

# THE SOUTHWEST PIONEER

JANUARY 2024

SOUTHWEST FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 3378 PARK ST., GROVE CITY, OH 43123

## Website To Receive Major '24 Overhaul

The Society implemented their first website in 2017 which won an award from the Ohio Local History Alliance.

Well, time marches on and now the site is getting a major overhaul, including:

- Improved donation, membership, and a tour request process with online payment option
- Showcasing of Society projects
- Online event calendar
- Better social media integration
- Better visual appeal, including mobile use

The new site will be directly managed by the Society, so that updates can be made more easily and costs can be reduced.

The website committee has been working on this for several months with plans to roll out the new site in 2024.

Many thanks to the members of that committee: James Hale, Bev Babbert, John Maxson, Steve Jackson, Larry Zapp, Rain Burroughs, Teresa Breckenridge and Mark Schmidbauer, committee chairperson.

## Briggsdale Baseball Memories Relived

*(The following story was written by the late Jack Seese in 2003. He was born in 1923, grew up in Briggsdale, and was a 1941 graduate of Grove City High School. After Pearl Harbor, he joined the U.S. Army and was assigned to the Army Air Corps where he served as a radio operator on B-17s and B-24s.)*

During Grove City's Sesquicentennial year of 2002, a flannel baseball uniform was loaned to the Southwest Franklin County Historical Society for display. Marilyn Gibboney asked if anyone knew the history of the uniform.

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*Bethard's Sunoco that was once located on Broadway. Photo donated by Karen Dover.*

## 'From Attics to Archives' An Important Library Tool

For those doing local research or for those who are working on their family's genealogy, the Grove City Library has several resources. Since 2006, the Grove City Library's 'From Attics to Archives' project has been used to preserve Grove City's rich history. People throughout the community have donated material to protect and restore our pictorial past.

The project has collected over 6,000 historical items – many of which are available online now. The library's Information Services staff hope to create other specialized collections in the future, featuring graduating class portraits, local school yearbooks, and family reunion photos.

'From Attics to Archives' can be viewed online by going to SWPL.org where you will see the top bar of the library's homepage. Click "Resources." Scroll down the portal until you find Genealogy & History. There you will find Ancestry.com, Community History archives, and both the Attics to Archives site and the Yearbook Collection. Go to the bottom of the page and hit "Browse Images."

The Community History archives has the Grove City Record, Westside Messenger, West Columbus Messenger, and the Lincoln Village Railsplitter.

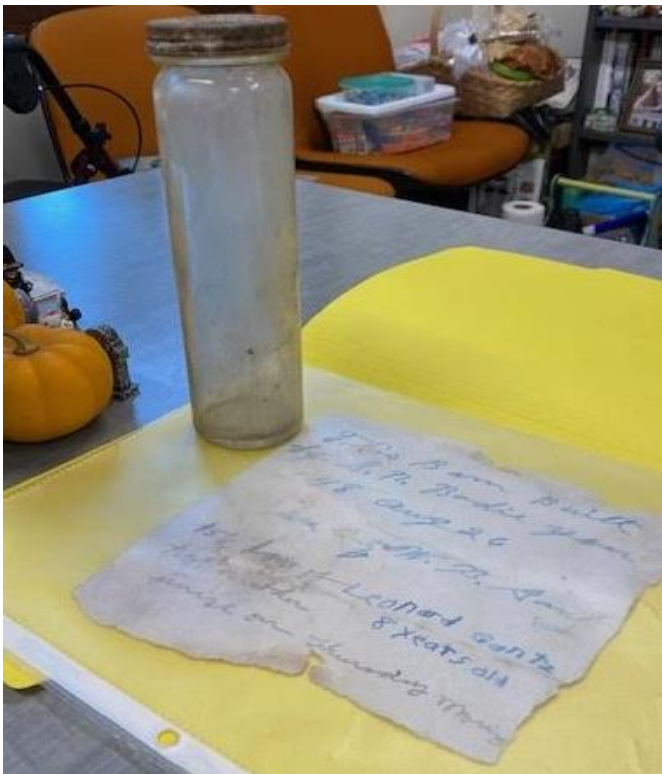
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# Brown Bats Lead to Discovery in Gantz Barn

**By Janet Shailer**

Everyone loves a story about buried treasure and last summer a gem from the past was revealed in Gantz Park.

The Gantz Farmhouse, located at 2255 Home Rd., has been a symbol of Grove City's agricultural past for decades. Once saved from destruction in the 1970s, the two-story brick house became an anchor of Gantz Park. The house, built in 1832, is on the National Register of Historic Places. Nestled beside the house are the well-known Gardens at Gantz, including the Garden of Yesterday with a variety of herbs and vegetables that the family would have grown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## **Time Capsule Found**

*An old glass bottle was found during the demolition of the Gantz Barn in Gantz Park last summer. The bottle was a time capsule left by members of the Gantz family in 1948.*



Just to the east of that garden once stood the Red Barn built in 1948 and used for over the last 30 years to house various Grove City Parks camp; Recreation Pre-School/Rec-

School programs. Unfortunately, a flock of Indiana Brown Bats had also decided to make the trees in the park their home. When some of the area trees had to be removed, the bats looked for a new home and, unbeknown to city officials, found it inside the Red Barn.

In August of 2022, city maintenance workers discovered a colony of bats had been living in the concrete block walls of the barn. All functions held in the barn had to be cancelled. In April of 2023, it was determined that the destruction was beyond repair and the building must be demolished. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, all species of bats must be protected, so professionals were brought in to humanely relocate them.

As the barn was being demolished last summer, the crew found a surprise under the floorboards. A glass bottle with its lid still intact was pulled from the wreckage. The bottle was left as a time capsule by the Gantz family in 1948. It had a note rolled inside that included the signature of Leonard Gantz, then age eight. The note states "This barn was built by S.N. Bodie – year 1948, August 26. (Signed) W.B. Gantz."

A side note added, "15 ½ days of hot weather – finish on Thursday morning."

The history of the Gantz farmhouse was documented by the late Wilbur Gantz in his booklet *The Adam Gantz Story* published by the Southwest Franklin County Historical Society in 1986. Wilbur Gantz wrote that Andrew Gantz married Margrett Harn in Washington County, Pennsylvania and gave birth to the oldest son Adam in 1805. Andrew purchased 200 acres of land east of Broadway and south of Home Rd. and brought his wife and eight children to (now) Grove City in 1817. The area where they settled became known as "Wolf Ridge" due to the wildlife that surrounded them. Family lore states that once when Andrew had to be gone from home, Margrett traded a cow for a rifle to protect herself and the children.

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## Received Awards

*The Visit Grove City Board of Trustees awarded Rita Traphagen (L) and Leanne Watkins of the Grove City Museum and Welcome Center with a Citation of Excellence in the Individual Trailblazer category in a ceremony on Nov. 2. In addition, the SWFCHS's Heritage Celebration received the annual Trailblazer Award for the Society's countless volunteer hours of community service to Grove City. The award is on display in the museum*

## Briggsdale Baseball

*From Page 1*

After examining the uniform, I recalled memories of what I believe to be the factual story of the uniform. My story is one from the period of the mid-1930s in Briggsdale, Ohio. Mary and Charlie Shade owned a grocery store on the north side of Clime Road about 100 feet from Harrisburg Pike. They also operated the Briggsdale baseball field on Frank Road where there were nightly softball games, Sunday baseball, and trap shooting. This occurred during the late 1930s.

Sometime during the 1938/39 period, Mary Shade sold nine or ten baseball suits to me. I organized a baseball team consisting of mostly Grove City players. They included Charles Borrer, Chuck Seipel, George Cox, Dwight Lambert, Gene Kerschner, Bill Seipel, Al Link, and myself. There were a few others that I cannot recall.

At that time, we advertised for Sunday games in the Sports Notes section of the Columbus Dispatch which were devoted to teams seeking games. I called the team, the Briggsdale AC, for lack of a better name. We played games as far away as Marion, Ohio and I received several compliments about our team, even though we were young and still in high school. I believe that this was one of the uniforms that surfaced after I sold them in the want ads of the Columbus Dispatch after returning from World War II. Until the Sesquicentennial Centennial celebration, I had never thought of them, but recognized the uniform immediately.

## Attics to Archives

*Continued from Page 1*

The Resource portal can also take you to the Columbus Dispatch, Wall Street Journal and to the EBSCOhost site by clicking on Newspapers, Journals and Research. There you will find access to 6,000 magazines and newspapers, including children's magazines and professional research journals. For more information, how to donate documents, purchase high resolution copies of the items in the collection for non-commercial use, contact [reference@swpl.org](mailto:reference@swpl.org) or 614/875-6716, ext. 503.

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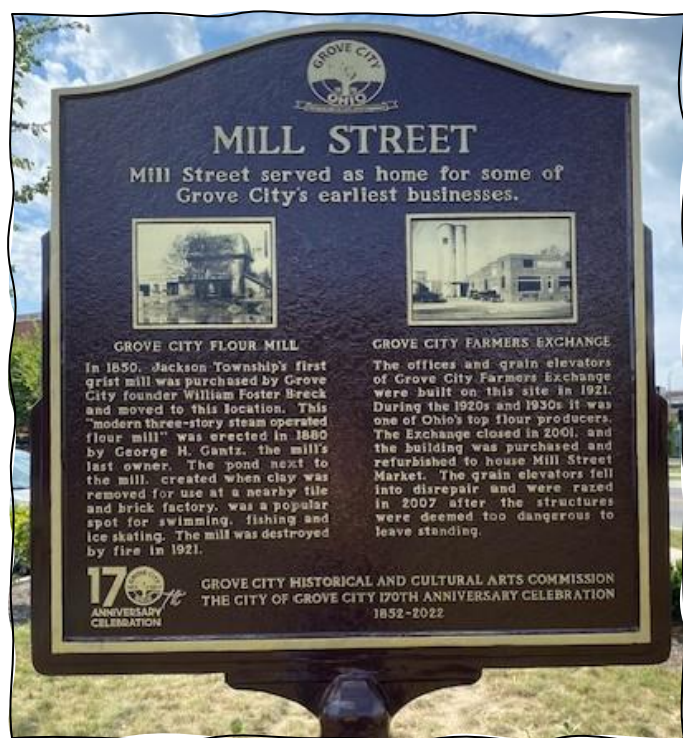
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*Meetings first Tuesday, St. John's Lutheran Church, 7 pm*

### 2024 First Quarter Meetings

Jan. 2	Regular meeting – 7 p.m.	St. John's
Jan. 11	Historical Commission – 9 a.m.	City Hall
Jan. 11	Website meeting – 7 p.m.	Museum
Feb. 6	Regular meeting – 7 p.m.	St. John's
Mar. 5	Regular meeting – 7 p.m.	St. John's





## Mill Street Marker Dedicated By City

The little-known history of tiny Mill Street in downtown Grove City was rarely mentioned until recently when the city brought it back to life.

A historic marker, located just west of Broadway on Columbus Street, marks the former location of Mill Street. This wagon wheel dirt road was once just two-tenths of a mile.

Why was it important? The town founder William Foster Breck opened his first business in the area in 1847 – a time when Jackson Township was wilderness land with hardly a dirt road.

Breck envisioned his new settlement to include not log houses so prevalent in the wilderness, but upscale homes made of fine oak and other timber.

Breck had George Weygandt build a sawmill made with two vertical saws in full operation. Around 1852, Breck purchased a steam powered grist mill from another location and moved it beside his sawmill.

As traffic to Breck's two mills increased, a wagon trail was created west of the Columbus and Harrisburg Turnpike (now Broadway). At

the time, the tiny trail to the two mills was nameless but eventually it would be called Mill Street. It wasn't until 1895 that Mill Street first appeared on a map of the village.

## Gantz Barn

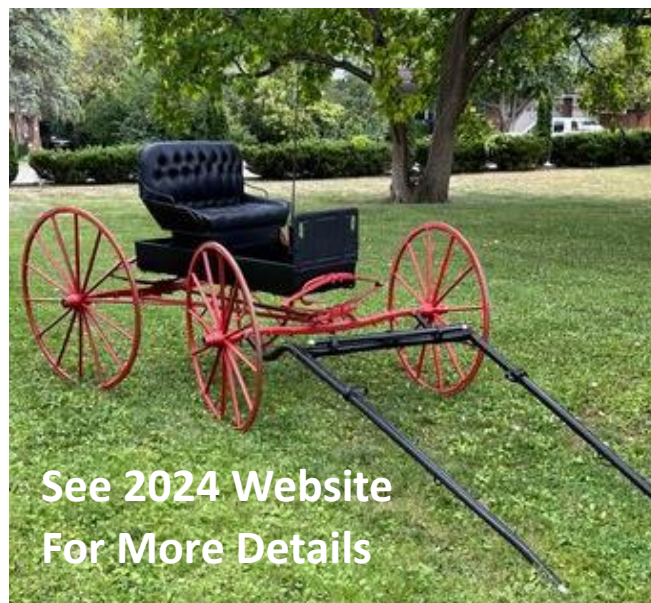
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In 1830, Adam Gantz married Catherine Pennix and the next year their first child, Elizabeth Gantz White, was born.

In 1832, Adam bought 100 acres of nearby land directly east of Hoover Rd. It is on this parcel that the Gantz Farmhouse was built. Adam and Catherine would eventually have 14 children.

The property remained with the Gantz family for over 140 years with Blodwen Jones Gantz the last family member to live in the farmhouse.

When her husband died, she mortgaged the property to John A. Miller. Upon Blodwin's death in 1973, Miller transferred 9.7 acres of the land to the city with a provision that it be kept and maintained as a public park.



*The 1904 Studebaker carriage was restored by J&J Custom Upholstery in Columbus.*

*It required careful research by the company to replicate the original factory appearance.*

*The original red was determined by taking a part that was never exposed to Sherwin Williams where they used a color match camera to identify the original hue.*