



SOUTHWEST PIONEER

DECEMBER 2020

SOUTHWEST FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
3378-B PARK ST., GROVE CITY, OHIO 43123

Historical Marker Suggested

Should Mill Street Be Remembered?

By James F. Hale

When Mill Street, one of Grove City's original dirt roads, intersected with Broadway around 1872, it created one of the busiest intersections in the early settlement.

It first accepted traffic as an access road in 1850 when William Foster Breck, founder of Grove City, built a sawmill and grist mill near that intersection.

Mill Street was just north of Breck's businesses on Nichols Street, a road we know today as Grant Avenue.

The 1848 wood plank Columbus Harrisburg Turnpike (Broadway) predates Mill Street but not by much. Before the turnpike, potholes in the main trail through town toward Harrisburg made for a rough and bumpy ride. Like other roads in and around Jackson Township, the turnpike, after rains, would become a muddy mess that was nearly impossible to navigate by horse and wagon.

Mill Street shows up on a map in 1872 probably because the home of William Nichols sat directly in its path. The street became a public roadway sometime between 1872 and 1895. The original Mill Street crossed the railroad spur that led to the old mill.

According to the 1895 map, Mill Street ran west of Broadway at Columbus Street to the Cincinnati, Midland and Columbus Railroad track. That rail line came through Grove City in 1884. Mill Street is today the Columbus Street extension leading into the Beulah Park redevelopment.

In the early 1840s, Xavias Buckholz operated a steam powered grist mill in Jackson Township. This was the first known mill in the township. His operation was about two miles west of the Columbus and Harrisburg Turnpike. In 1850, Breck purchased Buckholz's steam powered plant and mill stones and moved it to his property west of the new turnpike between Mill and Nichols Streets. Breck also operated a sawmill at the same location.

Two years later in 1852, Breck created a plat for a new village in Jackson Township that he named Grove City. As the village grew, Grove City's business district was clustered on the east side of Broadway between Columbus and Park Streets. Breck discouraged log homes in his new town instead promoting plank houses that required lumber

produced at his sawmill.

Breck operated the sawmill and grist mill until around 1864, the year he was killed in a farming accident. According to research in 1936 by local historian Harold Windsor, Breck's widow, Elizabeth, sold their property and planned a move to New Jersey where she would live with a son. The milling operation was purchased by John Buckholtz. Carl Grossman may have been a partner in the transaction. Grossman had worked many years at the Breck's mill.

Buckholtz moved the milling equipment to his property on the southside of Columbus Street in the area of Arbutus Avenue. He operated his mill at that location until he sold the business to William Nichols. He moved the milling operation back to its original location, property he then owned, on the west side of Broadway, east of the railroad tracks. Thomas Beavers was next to purchase the business but he ended up selling it back to the Nichols family.

By 1880, George H. Gantz purchased the mill from Nichols and built a three-story modern flour mill. Sometime after that, Gantz created an early subdivision with 21 lots located south of Mill Street.

Those lots today are on Grant Avenue between Broadway and the railroad track.

Gantz sold his business to S. J. Wollery, then Wollery sold it to Emmanuel White and his brother, Henry. They operated the business as the Grove City Milling Company selling under the name of Well Maid Flour. White's son, Hosea, an owner of the Pleasant Corners Mill, left there and joined his father in Grove City.

It appears the White family sold the business to A. J. Schaeffer and at some point, before being purchased by the Eesley family, the mill was known as the Gregg and Schaeffer Grove City Flour Mill.



Continued on Page 2



This photograph is recorded in historical accounts as Easley's Mill built around 1880 and destroyed by fire in the early 1921. A close examination of the photo shows the mill at the time might have been operated as the Gregg and Shafer Grove City Flour Mill. There's little history of that time.

Mill Street at Broadway

Continued from Page 1

When Alfred and Charles Eesley became owners of the business, they made numerous upgrades in power equipment and greatly improved the grinding process.

They also erected a modern concrete elevator with a capacity of over 21,000 bushels of grain. A few of the product lines the Eesley's sold included grain, flour, feed, salt, coal, fencing and tile, to mention a few.

By 1885, Emmanuel White had opened a general store at Mill Street and Broadway but White's store wasn't the only business in the area. Since the mill was a destination, several other small businesses opened nearby hoping to capitalize on the mill's customer base.

Other early nearby businesses at Mill Street included a general store and restaurant.

The general store, operated by William A. Haughn, was there along with a confectionery and restaurant operated by William Smith. Men by the name of Van Camp and Hamilton also operated a hardware store in another old structure between Mill Street and Grant Avenue. That building once housed the *Grove City Blade* newspaper, the town's first newspaper, in the late 1800s.

The Eesley's constructed a building on the north side of Grant Avenue at the railroad track around 1900 to

store grain, before the silos were built. Farmers would arrive with their horses and wagons and drive to the building to have the wagons loaded with feed for livestock.

The address was 56 Nichols St. In 1894, the Mill Street area became the town's information center when a four-page newspaper opened its office in a store front on Mill Street. After that, three of Grove City's five first newspapers had an office on Mill Street.

According to a Columbus newspaper, the C. L. Eesley Mill was destroyed by fire Feb. 18, 1921. Grove City was ill prepared to fight the blaze. The town fire department was a volunteer bucket brigade with an old, hand pump on a wagon. A fire engine from the Hilltop responded to a call for help but the mill was a total loss when it arrived.

On Sept. 28, 1921, the Grove City Farmer's Exchange was organized and incorporated as a non-profit farmer's co-op. Founding members included C. B. A. Bryant, S. S. Chambers, Harry Linebaugh, Edward Schlosser and R. E. Shaver.

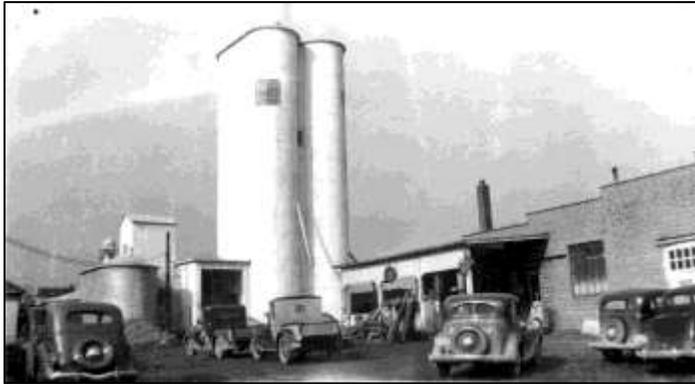
They recognized there was an ongoing need to rebuild a local mill and hired Anton Pitzer as the contractor. The business struggled at first until it gained support from area farmers. It was essential for area farmers to purchase stock in the co-op business. *Story continued on Page 3*

Mill Street at Broadway

Continued from Page 2

As the business grew, two grain silos were built and a rail spur added to load grain onto rail cars. That year, Grove City Farmers Exchange was recognized as the largest enterprise of its kind in Ohio, according to Curtis F. Kunz, general manager.

The business had expanded with operations serving the communities of Galloway, Orient and Mt. Sterling. In 1930, the Exchange opened an implement store in the Harley Building on the east side of Broadway, currently a microbrewery.



Grove City Farmer's Exchange and the old silos that once graced the property.

The store wasn't just a hardware and feed store for farmers. It sold International Harvester and Farmall tractors and farm equipment and even black and white televisions and electric toasters. The store eventually moved into the main floor of the Farmers Exchange.

In 1935, the Farmer's Exchange purchased the Grant and Johnson lumber and coal business at Park Street and Grove City Road. That enterprise was once owned by Silas E. Johnson and Adam G. Grant. The business was renamed the Grove City Lumber Yard.

By 1960, the harvest season resulted in an estimated 599 freight car loads of grain shipped by train from Grove City. Business was booming but as farming gave way to development the need for a farmer's co-op was shrinking.

Landmark purchased the Grove City Farmers Exchange but farming continued to decrease in the neighboring township. Not long after the FX was purchased, Landmark closed the Grove City Lumber Yard. The co-op had outlived its years and eventually closed.

A local resident, Karen Dover, had plans to purchase the former lumber yard but interest eventually shifted to FX complex.

"I wanted to continue to attract unique businesses where the people that live locally are running them and have some vested interest in the community," she said. "We had a lot of plans concerning the two silos including the creation of climbing walls and the possibility of a condo in one. After months of deliberation, a decision was made to demolish the

silos because of their continued deterioration."

Concerning the old FX building, she said she wanted people to be able to come in and feel the ambiance of the wood floors and enjoy pictures on the wall and maybe some history of the old landmark.

She wanted to provide educational information so kids could come in and understand why this was an important place in our history.

The old wooden floors at the Farmer's Exchange remain and remodeling has maintained the integrity and history of the building. The silos, torn down in 2007, are visible only in photographs. They helped represent 86 years of agricultural history in southwest Franklin County.

Once it was refurbished, the first businesses included Red Letter Journals, a scrapbooking store, candle shop, home decor shop, and a hair salon. The building's new name was the Mill Street Market.

Today, the building is a business but can also be considered one of Grove City's museums. Photographs and history blanket the walls of the building.

Local Historical Sites Re-Opened In October

This has been a most unusual year for the historical society. Out of concern for public health, historical sites in Grove City were closed for months only to reopen in October.

Work continued to progress at the museum as members gathered to paint the museum walls and prepare for new showcases with social distancing guidelines followed.

The outdoor work on the caboose also continued at the former Green's Heritage Park near Commercial Point. Once restored, plans are to move the caboose to Century Village. The caboose once sat at the downtown depot in the town center, originally acquired from the B&O Railroad by the Grove City Jaycees.



Looking Back In Time.
This is a far cry from what I-270 Georgesville Road looks like today. There's no traffic pictured because the

interstate wasn't open yet in the 1970s. This photo was taken by the Ohio Department of Transportation looking north from the area we now know as the Auto Mall.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor: Clark Article

Reading 'Peculiar Characters' in September issue by Richard G Clark, is this the Richard Clark I remember as being a teacher at Jackson Township (Grove City) High School back in the 40's? Could maybe be a son but the stories make me feel that it was an older Clark.

I loved the whole article; it was well written. I also grew up in Grove City and my husband was a race horse fan. We had *The Daily Racing Form* in our home for years and he would make a trip downtown early each morning to get donuts from the bakery and his copy of *The Form*. Clark's descriptions of the "race trackers" was so appropriate. I didn't know any of those characters personally, but heard many tales about them from friends and even some family members.

Learning about selling tickets in the mutuels was interesting, too. I heard stories of short changing or giving change first and then slowly giving the dollars back saving few dollars here and there. That all went on in those days, at least that's what I heard about.

If you have time, Jim, I would love to know just who Richard G. Clark was. The Richard I remember was a teacher, then became an attorney in Grove City.

Thanks for being a friend,

Sincerely, Barbara (Weygandt) Burkhart

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Barbara was put in touch with a member of the Clark family to answer her questions.*

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Editor: Grant Family

Thank you for forwarding this to me. All of this information coming to me just because two days ago I decided to look into my Hugh Grant on google and see what I could see!

I have to say, that I just attached my Grants to the trees researched by cousins years ago who lived in Arcola, IL where Lewis Grant, grandson of Hugh Grant, Sr., moved his family. He married Hester Duman in Franklin County so I presume they were all in Grove City. No one has information about her, or their trees, either. This gives me a whole, new avenue to search in.

Franklin County was just a name to me, now it is a location with real family history and more names! I am beyond excited about this!

Pamela Sensney

ANNUAL MEMBERS

Have You Renewed Your Membership?
\$15 is due by Dec. 31, 2020

Annual and Life Members Who Want a
Newsletter mailed must pay \$9 extra
3378-B Park St., Grove City, OH 43123

LTOB Building Has Long History In Grove City

The Little Theatre Off Broadway building has been home to numerous other venues over the years.

In 1916, it opened as the Grove Theatre showing silent films and by the time sound was added it was known as the Kingdom Theatre. Westerns were popular, especially on Saturday mornings.

Alice Litchfield once wrote in a newspaper article that she wondered how a small community like Grove City ever supported a theatre. She remembered in a reminiscence that she and friends "would watch in open-mouthed wonder, dreading the moment when the To Be Continued words flashed across the screen, always at a very exciting moment."

The last motion picture company to operate out of the building was the Douglas Theatre. After it closed, the building was purchased and used as a Catholic Church.

After Our Lady of Perpetual Help opened on Broadway, the theatre was purchased by the LTOB which had been performing in school auditoriums.

For years, there was not theatre in Grove City until Lowes opened in the Kroger shopping center at Stringtown and Hoover. After that business shut down, Super-X Pharmacy took over the space.

Star Cinema, a multi-screen theater opened beside K-Mart on Stringtown operating about 17 years. Not long after a Rave Theatre opened on Buckeye Parkway, Star closed its doors. Rave, a local 14-screen theatre with IMAX was soon purchased by AMC Theaters.

Back in the 1960s, the Grove City Jaycees, using old projection equipment from the Douglas Theatre, showed outdoor movies free to local residents at Windsor Park. The sold refreshment to help cover costs.

FACEBOOK
COMMENTS
ENCOURAGED

How often do you visit your Facebook page? If you haven't done so recently, we encourage you to **FRIEND** and **FOLLOW** the Society's Facebook posts and when possible **SHARE** a post with family and friends. This is an important part of our historical outreach program. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/SWFCHS>

IT HAPPENED IN DECEMBER

It's interesting sometimes to look back and uncover what happened years ago. This collection covers events that occurred in the month of December over the past 90 years.

1927 – A tornado touched down in the area of Concord Church leaving a path of destruction about a mile long. It lifted the roof off the house and barn of the William Hill on the Shover farm, destroyed Sheldon Beatty's barn and knocked down trees and telephone poles.

1930—Charles Alkire who lived on Grant Avenue was surprised to find his new Whippet sedan on fire. Speculation was he parked near the railroad track and sparks from a passing locomotive ignited the cloth car seats.

1940—Grove City moved into the modern age when the local telephone system changed overnight offering dial service. A total of 425 subscribers were impacted in Grove City; 223 in Harrisburg and 106 in Galloway. Each household was assigned new telephone numbers.

1953—An announcement was made that the new Grove City Roller Rink would open in January.

1966—The Bemco plant on Park Street, which manufactured a wide variety of synthetic rubber materials for shoe soles, was sold and ceased to operate.

1975—Grove City Council authorized the city engineer to begin looking into plans to establish “east-west and north-south corridors” within the city to handle future traffic demands. Residents along Columbus Street were not happy with the decision fearing increased traffic.

1985—Aaron Ashton, a black belt with his own kung fu studio in Grove City, said the art was once used by farmers to defend their property from bandits. “One of the enjoyments I get from the school is watching my students have fun and seeing their confidence build.”

1992—A bike path along Hoover Road from Dartmoor Road to Grove City High School provided a new trail for students and residents. Plans were announced by Parks Director Barry Babbert that the city hopes to extend the Hoover Road trail to the Hoover Crossing subdivision and eventually to Meadow Grove and Indian Trails.

2005—Jackson Township Trustees spoke out against a \$1.5 million Grove City Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement for Rockford Homes. In Pleasant Township, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency extended the deadline for residents to connect with the new sanitary sewer system.

2010—Mike Cavey became the boys basketball coach at Central Crossing High School without knowing if he would have a team. When hired, South-Western City Schools had not yet restored extra-curricular activities.

Website Updates Pleasant, Jackson Township Text

Updated additional information is now available on the Pleasant and Jackson Township pages on the Society's website.

Pleasant Township was organized in 1807 and, at that time, it was about five times larger than it is today. In 1815, portions of Pleasant and Franklin Townships were taken to create Jackson Township. In 1815. In 1819, additional land from Pleasant helped create Prairie Township.

The Pleasant Township pages include information and histories of Harrisburg, Darbydale, Georgesville, Pleasant Corners and an area once known as Miller's Station. Jackson Township includes Grove City, Urbancrest, Borrer's Corners and Shadeville which is now part of Hamilton Township.

Over the next several months, all website content is being examined to include new information and photographs. Society members with comments are encouraged to send information, photographs or corrections, etc. to Jim Hale at jhale45@gmail.com. This is an ongoing process and help is always welcomed.

Jackson Township Once Operated 12 Schools

Jackson Township in 1853, one year after Grove City first appeared on a map, was operating 12 school districts including four in Pleasant Township.

The early schools were located throughout the township so most students would not be required to walk more than two miles to the nearest school, according to Linda Lewis in a 2003 interview in the *Grove City News*.

By 1900, students who completed the eighth grade could take a test and upon graduation would qualify to attend the high school in Grove City.

Jackson Township sold 10 of the old school buildings and outhouses in 1931. That included the four schools in Pleasant Township.



Did You Know?

The Grove City Welcome Center and Museum, 3378 Park St., has an extensive collection of Grove City High School graduating classes mounted on a wall. Stop and take a look. Can you identify anyone in the pictures?

How Familiar Are You With Grove City History?

The following is a fun quiz. See how many answers you get right then check the answers on page 8.

1. **Which of these animals once roamed the Jackson Township area?**
 Panthers Buffalo None All
2. **Ohio was once part of what state?**
 Pennsylvania Virginia
3. **What were the first two permanent settlements in Central Ohio?**

4. **Hugh Grant Sr., once owned 187 acres in downtown Pittsburgh where the courthouse now stands.**
 True False
5. **Where did Hugh Grant Sr. stay after first arriving in Ohio?**
 Columbus Chillicothe Portsmouth
6. **When was Grove City founded?**

7. **What road had to be rerouted to create the plat for Grove City?**

8. **Who is the founder of Grove City?**
 Hugh Grant Sr. William F. Breck
9. **Greyhound and Thoroughbred races in Ohio were first held in Grove City.**
 True False
10. **Local boys who walked Greyhounds before and after races were often paid with chewing gum.**
 True False

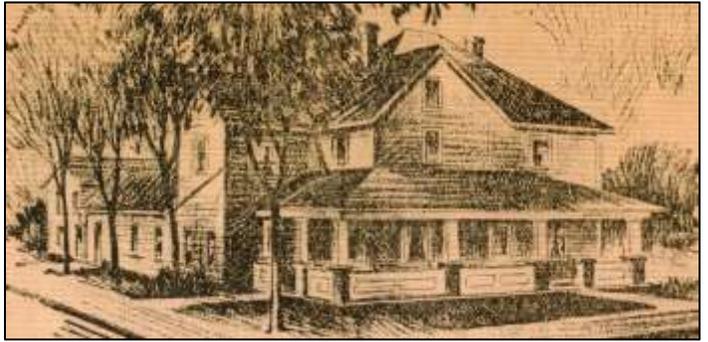
Now, turn to page 7 to check your answers.

Give Gift Of History This Holiday Season

This Christmas season, consider giving a gift of history to a friend or family member. Grove City has a rich history and this is an ideal way to share with others and become more familiar with the past.

A wide variety of books are available at the Grove City Welcome Center including histories of Grove City and Jackson Township.

Other publications include stories about Grove City as the home of greyhound racing in Ohio and a history of the very first Park Street School. Two others books offer a collection of short stories about the early days of southwest Franklin County. They are all reasonably priced and ideal last-minute gift ideas. After looking over the offering, you might want to purchase a book for yourself.



Drawing of the Norris Funeral Home in Harrisburg taken from Society files.

Norris Moves To Grove City

The Norris Funeral Home moved to Grove City from Harrisburg in 1935. At the time, it was located at the corner of Broadway and Grant Avenue.

In 1939, construction of the current site started and a year later the new building was open for services. The Norris family lived in the funeral home.

In 1955, plans were underway to expand when the south chapel was constructed. Kenneth Norris sold the funeral home to the Schoedinger family in 1967.

How's Your Memory?

Many National Stores

Operated In Grove City

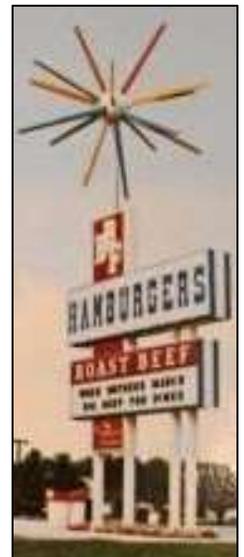
How's your memory? A number national chain stores once had retail outlets in Grove City. See how many you remember and even more challenging, can you remember their location? If you think of more, let us know.

The Great Atlantic & Pacific grocery (A&P) operated in the Broadway Shopping Center and was the last major grocery on the northside of Grove City. Are there others businesses you remember?

Other grocery stores, besides A&P, included Giant Eagle, Super Duper, Cub Foods and The Box Store.

Retailers included Radio Shack, Blockbusters, TG&Y, Harts, Scotts, Western Auto, Sears Hardware, Carter Lumber and Rinks.

Hotels and restaurants included Howard Johnson's, Holiday Inn, BBF, Borden Burger, Ponderosa, A&W Root Beer, Long John Silver, Rax Roast Beef, Arthur Treacher's Fish & Chips and Baskin-Robbins ice cream.



New Newsletter Editor Takes Over In 2021

By James F. Hale

As 2020 passes into history, so does the *Southwest Pioneer* newsletter editor.

Beginning with the March 2021 quarterly newsletter, there will be a new editor for the quarterly newsletter. I started as editor in 2009 taking over from Marilyn Gibboney who told me to keep it accurate and interesting. I did my best to respect her instructions.

My first quarterly newsletter in March that year. It was two pages printed front and back on a single sheet of paper. It was handed out at meetings. The most recent editions, which are now posted on our website, have been eight pages in full color with photographs. It is now primarily delivered by email; about 25 members pay extra to have it mailed.



I have enjoyed my term as editor and hope members were satisfied with the newsletter.

It's not easy stepping away but I won't be gone, just out-of-sight. I have very much enjoyed working with the talented Mark Schmidbauer who does an outstanding job with the Society's website and Facebook posts. He is a valuable asset to the Society. I'll continue to work with Mark on the website, Facebook and Blog to make the Society's online presence both interesting and informative.

If you haven't spent time on the Society's web page, I encourage you to take a look. We have one of the best historical websites in Ohio. As a reminder, last year our Facebook presence increased by 14% and more than 8,200 people throughout the United States and world accessed Southwest Franklin County's historical information.

I will also continue to work on efforts to create more interest and opportunities for the Young Historians of Southwest Franklin County program. We are very fortunate Nash Patel, a local businessman and owner of the Red Roof Inn and numerous other hotel properties in Central Ohio, funded the program with a \$2,500 donation.

There is one thing I would ask members to consider. Sitting at a computer trying to generate text for a newsletter can be a challenge, especially when there is no feedback from those who read the content.

Whoever takes over, members need to share information and ideas. I really appreciate the handful of members who helped me complete research and write what I thought would be meaningful stories.

My only regret over the 11 years is that I have been largely unable to get members to offer story ideas or make comments. That is important! Sharing information is an important part of history and you'll never know when one little bit of information can help complete a puzzle.

The Society needs to engage more 50-60-year-olds in the organization. Mark tells me the Facebook posts that get the most attention and comments are about more recent history. That is now a new challenge that must be engaged on-line to meet that demand. We have lots of information about early history but we're lacking history from 1950 forward. You can help!

You probably won't see me at meetings because I'll be working from home. A lot of my time is now being spent researching and writing history-based articles for a Virginia newspaper. I'm also involved in writing several family histories, other newsletters, catching up on a backlog of reading and spending more time with family.



GIVE CREDIT—A recent question to the website asked who designed the patio and walkway and labyrinth at the Gardens at Gantz Park. Since the information was not in Society files, the City provided the answer. The design was created by EMH&T and installation was completed by Hidden Creek Landscaping.

Answers To Questions From Page 6

First question, All; 2. Virginia; 3. Franklinton and Georgesville in 1797; 4. True; 5. Chillicothe; 6. 1852; 7. Dutch Pike/Grove City Road; 8. William Foster Breck; 9. True; 10. True. You'll have to score yourself. Hopefully you scored at least an 8 in the fun test. There's lots of local history available free online at grovecityohhistory.org.



Remember when gasoline was only 59 cents a gallon? This file photo taken in front of the SOHIO station on the northwest corner of Broadway and Park Street advertised that low price for self-serve. The brick building was originally the Grove City Savings Bank and later the Franklin Bank. This was a recent Facebook post.



Looking down onto Broadway from a second-floor window is Flora Voelkel. The brick building was built by William Voelkel, who also at one time, operated a bar on the ground floor level. Will and his wife, Gertrude, lived upstairs. Beside the brick building, built in 1880, where Voelkel lived was the Baumgartner and Voelkel Dry Goods and Grocery business. They also operated the Daily Meat Market. Both buildings were destroyed in a fire. Voelkel also once operated the hotel and saloon, a stage coach stop, at Park and Broadway, known today as Planks on Broadway.



Website Donations Needed For 2021 Annual Support

The Society's website continues to support itself through private donations which maintains the site without using funds from the Society's general account.

The money is used to pay the web development firm for maintaining and updating the historical offerings on the website. No money is paid to either Mark Schmidbauer or Jim Hale.

Donations in any amount are appreciated. Individuals who donate at least \$100 will be listed on the home page as a Historian.

Mail your check in any amount to SWFCHS Website, 3378-B Park St., Grove City, OH 43123.

Broadway Once A Brick Road

Ohio Governor George White was the featured speaker Aug. 21, 1931 when Grove City dedicated Broadway's newly bricked surface.

Sixty-five percent of property owners abutting Broadway had petitioned the village council in 1929 to improve the road with brick. Council enacted legislation in 1930.

The old road was leveled and graded by a Chillicothe contractor. Water mains and sewer lines were lowered as part of the project and drainage tile was laid under the new road. A six-inch bed of concrete provided the base and sand, to the depth of three quarters of an inch, covered the concrete providing the base for brick at a cost of \$114,877.66.

Besides an opening parade, performances included a 58-piece band from Lancaster and a nationally recognized trapeze group. Part of the day's events also included a pajama revue for girls 12 and older, baby show, athletic events, bike races, chicken catching contest, tap dance performances and prize drawings to mention only a few of the day's events. Seventy-six merchant prizes, from a block of salt to a gallon of fly spray, went to the contest winners.

SOUTHWEST PIONEER

PUBLISHED MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER, DECEMBER

Southwest Franklin County Historical Society

A 501C3 NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

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MONTHLY SOCIETY MEETINGS

Monthly Meetings first Tuesday at 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran Church, 3220 Columbus St.

Public is Invited to Attend

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual Member	\$15	Annual Student	\$1
Annual Business	\$50	Life Member	\$150

All Newsletters Sent Free by Email

Newsletters Mailed Require a \$9 Annual Fee