

SOUTHWEST PIONEER

JUNE 2019

SOUTHWEST FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

grovecityohhistory@gmail.com

GROVE CITY, OH 43123

grovecityohhistory.org

Horse Racing Memories; It's Impact On Village

By Barbara (Weygandt) Burkhardt
Orange City, FL

I loved seeing the WOSU neighborhood video on Grove City and Beulah Park, however I didn't see anything mentioned about what that brought to our little village's economy and diversity of people.

I am 89 years old and I remember how the village women would rent out any extra bedroom, shed, or garage to folks who traveled with the races. It was a way to make a little extra money each spring and fall during the racing season.

In my family home on Park Street, I was moved to the couch and my bedroom was rented to people whom we referred to as race trackers. That was not a bad word or a slur in those days, just a word that referred to people who came to town to work at the races; owners, trainers, jockeys and agents. Even Guianas, often dark skinned boys who usually worked and stayed in the barns close to the horses. In later years those words were considered taboo and changed to Horsemen, etc.

Restaurants and bars were busy and the buses to and from Columbus were often crowded to standing as people came to Grove City, especially on Saturday afternoon. We locals were sometimes upset because those race trackers often took our seats on the bus reading the Racing Form and all seemed to smoke cigarettes.

At our home, we sometimes rented to owners and their wives and for a few years to a jockey, Herbert Chin, and his beautiful wife, Pauline. We shared the one bathroom and I don't remember any problem doing that. Unfortunately he was killed in France during WWII and we were very saddened as if we had lost a member of our own family.

Many families welcomed the same renters season after season. *See Page 2*



From The Grove City Record, Earl Nicholson, 1985

DeVoss House – This house, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dwight DeVoss in the 1980s, stands at 1103 High St., Harrisburg, and was built by the village's first mayor, Dr. Joseph Helmick. The house is constructed of pegged timbers much like a barn. Much of the downstairs woodwork, the stairway and the entire upstairs hallway woodwork, were original and made of black walnut. The south side of the house also had black walnut lap siding. Below the floor of the garage was a smokehouse.

Heritage Day June 1 At Century Village

The annual Heritage Day festivities will be held Saturday, June 1 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Century Village.

This is a completely free event that has something for all ages. Society members are encouraged to invite friends, neighbors and relatives to experience local history that day.

Various other organizations will have displays at the daylong event and various games and activities are planned for children.

The Columbus Cincinnati and Midland Railroad Station can be viewed from the outside by visitors but considerable work is still required before the depot is open for public tours.

Horse Racing Memories

Continued from Page 1

Many of them became neighbors and stayed in our fair village for the rest of their lives.

One jockey married a local gal and he became a postman for the village. Some others became businessmen and one owned our popular bowling alley.

Another source of extra income was for women and men working at the track in the restaurants and bars and in the ladies rooms where they would hand you a clean white towel to dry your hands or maybe a safety pin to fix something that needed attention.

Men, young or old, could find work selling programs, working in the grandstand seating folks or some touting betters with hot tips.

I remember, especially, Saturday nights when the handsome young jockeys would be standing around, maybe in front of the hotel or one of the other bars, just talking. Many were from Mexico or some other Spanish speaking country. They would be dressed in fine suits and ties, pointed leather shoes so beautifully shined.

If they had wives they would also be dressed like models in lovely dresses and lots of make-up and eye shadow, something that hadn't yet caught on in our little village.



Women's Civic Club float at Aug. 29, 1939 Grove City Homecoming parade.

Homecoming Festival First Held in 1934; 14 Founders

Fourteen local residents are remembered as founders of the Grove City Homecoming in 1934.

They were: Charles Patzer, Gurnie Vaughn, Kenneth Morris, Oscar Ranke, Dr. David Lewis, Charles Endres, Dr. Deane Davis, Edward DeVault, Ralph Clark, Harold Defenbaugh, Russell Darnell, William Albright, Randall Wade and Harry Hanna.

HISTORY Dateline

By Jim Hale

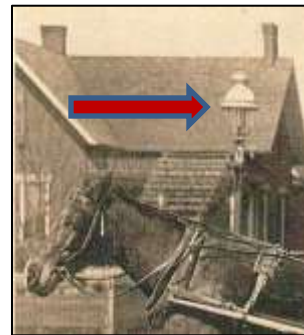


How many times have you looked at a photograph and see something you never noticed before. Historical photographs can be very telling and we should always examine closely.

Take for example the photograph below. It's believed the photograph is of Frank Smith, who is inside the buggy, with Coast Berry, standing.



According to notes, the picture was taken looking west from the intersection of Park Street and Broadway. If you look closely, you'll also



see one of Grove City's early gas street lights just above the horse.

The street light was there all the time but our eyes are drawn to the people and the buggy.

There's another interesting visual that

can go almost unnoticed. In the bottom picture, what appears to be a storm drain is visible. It's difficult to tell from the picture if the streets are paved but the surface seems to be compact and smooth. There is no sign of Interurban tracks. Looking again, it would appear this was a winter scene because there are no leaves on the trees. Next time, take a close look at the old photo and see what you can uncover.



Timeline Provides Quick View Of Past

Grove City has an interesting history and sometimes the best way to understand the big picture is with a timeline.

It may be hard to picture the landscape when settlers first moved into the wilderness area. The Wyandotte and Shawnee had small settlements along the Scioto River. Stringtown Road was originally an Indian path from the river into to forest.

Early settlers appreciated the rich soil of the township but unfortunately much of the land was too wet and very few acres were suitable for farming. The land needed to be drained into the various runs that emptied into the Scioto River. That was one reason Ohio had so many tile mills. There was a great demand for drainage tile, especially in the Grove City area.

There was an abundance of wild game including turkey, elk and deer and predators including panthers and bears. There were so many wolf packs and squirrels that Franklin County commissioners placed a bounty and encouraged residents to kill wolves and squirrels. At one time, there were so many squirrels in the county that they were destroying crops. One of the largest wolf packs in the county was located in the area today identified as Independence Drive.

Hopefully, this timeline will offer a better understanding the heritage of Grove City.

- 1796 – Franklinton, first settlement north of Chillicothe.
- 1797 – Hugh Grant Sr., follows Scioto River north.
- 1803 – Ohio becomes the 17th state.
- 1804 – Grant moves family to Chillicothe from Pittsburgh.
- 1805 – Grant moves to 450 acres he purchased.
- 1806 – Hugh Grant Sr., dies, the winter of 1806-1807.
- 1807 – Hugh Grant Jr. born.
- 1815 – Jackson Township created from Franklin Township.
- 1815 – First school opens at Borrer’s Corners.
- 1816 – William F. Breck born in Washington County, OH.
- 1820 – Township population, 310.
- 1830 – Methodist circuit rider preacher arrives.
- 1837 – John Smith purchases 273 acres, Jackson Township.
- 1840 – Township population, 784.
- 1840 – Breck marries Elizabeth Smith, dau. of John Smith.
- 1846 – Breck scouts Jackson Township.
- 1847 – Highland Road Free Meeting House opens.
- 1847 – Breck, wife buy 273 Jackson Twp. acres for \$1,911.
- 1847 – Breck becomes Carroll, OH postmaster.

- 1848 – Breck builds brick house on White Place.
- 1848 – Investors create company to build Highland Road.
- 1849 – Lutherans organize fellowship.
- 1850 – Breck builds steam powered sawmill.
- 1850 – Township population, 1,550.
- 1852 – Plat with 19 lots created for town of Grove City.
- 1852 – Grove City lots advertised for sale.
- 1852 – Breck opens first mercantile, brick-tile factory.
- 1853 – Amelia Friederick Miller first child born in village.
- 1853 – Jackson Township opens school in village.
- 1854 – John Smith gives 600 acres to his daughter.
- 1854 – William Blackburn builds hotel and saloon.
- 1855 – Breck opens grist mill to process grain.
- 1856 – Presbyterians organize church.
- 1857 – First post office in township opens.
- 1857 – Breck appointed Grove City postmaster.
- 1862 – Breck builds 20-room house, Park and Broadway.
- 1864 – Breck died in tragic farm accident.
- 1866 – Grove City becomes an incorporated village.
- 1869 -- Grove City Special School District organized.
- 1884 – Cincinnati, Midland City and Columbus RR.
- 1886 – Grove City expands west of Broadway.
- 1888 – First brick school opens in Grove City.
- 1891 – Columbus-Grove City commuter train begins.
- 1894 – Elizabeth Breck died in New Jersey.
- 1895 – High school charter was received.
- 1896 – First high school class graduates all girls.
- 1896 – Grove City Interurban begins operation.
- 1898 – Students, residents plant maple trees in village.
- 1898 – High school colors of crimson and blue selected.
- 1900 – Breck’s former home becomes the Highland Hotel.
- 1906 – Grove City Pioneers Reunion held at Breck home.
- 1952 – Centennial Celebration held.
- 1959 – Grove City population reaches 5,000.
- 1959 – Grove City becomes a city.

Softball Sized Hail Peppers Grove City

Nearly 40 years ago on Mother’s Day, a severe thunderstorm roared through Grove City leaving behind softball sized hail and strong winds. Many still remember that day and where they were that Sunday afternoon.

According to the Ohio Insurance Institute, the May 11, 1980 storm caused \$51 million in damage in Grove City.

Newspaper accounts said Grove City was the hardest hit community in Central Ohio. An estimated 32,000 claims were filed with 54 insurance companies.

Continued Page 4

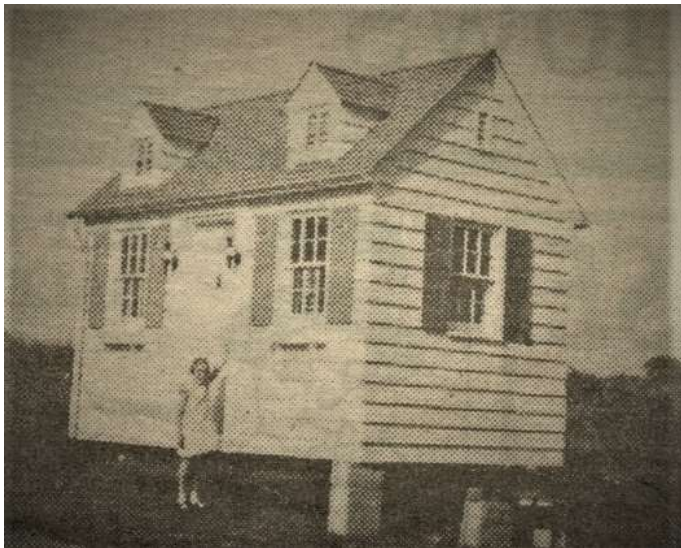
Softball Sized Hail

Continued from Page 3

The largest claims were for residential properties which totaled \$32.3 million followed by \$16.2 million for motor vehicles.

Nationwide Insurance paid out \$5.5 million after processing about 4,000 claims. State Farm Insurance paid out more than \$3 million in about an equal number of claims. The average residential claim for both companies was \$1,962 and damaged vehicles averaged \$889.

Individual commercial properties reported about \$4,623 with some as high as more than \$100,000.



Little houses are featured on cable television but the idea was nothing new. Grove City had its own miniature house built in 1937 by the employees of the Grove City Lumber Yard. The lumber yard once sat on Park Street where the new apartments are located today. The model house was used as a display at the Franklin County Fair and was also shown at various homecomings throughout Franklin County. Pictured beside the house is Marilyn Gibboney, former longtime president of the historical society.

Members Approve New Young Historians Effort

Society members have approved a new direction for the Young Historians program which will hopefully encourage a youthful interest in local history.

Cash awards will be paid out to contest winners starting in the next school year funded by a \$2,500 donation to the Society.

Students who enter the contest will have a variety of optional areas of interest or they can select their own historical category.



This is a picture of the Kropp Road bridge near Georgesville. It is one of many photographs in the Society files that has little to no further information. Any member who can provide any additional information is encouraged to contact Jim Hale at 614-875-9560 or email him at jhale45@gmail.com.

Prairie Township, 200 Years Service

Prairie Township, organized in 1819, has reached 200 years of community service to the west Franklin County area.

The township was originally much larger in territory when a portion of Franklin Township was taken to create Prairie Township.

Not to be overlooked, Prairie Township Fire Department is also celebrating marking 75 years of fire and emergence services. The fire department is planning a fish fry and classic car show the last weekend of June.

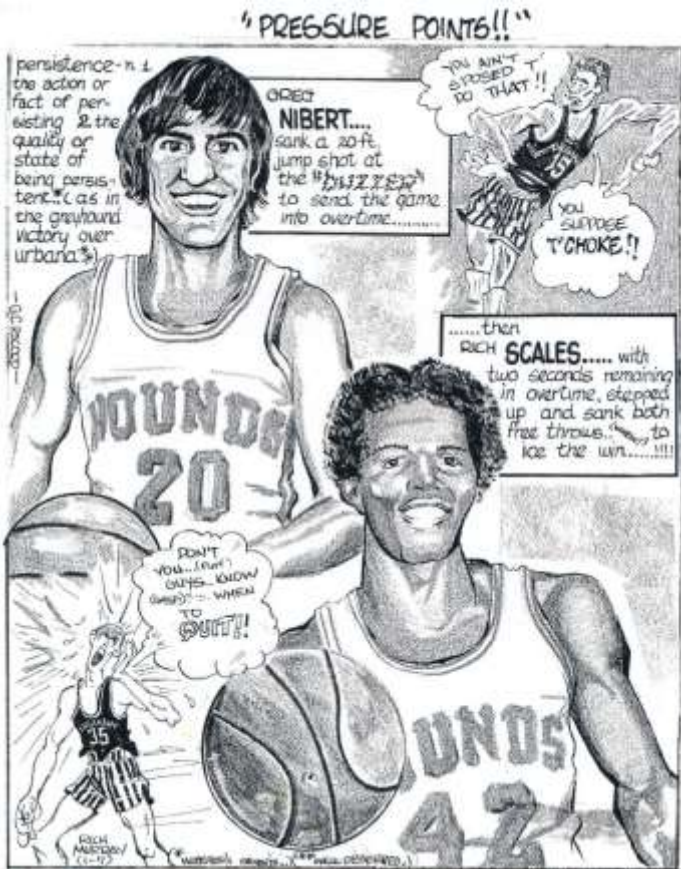
The township is one of 17 townships in the county with a population just under 20,000.

Early settlers in the township included the Higgins, Postle, Mannon families and the 14 member Clover family, one of the largest.

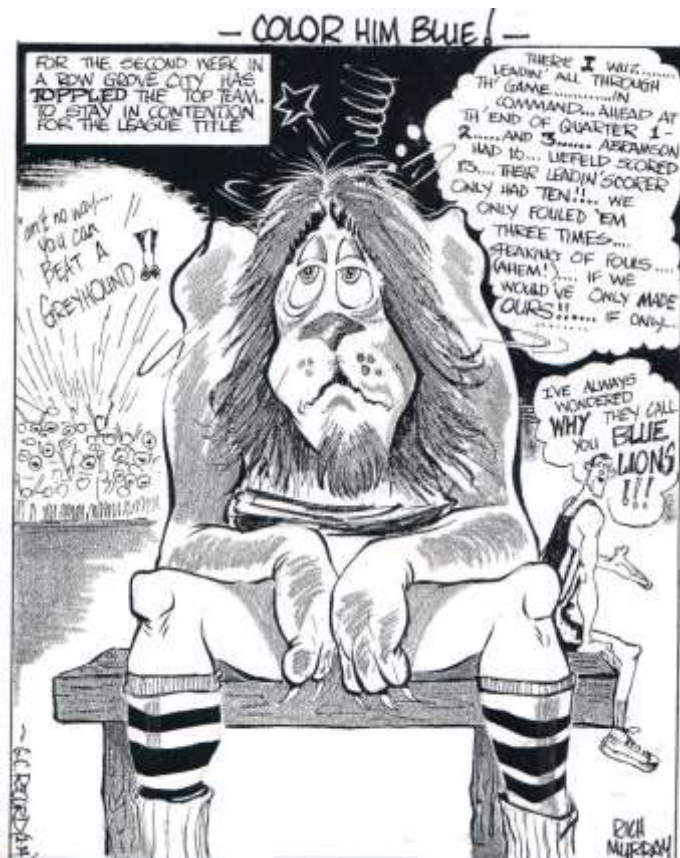
The Clover family also became one of the prominent families and their homestead was referred to as *The Clover Settlement*.

Hunting was a necessity and there was plenty of game including wild turkey, deer, squirrel, to name a few. A hunter seldom came home without an abundance of meat for the table.

There were also many predators such as wolves, bears and panthers that roamed the thick forest and natural prairie. See Page 6.



Back in the 1970s, the Grove City Record had frequent cartoons drawn by Rich Murray that featured Greyhound teams. These are from Society archives.



One never knows what will show up in the mail. This is a very rare sketch of the Dyer Brothers Flour Mill once located near Georgesville. It is postmarked Georgesville but the date is not possible to read. The mill was erected in 1805 by Samuel Dyer and eventually passed on to William Dyer. It was the only flouring mill in the township for 50 years.

Did You Know . . .

- Dr. Nessley owned the first automobile in Grove City?
- The first high school band consisted of 40 students and was under the direction of Ralph Grant?
- Gabe Postle was Grove City's first barber?
- Stringtown Pike and Grove City Pike were once the same road?

Southwest Pioneer

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 3378-B Park St., Grove City, OH 43123



www.grovecityohhistory.org
grovecityohhistory@gmail.com

JAMES F. HALE, Newsletter Editor
 614-875-9560 – jhale45@gmail.com

OFFICERS

Steve Jackson, President	614-871-0081
John Hines, Vice President	614-364-6692
Trudie Gardner, Secretary	614-879-7416
Larry Zapp, Treasurer	614-475-4018
Janet Garza, Membership	614-991-4712

MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

Monthly Meetings first Tuesday at 7 p.m.
 St. John's Lutheran Church, 3220 Columbus St.

Prairie Township

The following was written by Nola Freeman, and is reprinted from Reflections, a collection of local stories.

Prairie Township lies in the Virginia Military Land Tract. In consideration of military service performed by officers and soldier of the Virginia Line, on Continental Establishment, they were to obtain title to certain lands lying northwest of the River Ohio, between the Little Miami and Scioto.

Over a period of time from the earliest survey in July of 1796 to the latest in July of 1829, these officers and soldiers were given the original warrants to land in Prairie Township. A Patent on 56 surveys on 48 warrants was given to 33 men.

Many of these lands were never settled by the grant holders of Prairie Township.

The Clovers came from Virginia and settled here in 1813. The township was formed on December 28, 1819. Some of the pioneers had settled in Franklinton. As they wanted to buy a larger tract of land on which to raise their crops and families, they came west to Prairie Township. In the early days before 1836 the National Highway was nothing but a dirt road.

Prairie Township was so named because it was covered with the tall grasses familiar to the prairie. Most of the township has been farmed or grazed; and the prairie grass, once tall enough to hide all but the head of a man on a horse when he was riding, is gone, as well as the forested areas.

Settlers came from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New York, and a few from as far away as Germany, Ireland, Scotland, England, France and Wales.

In the late 1800's and 1900's the descendants of the settlers tilled and ditched Prairie Township, and it became productive farmland.

The farms were located in the township like pieces on a quilt, with a small gathering of persons and business establishments in the Galloway, Alton, and Rome areas. The township consisted of approximately thirty square miles of farming community located on both sides of the National Road.

After the road was built, progress later brought a railroad to the north and south of it, the interurban streetcar, and finally the utilities.

With the industrialization of the nation and the expansion of Columbus, both for commercial and residential purposes, some of the farmland has been lost. Also gone are the old elegant farm homes that once lined the National Road.

An example of one family to come to Prairie Township and whose descendants are still in the area today is that of John Dougherty. He was born in Derry County, Ireland in 1766. He and two brothers arrived in New York before 1790.

At 24 years of age he married his first wife, Mary Morris. His young wife died in 1797, leaving him with three children to raise. At the age of 39, in 1804, John married a girl 22 years younger than himself. Her name was Nancy Ann Gatton. A year afterwards John and Nancy's first son, James, was born in 1805; and John and Nancy and the baby came to Ohio.

They first settled on the banks of the Scioto River in Franklinton. In a short time, John and Nancy moved to Prairie Township and had ten more children in addition to James. Son James married Mary Ann Clover and along with his brothers and sisters continued the heritage of John, who had emigrated from Ireland. Mary Ann was the daughter of Joshua and Rachel Rutan Clover.

James and Mary Ann had a dozen children...as the sons married he gave each 70 acres of the land accumulated over the years; to each daughter he gave 35 acres, when she married.

The Daughertys were very religious. James and his son Joshua, who owned a brick and tile mill, were responsible for donating the land building the church called Salem Chapel, and also a school house.

Today, half a century after the death of Joshua and his wife, Cindia Rilla Freeman Dougherty, the Thornapple Golf course, designed by nationally known golf course architect, Jack Kidwell. Kidwell, a resident of Prairie Township, is on part of Joshua Dougherty's beloved homestead.

Few remnants of our ancestors are left except the cemeteries. The Postle Cemetery, once nestled in a stand of trees south on Norton Road, was taken over in the development of some land. There remains a relic family burial ground here and there; the Clover Settlement Cemetery is still visible, located on Alton-Darby Creek Road in the early days of Prairie Township.