

From Under the Oak Tree

2013 is now history . . .

It was a busy year at the Museum Campus for your Historical Society. All activities had good attendance and the Trustees were kept busy with an increase in campus visits by outside groups. The addition of a new membership appreciation cookout was a success and will be scheduled again for 2014.

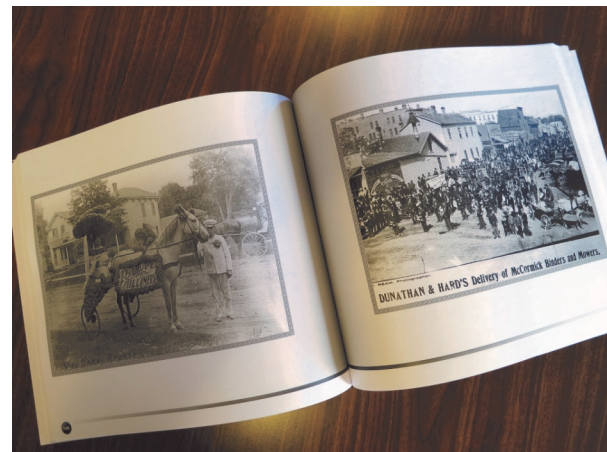
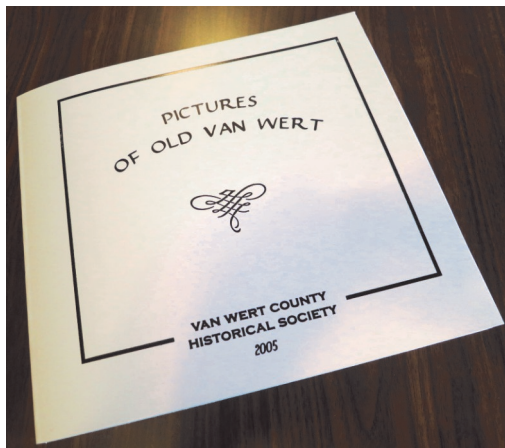
The new Welcome Center and Niswonger Research Library provide space for reference material that could not be filed or easily accessed before due to limited space.

The Gift Shoppe at Seven Oaks has allowed display of books, mementos, collectibles and gifts that could not be displayed in the past.



The Historical Society continues to receive many donated items. With the new space to file photos and other paper records, there has been an increase in donation of these items. In 2013, a new newsletter format, "From Under the Oak Tree," was introduced and it is now available online in digital format, as will all back issues, starting with the Spring 2013 issue. A facebook page was started in 2013 and there are many photos posted there. Many of these photos would have never been seen and the page has proven to be popular. Lists of donated items may also be accessed online. The next donation listing will be included with the Spring 2014 "From Under the Oak Tree." Check your membership renewal status. There is a membership form on page 7.

"Pictures of Old Van Wert" was issued in 1977 by The Van Wert National Bank. It was a selection of photos from J. Frank Mount's collection. It was reissued by the Historical Society in 2005. A new printing of the 2005 edition is now in stock at the Gift Shoppe at the Seven Oaks in the Welcome Center. Price is \$25.00. The book is 12" x 11" x 1/2" with 159 single page photos and descriptions.



What am I? →

I stayed in the same spot for over 90 years and never got to travel. I sent thousands of travelers on their trips and welcomed just as many home. I am on display at the Historical Society.

Inside this issue:

1917 Post Office Bldg.	2
New quilt display	3
New Society parade float	4
Donations	5
Membership Invitation	6
Contact Information	7
Well, I didn't know that . . .	8

I am the well-worn entrance step to the Pennsylvania Railroad Depot in Van Wert. The depot was opened on Aug. 7, 1891. It was demolished May 25, 1984. The depot was located behind the County Courthouse.



The first Van Wert Post Office was first located in a log cabin in the 300 block of E. Main St., across from the current post office! It moved to numerous locations in its early years. In 1862 it was located on the northeast corner of Main and Washington. By 1893 it was in the building where Thomas Jewelers would be located many years later at 114 S. Washington St. It also was on N. Washington St. and finally settled in the Humphrey-Hughes-Rump Building on the southeast corner of Market and Main at 200 E. Main St. This is where Derry Drugs was located for many years and today Barnhart's Furniture Outlet. The only memory by anyone alive today of a past location is the "old post office" shown in this photo. Currently the location of the City of Van Wert Municipal Court. The post office was located here for 68 years until 1984 when a new United States Post Office building was dedicated at the southwest corner of Cherry and Main at 314 E. Main St., now 29 years old.



The new Federal Building (the first one constructed in Van Wert County) during construction, 1915-1916-1917. It was built as a new United States Post Office for Van Wert. This is at the northeast corner of E. Central Ave. and S. Market Street. Work began Feb. 3, 1916 and the opening of the post office was delayed until Aug. 1917, due to materials not being available. The official opening was on Aug. 31, 1917, although the opening is usually reported as 1916, per the original schedule. This photo is undated, but would be 1916-1917. There is some type of rework being done on the front of the building (bricks being replaced.) Note the lack of landscaping and the unpaved streets.

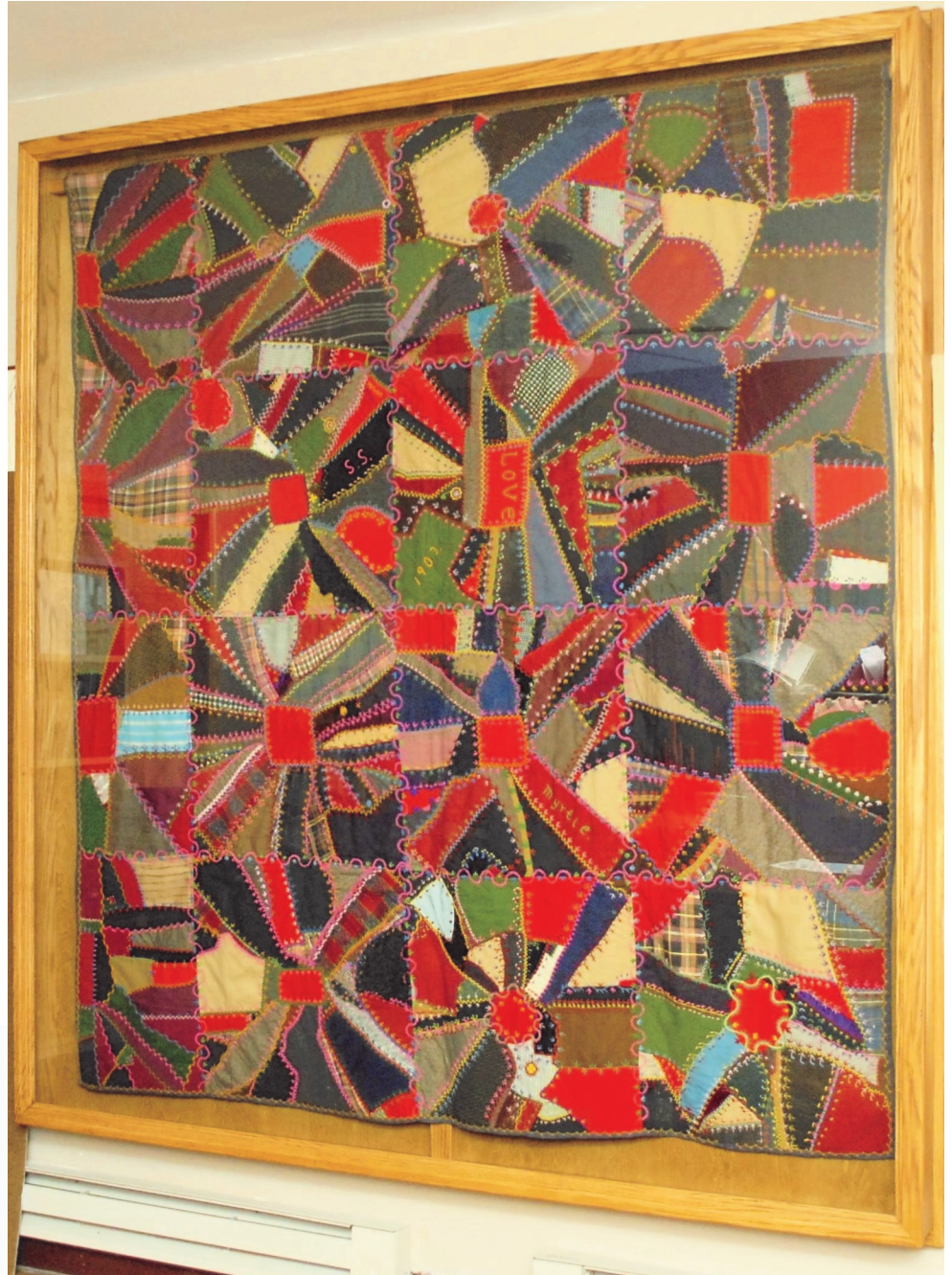
The first post office in Van Wert was established on Nov. 9, 1838, making 2013 the 175th Anniversary of the Van Wert Post Office.

A new display in the Welcome Center

The Welcome Center gained a new display in 2013. A large quilt, actually a comforter, is now hanging in the Niswonger Research Library room in the Welcome Center. It is displayed in a beautiful, hand-crafted, sealed display case that has a full glass front, almost 8 x 8 feet square.

The comforter (and the display case) were donated in 2013 to the Historical Society by Wanda Uncapher. The comforter was passed on to Wanda by her mother after it was passed down through several generations. It was made between 1899 and 1903 by Wanda's great-great-grandmother, Susanna (Rummel) Sheets.

Susanna was born in 1830 in Columbiana County, Ohio (south of Youngstown on the state line) and died in 1911. She married Jehu Sheets, who was a 5th generation son of his family in America. The comforter was kept in good condition over the 110 years since it was completed.



Then the lineage to Wanda is as follows: Josiah Sheets, a 6th generation son and Wanda's great-grandfather, married Ruth Ann (Howell) Sheets, great-grandmother to Wanda. Josiah Sheets lived in Harrison Township, Van Wert County, his entire life. Mary Viola (Sheets) Smith, a 7th generation daughter and grandmother to Wanda, married Amos Z. Smith, grandfather to Wanda. Ruth C. (Smith) Johns, an 8th generation daughter and Wanda's mother married Dallas Christian Johns, father to Wanda. Wanda Charlotte (Johns) Uncapher, 9th generation daughter, Van Wert High School Class of 1949, married Edward C. Uncapher (deceased 2002.) Today, there are 12 generations of Wanda's family in America.

It has a multi-color scheme with very decorative hand embroidery and quilting. The completion date of 1903 is found near the center and several other words are stitched into the comforter. "Myrtle" refers to Wanda's great-aunt, Myrtle Sheets (7th generation) and "S.S." refers to the originator of the comforter, Susanna Sheets. The display features the large comforter hanging fully open. It was a nice compliment to the fall display at the Museum Campus, *Warm Blessings – Van Wert Historical Quilts and Coverlets*. It featured three memory quilts made by Van Wert County churches. One coverlet was made of wool gathered from sheep raised on the owner's farm. All of the coverlets were hand woven on looms then sewn together to create a warm covering large enough for beds of the era. The display was made possible by partnering with members from the Van Wert Neighborhood Group of the American Sewing Guild.



Your Historical Society supports Van Wert County parades . . . A new Historical Society float was introduced at the Peony Festival Parade on June 8, 2013. The Society needed a new, durable float for the annual Peony Festival Parade as well as numerous parades held in Van Wert County. The theme of the new float was selected to match up with the 100th Anniversary of the Lincoln Highway. Jeanne Zeigler, long-time volunteer for the Society, took the project on, and with the help of Society jack-of-all-trades volunteer, Lionel Enyart, they produced a new float. It can easily be changed to new themes and should last many years.

Photos shown on the float are 1) E. Main St. showing the County Courthouse and the Schines move theater 2) The County Courthouse 3) A peony farm in Van Wert County 4) The Brumback Library 5) The Van-Del drive-in movie theater 6) Webb's Hi-Speed Service Station and Tourist Cabins 7) Lincoln Highway Dairy 8) Map showing the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County. All the photos show places on the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County.



A tour booklet for traveling the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County was published in 2013 during the 100th Anniversary of the Lincoln Highway. Copies will be available at the CVB office, downtown Van Wert, while supplies last.

This booklet is available online as a PDF file at:

<http://www.timesbulletin.com/ftp/Touring32Pages.pdf>

and at the Society's publication access page:

<http://www.vvlocal.net/museum/files/newsletter/>

***Your County Historical Society
in Action!
Through people like You!***



The Museum Complex has a large area that needs mowed with walnut, buckeye and oak trees creating plenty of debris on the grounds. A new lawn mower was required at the end of 2013. Here is Theresa Mengerink, Vice President, Van Wert County Historical Society, accepting \$1,000 checks from two local banks in December 2013. Theresa is a history teacher at Vantage Career Center, local volunteer for the cub scouts and has volunteered at the Historical Society for a number of years. **Thank you very much to Van Wert Federal Savings Bank and First Federal Savings & Loan for their generous donations!**



Brian Renner and Jessica Hurdesty, of First Federal of Van Wert, present a \$1,000 check to Theresa Mengerink to help purchase a new lawn mower for the Historical Society..



Gary Clay of Van Wert Federal Savings Bank presents a \$1,000 check to Theresa Mengerink to help purchase a new lawn mower for the Historical Society.



The 1917 Overland Opera Touring Coupe before restoration.

Restoration of the 1917 Overland Opera Touring Coupe, a rare 4-cylinder automobile, continued through 2013. It was built in August 1916 and first owned by Charles Wassenberg of Wassenberg Art Center fame. Current work includes fabrication of replacement parts and body pieces. The outer body metal coverings are also being completed. A group of volunteers are completing the work and managing outside contract work, such as the rebuilding of the engine. Donations to help with to the Overland automobile restoration project may be sent to the Historical Society, specified for "Overland Restoration Project."

It's time for our 2014 Membership Drive.....

If you are a donor to the Historical Society through membership,
thank you very much for your generosity!

The Van Wert County Historical Society has worked hard this past year to preserve our local history for future generations.

The Historical Society was privileged to host many local groups, including a large number of out-of-state visitors who were traveling the Lincoln Highway during its Centennial Anniversary. The Society Trustees have been especially busy this fall with tours for school-age children. Your Society is the only local organization preserving county history. This is a plus for area elementary schools that can stay local to fulfill requirements for off-site history education.

Spring and summer displays and activities brought to light many of our history treasures. The bi-monthly programs on Sunday afternoons have proven to be informative and entertaining.

An expanded newsletter, *From Under the Oak Tree*, was introduced for Spring 2013. It is available online in full color! A facebook page was started in 2013 and is now used for posting photos and notices of activities.

The Historical Society depends upon individual memberships as its main source of funding. The Society is fortunate to receive donations most years, but these are not a steady source of funding.

How can you help?

- You can support us financially by renewing your membership.
- You can attend the Society's activities. Bring a friend or family member!
- You can visit the Gift Shoppe at the Seven Oaks – there are many treasures to be found there!
- You can encourage your friends and family to purchase a membership. Forward their mailing address to us and we will mail a newsletter to them!

A membership coupon is on the next page for your convenience.

We are so thankful for your support in the past and look forward to partnering with you again in 2014.

Thank you in advance,

Membership Committee
Van Wert County Historical Society

**Become a member of the
Van Wert County Historical Society**

Your support is very important to the operations of the Historical Society. Choose from four levels of membership:

- Individual Membership** - \$20 annual donation
- Patron Membership** - \$50 annual donation
- Sponsor Membership** - \$100 annual donation
- Isaac Van Wart Membership** - \$200 annual donation

Memberships are annual, renewed at the beginning of the year. If you did not receive a notice to renew, please use the form to the right.

The Van Wert County Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)(3) institution. All memberships are tax deductible. Your memorial donations, contributions and gifts may be tax deductible.

The Van Wert County Historical Society was organized in 1953, during Ohio's Sesquicentennial celebration. In 1955, William Fosnaught, a local attorney and school teacher, donated to the Society a building which was built circa 1896 by the John Clark family. The building, now the County Museum, is located at the corner of N. Washington and Third Streets in Van Wert.

The Museum houses thousands of artifacts that have been donated by area residents. This original Museum property has been maintained as a Victorian home and features many displays.

The 1985 addition to the Museum Campus is a 50' x 50' building, called the Annex, with displays of other phases of early Van Wert life. The Annex features a Historical Walking Tour of early Van Wert.

Visit us for organization information, photo gallery, trustee and officer listings at vanwert.com/museum



Van Wert County Historical Society
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602 N. Washington Street
P.O. Box 621
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vanwert.com/museum
vwc.historicalsociety@gmail.com
facebook "Van Wert County Historical Society"



To find and to hold for posterity

**Van Wert County Historical Society
2014 Membership Form**

_____ New Member _____ Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

email _____

Date: _____

Annual Memberships

Individual Membership - \$20

Patron Membership - \$50

Sponsor Membership - \$100

Isaac Van Wart Membership - \$200

I would like to volunteer to help the Society.

We will contact you about your volunteer interest.

Make payments payable to:

Van Wert County Historical Society
602 N. Washington Street
P.O. Box 621
Van Wert OH 45891-0621

Questions and inquiries:

419.771.9851 vwc.historicalsociety@gmail.com

Thank You!

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From Under the Oak Tree is the quarterly newsletter of the Van Wert County Historical Society.

Published as Spring, Summer, Fall & Winter issues.

Available as a PDF file online or by email.

If you would like to comment on, suggest content, or receive the newsletter, contact the newsletter editor via email at gbjja@vwlocal.net or the Society via the contact information located on the last page of this newsletter.

Access the Historical Society's publications and the *From Under The Oak Tree* newsletter at:

www.vwlocal.net/museum/files/newsletter

Our facebook page has many photos displayed so they are available to everyone. Many of these photos have been stored for many years without being seen by visitors to the Musuem Campus. On facebook we are "Van Wert County Historical Society."

Van Wert County Historical Society
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To find and to hold for posterity



From Under the Oak Tree

This page is used for mailing of the newsletter.

Well, I didn't know that . . .

Vol. 13 Issue 4

On the northwest corner of Mendon Rd. and the Lincoln Highway, there was a business called Runnion HC Gas and Tourist Cabins. This was many years ago, during the busy days of the Lincoln Highway. From the 1920s through the early 1960s, tourist cabins were common along highways used for long distance travel. There just happens to be a cabin from the Runnion

Winter December 2013



Tourist Cabins, kept in its original condition. The current business on the corner, Dr. Wilkin's veterinary clinic, had stored the building awaiting its placement on the Museum Campus. In early December, members of the Vantage Career Center's Buildings and Grounds class, taught by Larry Mengerink, moved the cabin and started the restoration process. The cabin was secured for the winter and will be finished for the 2014 Museum season. A big thank you to the Vantage students!