



# THE KENT HISTORIAN

Newsletter of the Kent Historical Society

Summer 2009  
Number 65

## PROGRAM FEATURE

### Progressive Garden Tour Dates Set

If you are longing for summer and love peeking at other people's gardens, the Kent Historical Society has the perfect event for you.

A progressive garden tour—three dates with different gardens on each date—will take participants through a wonderful series of woodland and shade gardens, perennial and water gardens, interesting city gardens, sprawling summer gardens and a few unique surprises along the way.

The garden tour will be June 6, June 27 and July 11. One \$15 ticket allows participants access to 15 different but equally beautiful Kent-area gardens. Each self-guided tour date is a Saturday, with the following day being reserved as a rain date. Tickets (which would make a perfect Mother's Day gift) will be available April 30 at the Kent Historical Society, 234 S. Water St., and at Home Savings Bank, 142 N. Water St., in downtown Kent. Because some yards include steps, narrow pathways and sloping terrains, the garden tour cannot offer handicap accessibility.

A progressive garden tour offers participants the opportunity to view different gardens when each is near

its most beautiful time of the season. The early shade and woodland gardens may still have some spring flowers such as Jack-in-the-Pulpit, varieties of Columbine, Sweet woodruff and Forget-me-nots, while the growing canopy of trees provides the perfect environment for shade-loving foliage such as Hosta, ferns, Astilbe and Coral bells.



Kathy Imler's informal cottage gardens feature winding walkways, beautiful perennials, a multi-tiered water feature and great ideas for a sloping lot. Imler's garden will be open on June 27.

Roses are most prevalent in mid to late June, while favorite perennials such as Shasta daisies, Bee balm, Veronica, Lilies and Phlox highlight the late June and early July summer gardens. Wonderful, dependable annuals provide splashes of color throughout the gardens from June through September and October.

In recent years, water features have become very popular,

and the tours include a variety of appealing ideas that you can use in your own home garden. You will find everything from small bubbling fountains and waterfalls to fish ponds and even picturesque lakes. Each one is an oasis of nature with strokes of color to brighten the day for persons of all ages.

For additional information, call garden tour coordinator Pat Morton at 330-678-5671 or the Kent Historical Society at 330-678-2712.

## Kids Korner Coming to KHS

All children ages 6 to 12 are invited to participate in the Kent Historical Society's new Kids Korner on the last Saturday of every month. Have fun while learning about Kent and its many stories. The first Kids Korner is April 25.

The Historical Society will be offering many different activities so participants can learn more about the city where they live. In April, Kids Korner will be celebrating Earth Day, talking about Gov. Martin Davey and making a cherry tree to take home.

Call Mary Ann Green at 330-678-2712 for more information. Historical Society volunteer and teacher, Beth Pasciak, will coordinate the monthly program.

## Artifact Added to KHS Collection

The Kent Historical Society's latest addition to its museum collection is a letter with a postmark of Franklin Mills. It has been archivally framed in glass so that the entire contents of this 1831 correspondence are on view. The letter is signed by George DePeyster, who was appointed postmaster in 1820. His flourishing script dots both the front and back, and the letter seem to be an inquiry into a parcel of land that had gone into foreclosure.

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# All About Kent Speaker Series Features Martin L. Davey Biographer F.P. Vazzano

Martin L. Davey will be the topic of the Kent Historical Society's *All About Kent* speaker series in March. Frank P. Vazzano, a retired professor of history from Walsh University in North Canton will talk about his book *Politician Extraordinaire, The Tempestuous Life and Times of Martin L. Davey* on March 31 at 7 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 335 W. Main Street in Kent.

Martin L. Davey, a native son who rose to national prominence as a businessman and politician, was the son of John Davey, who founded the Davey Tree Expert Company in Kent. The business was incorporated in 1909. The Davey family, poor but hard working, built the business into a national company that now is employee-owned. Davey Tree remains a recognized industry leader.

Martin Davey is remembered as a former mayor of Kent in 1913, U.S. Congressman in 1918 and governor of Ohio in 1934, achieving national prominence during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the late 1930s. Davey began his business career as a salesman for the family business, quickly becoming treasurer and general manager, as he helped to guide and build the Davey Tree Expert Company through perilous financial times in the 1920s and 1930s. Davey was a man of great energy, vision and accomplishment.

Author Robert E. Pflieger, likely would agree, having written the following in his 1977 book *Green Leaves*: "The death of Martin L. Davey marked the passing of a very remarkable man. He took over a debt-ridden business, that was little more than an idea and a book, and turned it into a

successful enterprise of national and international fame. His business acumen served him well in other business ventures. He had a brilliant and successful political career as a mayor, congressman and governor. He was mourned by people in all walks of life."

Upon Davey's death, Henry Van Dyke wrote a poem that was used to close Davey's funeral. It sums up his life this way:

*So, let the way wind up the hill or  
down*

*O'er rough or smooth, the journey  
will be joy:*

*Still seeking what I sought but when a  
boy*

*New friendships, high adventure and  
a crown,*

*My heart will keep the courage of the  
quest*

*And hope the road's last turn will be  
the best.*

For an excerpt from Vazzano's book about Davey's life and experiences as a youth, see page 3.

A tour of the First Christian Church will follow with information about the Davey family's relationship to the church. Vazzano will be available to sign copies of his book and answer questions. Vazzano also has written numerous articles for historical publications.

Other speakers in the series include Bryan Hill in May. He will talk about the Twin Coach Company and the Faegol family. That presentation will take place at the Kent Free Library. In June, Pat Morton and Carol Stroble will talk about the Pioneer Cemetery and the early settlers of Kent.

## Kent Historical Society

THE KENT HISTORIAN is a quarterly publication of the Kent Historical Society, a nonprofit organization that strives to be the primary Kent history resource and reference center, leading the community in the collection, preservation and interpretation of Kent's heritage through exhibitions, educational programs and activities. The society brings educational programs to schools, businesses and civic organizations and collaborates with the Main Street Kent and other historic preservation projects in the community.

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### Museum Hours

Thursday: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Friday: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Saturday: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Groups and special tours  
by appointment

Direct inquiries to  
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### Need Ideas for a Mother's Day Present?

Mother's Day is May 10, so it's not too early to start thinking about what to give your mom to tell her she's wonderful. Here are some suggestions: tickets to the KHS garden tours, vintage-style aprons, hand-blown glass ornaments, vintage post cards and note cards, posters of Brady Lake and the 1924 Kent Congregational Church Cook Book. You can purchase all of these items at the Kent Historical Society Museum. Come in, and view the selection.



# A Portrait of Young Martin Davey: A Budding Entrepreneur

*Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from Politician Extraordinaire by Frank P. Vazzano. It is reprinted with permission from Kent State University Press.*

If God ever spoke to Martin Davey during his boyhood, it was to tell him not that he was never meant to be a farmer. Nobody worked harder or faster than John Davey, and he expected the same



Martin Davey

from his children. Still trying to make a living growing vegetables, the elder Davey had bought a small farm about two miles outside of

Kent. Here he planted celery and onions, and because his landscaping work dominated his time, he expected his sons to handle the onion and celery business. The work was hard; Martin hated digging the celery out of the cold, wet ground during the fall. Gloves were useless in the muddy celery field and his fingers froze. Wellington (his brother) was luckier. While Martin picked in the cold and the mud, his older brother trimmed the celery in the nearby out-building warmed by a stove.

Early on, Martin recognized how utterly dependent his farming father was on economic and weather conditions. The vegetable market was frequently glutted, and more than once John Davey barely made expenses. When unfavorable market conditions failed to wreak havoc with John

Davey's livelihood, bad weather often did. In April 1901, when Martin was sixteen, his father grew a bumper crop of onions. Just as the Daveys began to anticipate a nice (and rare) profit, Kent was hit by a devastating spring snowstorm. The snow began falling on Thursday night, April 18 and did not stop until the next Sunday morning.

Railroad and trolley traffic ground to a halt. Snow piled ten feet high on some places on the tracks. Telephone and telegraph lines dangled from poles throughout town. For two days Kent was cut off from the outside world. By Sunday afternoon the sun broke through and undid in a few hours what the storm had taken the entire weekend to do. The trains and trolley cars started running again, and soon Kent was back in business. The same was not true of John Davey. His onion crop, once so promising, lay dead under three or four feet of snow.

Daydreaming allowed Martin escape from such tribulations and the drudgery of garden toil. During brief breaks in the workday and after lunch, he would lie on his back, gaze into the summer sky, and speculate about the world beyond Kent. As the cars of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad clattered past the family farm, he wondered what the people who lived in the towns and villages between Cleveland and Wheeling, West Virginia, were like. That world opened a bit to him and other Kentites in November 1895 when the town completed its first electric street car line. Inter-urban cars now left Kent every hour between 6:15 A.M. and 10:15 P.M. For a dime, Kentites could ride to Cuyahoga Falls seven or eight miles to the west, and for twenty cents they could ride all the way to Akron. Not surprisingly, the celery and onion farm grew too confining, and Martin began thinking of his future and a life beyond Kent.



The Kent Interurban Trolley was snowed-in following a four-day snowstorm in April 1901.

There remained, however, pleasant local diversions sufficient to keep a young boy occupied. One summer a merry-go-round operator brought his carousel to Kent. The town children,

Martin Davey among them, flocked to pay their nickels to ride the snorting and prancing wooden horses

for a few moments. But while other children just rode, young Martin already well acquainted with entrepreneurship, talked the operator into allowing him to sell tickets to would-be rides. He could keep one nickel for every five he took in. He hustled and made a fair profit for his time and energy. But there was more than monetary reward that accomplished his deal with the merry-go-round operator. As a "partner" in the concession, Martin could ride for free and he took great delight in jumping on and off the carousel whenever he chose. Before long he was doing it not just for the enjoyment of the ride but because he could show off before envious friends. His pleasure ended quickly though. One day, while leaping on and off the merry-go-round before an admiring audience, a sharp voice cut through the air. "Martin!" It was his father. John Davey lectured his son about the dangers of jumping on and off the moving carousel, and that ended Martin's entry into the world of merry-go-rounds. After settling his affairs with the operator, he returned home, sadly, with his father.

## World War II . . . Where Were You?

The Kent Historical Society's Oral History project is looking for stories from those who served in World War II. If you served your country during any part of the war years (1941-1945), please leave your stories with the Historical Society.

The society can arrange for you to either video tape or audio tape your personal recollections. It can be done at the Historical Society or in your home. Call Henry Halem at 330-673-8632 or send an e-mail to [hhalem@neo.rr.com](mailto:hhalem@neo.rr.com) to make arrangements.

If you have photographs of family members who were serving in the war effort, these can become part of the society's archives. The photos will be scanned and the originals returned to you. All photographs should be captioned with information about the person, the place and the activity (or service).

## Grand Opening for Historic Log Cabin Set for River Day

Celebrate River Day with the opening of the Kent Parks and Recreation Department's historic 1808 log cabin, located in the John Davey Arboretum, on May 16 from noon to 3 p.m. River Day also features garden and historic displays and activities, such as self-guided walking tours of Standing Rock Cemetery and The Portage hike-and-bike trail. For more information, call the Kent Parks and Recreation Department at 330-673-8897.



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### In Memoriam: Trudy Crawford

The Board of KHS extends its deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Trudy Crawford. She was a wonderful volunteer who truly brightened our day with her smile and spirit. She will be missed.

## Loris Troyer 94 Club Grows

The Kent Historical Society is pleased to acknowledge the following contributions to the 94 Club, which helps maintain the growing KHS library and archives:

- Walter & Nancy Adams
- Bill & Carol Birkner
- Leah Bradstock Trust (daughters Linda and Janet)
- Kathryn Hahn Burgess
- Kenneth & Frances Cardinal
- Trudy Crawford
- David & Janet Dix
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