non-native settler to arrive. In 1806, he erected a cabin in the area of present day Yankee Street and Big Walnut Creek. A saw and grist mill followed. As war with Great Britain approached, Jeremiah sold his land and moved with his family away from the threat of marauding Indians to safety in Marietta, where he died in 1813. Two monuments in Copeland Cemetery remember Jeremiah and his wife, Rachel.

Jeremiah’s younger brother, Marcus Curtis (his cemetery stone spells it Curtiss) and his wife Caty, and Caty’s brother, Elisha Newell and their families, found their way to the area in 1808. Marcus purchased nearly 700 acres of land including some on Yankee Street, where he built a cabin. He began making brick from the clay on his farm and erected the township’s first brick home. Over the years, the structure also served as a stagecoach inn and post office. The lovely structure is still standing on Sunbury Road, just north of Harlem Road. The home remained in the Curtis family until the mid 1990s. Both Marcus, who briefly served in the army during the War of 1812, and Caty are buried in Copeland Cemetery.

Dr. Eleazer Copeland was among the settlers who came to the township between 1816 and 1819. While he was a productive member of the community, it is the circumstances surrounding his death that were of particular interest. It seems Dr. Copeland was part owner of a sawmill located along Big Walnut Creek.

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Featured Business Members FIRESTONE, BREHM, WOLF AND WHITNEY, LLP

Their predecessors started the firm more than seventy years ago as an integral part of the lives of clients in Delaware County. Their mission has been to serve both business and individual clients cost effectively with excellence and integrity. The attorneys and staff reside in Delaware County, giving them an advantage over outside lawyers.

Current lawyers include David Brehm, Scott Wolf, Vic Whitney and D.J. Young III.

They can be contacted at their Delaware office at 15 W. Winter St, 43015, 740-363-1213 or their Sunbury office at 6 S. Vernon St., PO Box 321, 43074, 740-965-2226.

Genoa Township continued from page 3

a productive member of the community, it is the circumstances surrounding his death that were of particular interest. It seems Dr. Copeland was part owner of a sawmill located along Big Walnut Creek. During a sudden rainstorm, a number of logs stored near the mill broke loose and started to float off. Copeland's wife, Hannah, saw the logs and alerted her husband. He leaped into the stream after the logs, but despite being an excellent swimmer, fell victim to the swift, turbulent water. Several days later his body was discovered near Spruce Run, which empties into Big Walnut. Copeland and his wife are buried in Copeland Cemetery.

Early settler Diadatus Keeler and his wife, Orilla, left the Lake Champlain region of Vermont for Ohio in 1816. Soon after arriving, Keeler built a log cabin near the present intersection of Red Bank and Sunbury Roads. Described as a "very enterprising man," Keeler would later erect a substantial home on the north bluff of "a lovely little valley in which...two creeks would flow into the...Big Walnut Creek and in the vicinity of a famous Indian mound". This architectural gem still stands on Red Bank Road, across from the original site of the Keeler cabin. It has been the longtime home of Wayman and Joan Lawrence, strong supporters of the BWAHS. Wayman passed away in 2019.

The reminiscences of Keeler's granddaughter reveal his ingenuity in planning the house. Family lore says it took two years to complete and required the efforts of forty workmen. Among its most notable features are a stunning curly maple staircase and a room with folding doors which, at the time, opened the entire side of the home to the outside and served as a summer dining room during hot weather.

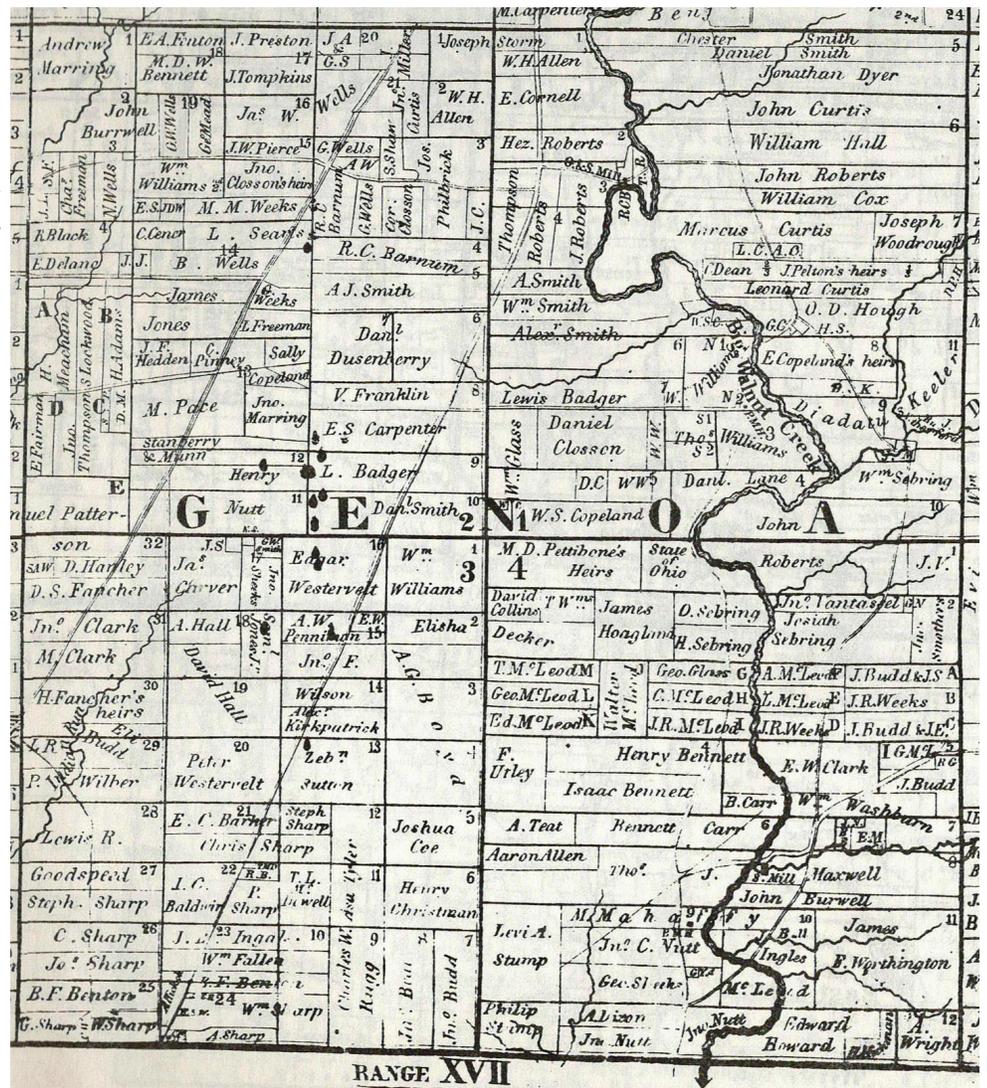
A farmer, Keeler introduced several new strains of sheep and hogs to the area. His granddaughter remembered that he had "many lines of work on the farm at the sawmill and quarry, where the chief work was the making of tombstones".

Keeler died in 1854 and is buried alongside several family members in Copeland Cemetery.

Yes, history abounds just down the road. Hopefully, as the weather warms and the grass greens, you will have the opportunity to explore northeast Genoa Township and remember the early settlers sleeping in Copeland Cemetery.

Special thanks to Polly Horn, Brent Carson, Joe Shafer of the Genoa Twp. Zoning and Development Office, and former State Representative Joan Lawrence for their assistance.

Learn More of Our Local History at
<http://BigWalnutHistory.org>



1849 Genoa Township Map Showing Land Owners