



THE KENT HISTORIAN

Newsletter of the Kent Historical Society

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HISTORY FEATURE

Beckwith Orchards Owned, Operated for Five Generations

For many, a visit to Beckwith Orchards on Lake Rockwell Road in Franklin Township is much more than a trip to buy freshly harvested apples, tasty apple cider and gifts with a country flair. For area school children, it's a field trip to learn how Johnny Appleseed planted apple seeds when America was still a wilderness beckoning pioneers westward. Beckwith's has two Johnny Appleseed trees started from a tree he planted in Ashtabula.



Charlie Beckwith inspects one of the apples in his orchard.

A family owned and operated farm for five generations, Beckwith Orchards has been growing and selling fruit for more than 125 years. Also on site is a gift and apple pie shop.

For those who want to explore the history of this Portage County treasure, a visit to the Kent Historical Society is in order. The society's holdings include an article by Jay Beckwith, who noted that the Beckwith family history can be traced to before the Revolutionary War. Jay recalls how his parents, Frank and Mary Beckwith, provided the foundation for the "Beckwith Clan" when they married and began to raise a family.

The Beckwiths' home journal entries were initiated in 1891 by Jay Beckwith, with contributions from Beckwith family members over the decades to provide a sense of what life and hard work were like in a more rural and pastoral Portage County during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

For example, this excerpt from March 7, 1891: "Today is Saturday. The men have been hauling logs for lumber for the new house. . . . The sled went very nice across the fields in the forenoon, but in the afternoon it thawed quite a little and in some places was quite muddy."

Two entries describe how even when hard frosts threatened crops, Beckwith family members looked forward to warmer and brighter days. Take this one from May 4, 1891: "We had a hard frost night. The fruit trees are mostly blossomed now. The frost did a great damage to the strawberries last night. I have made a flower bed out in the garden. Zinnias, four o'clocks, bachelors buttons, poppies, sweet alyssum and sweet peas are in it."

And from June 7, 1891: On the night of May 18, a hard frost visited this part of the country and killed all the wheat, and small fruits, doing great damage. School let out May 5. . . . Three months vacation now."

The entry for January 1, 1892, shows that New Year's Day was more of a work day than a holiday: "Marvin and James and I butchered a beef in the forenoon. A nice young cow. In the afternoon we cleaned out the well. I went down into it and fished out two pails, a chain, rope etc.

In the 1890s, horsepower meant exactly that and not automotive power. This entry from December 31, 1893, also adds a commentary on a play: "A large party of young people from the neighborhood went on a sleigh ride about the 14th to [Redbrush] Schoolhouse. I shall always remember that ride, how I froze when I got there and melted after we go there. The play was not so good as the sleigh ride."

One entry describes a time before rotary tillers and clothes dryers. April 9, 1892: "Frank began plowing our garden patches. I helped first round. Held the plow for part of one furrow. It is Saturday and Maud is washing. The wind is doing its best to keep us from hanging our clothes out. The sheets can wind around six times and have room to flap as many times again. How the wind did blow. Nothing like air. Fresh air.

A very cold winter in January 1893 hampered one journal contributor as shown by this entry: "Lakes are frozen solid. Roads are drifted terribly, such a freezing, sweeping wind. I must close, for my ink is froze; my hands are numb."

An entry one summer shows what multitasking would have meant

See *APPLE*, p. 4.

Inside . . .

'School Days' Exhibit	2
Kent World War II Veterans	2
Tales of Kent Forthcoming	3
In Memoriam: Pat Morton	3
New KHS Web Site Debuts	3
Ghost Stories/Walk Coming	3
Garden Tour Blossoms	4

'School Days' Exhibit Opens in December

Have an old photo of your favorite school event or maybe an old lunch box? This December, the Kent Historical Society will open a new "School Days" exhibit to show what school was like in Kent in years past. Whether you or someone you know attended one of the Kent public schools, St. Patrick's School or the University School, you can help add to our collection by donating photographs of school rooms, teachers or activities, writing slates, report cards, textbooks, writing instruments, and lots of other memorabilia such as graduation announcements that helped capture what it was like being a student. (anyone have any knick-ers?)

Although the exhibit will highlight the period from 1890 thru 1940, the society will be happy to look at artifacts from other decades that may be considered for loan or acquisition into the society's collection. Photographs and many other written materials may be scanned and returned to family albums if necessary. Limited space for the exhibit means that not all items can be accepted for the collection.

Funding for this exhibit has been provided by the Joseph G. and Sally A. Miller Foundation, the Henry V. and Frances W. Christenson Foundation, the Kent Rotary Foundation and the Kent Historical Society Exhibitions Fund. The guest curator is John Klassen.

Kent WW II Veterans Share Memories

Several Kent World War II veterans recently shared their memories of a conflict that spanned from 1939 to 1945. Their stories were varied and personal. But regardless of the topic, their memories have been saved as part the Kent Historical Society's World War II oral history project. You can view their stories at the society office.

Some of the men who shared their stories are shown in the photo below.

If you or someone you know has a story to share, please contact the historical society. We are looking for men and women who served in the military and those who supported the war effort stateside working in factories and other occupations.



Some of the military veterans who shared their World War II experiences with the Kent Historical Society are seated (left to right), Gene Lindsay, Steve Messino, Sydney Krause, Harry Ruggles; standing (left to right), Jack Joy, Earl Kilchenman, Gene Trimble, Jerry Wiland, Harold Snowberger, Harold Ruggles, Tom Campana, John Wunderle, Leon Fenstermacher.

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
Kent Historical Society
P.O. Box 663
Kent, OH 44240
330/678-2712
khs@kentohiohistory.org
www.kentohiohistory.org



DiPaolo Book of Tales from Kent Coming Soon to KHS Gift Shop

Save room on your holiday shopping list for a new book, *Rooted in Kent: 101 Tales from the Tree City* by Roger DiPaolo. DiPaolo was reared and educated in the Tree City. He is editor of the *Record-Courier*, where he got his start in journalism in 1977 as a reporter. His weekly column, "Portage Pathways," is an opportunity for him to share his interest in local history with readers.

The new book will focus on events, people, businesses and industries as well as trends that shaped the community from its founding through the middle of the 20th century. A form will be mailed in November for Kent Historical Society members to preorder the book at a discounted holiday price.

In Memoriam: A Tribute to Pat Morton, Long-Time KHS Board Member

The Kent Historical Society lost a dedicated volunteer and board member when Pat Morton passed away on July 20, 2009, of cancer. She was born in Champion, Ohio, on January 26, 1948, and moved to Kent in 1981. Pat served on the board of the society from 2005 to 2009. She was very active in numerous projects and events that showed her affection for the city and its history.



Pat Morton

Because of her love of flowers and gardens, Pat organized a successful garden tour during Kent's bicentennial celebration and another for the historical society this year. For the society's tour, she created very attractive program booklets, and found four tour sponsors and 15 lovely gardens (to be shown over three Saturdays and staffed by more than 20 volunteers). This highly praised event raised \$4,000 for the society.

Pat also was instrumental in assuring that the community's first resting place, Pioneer Cemetery on Stow Street, was transformed into a beautiful place that honored the city of Kent's heritage. She started the Adopt-a-Cemetery-Plot Program, which encourages individuals, families and community groups to maintain a plot. More than 25 active volunteers now care for cemetery sites.

She had a strong desire to erect a marker within the cemetery to honor the many babies and children of Kent's early settlers who died so young and who are buried at the cemetery. The historical society will continue its commitment to the cemetery and any future memorial in Pat's memory. Tax-deductible contributions may be made to the Pioneer Cemetery Preservation Group in memory of Pat Morton by mailing checks to Portage Community Bank, P.O. Box 9, Kent, OH 44240.

KHS Announces New, Improved Web Site

The Kent Historical Society has been adding many features to its revamped Web site, including a shopping cart to purchase gift shop items, information on how to research the history of your house, historical facts about the railroad era and personal memories from John Jacobs and John Wunderle. The Wunderle page includes 95 memories of Kent to which

visitors can add their own memories.

The Coming Events page will keep you connected to scheduled speakers for the society's "All About Kent" series and to events around town. More links and information are being added all the time, so check back often. If you have suggestions for the Web site, e-mail them to khs@kentohiohistory.org.

Ghost Stories, Ghost Walk to Return to Kent

Halloween returns at the end of October and along with it is the Kent Historical Society's second edition of *Haunting Tales from the Tree City* and Main Street Kent's third annual Ghost Walk.

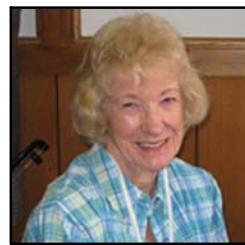
The Kent Historical Society published the first edition of the ghost-stories book with stories from Kent residents. The stories included tales about ghosts at the Kent Stage and at private residences. More have been submitted this year. The second edition will sell for \$5 in the society's gift shop.

The Kent Ghost Walk is set for October 24 from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Ghost stories that take place in historic downtown Kent will be used for the ghost walk. If you have a Kent ghost story, send it by e-mail to mary@mainstreetkent.org or postal mail it to Main Street Kent, 138 E. Main St., Kent, OH 44240.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the ghost walk, contact Main Street Kent.

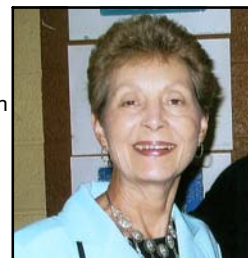
KHS Volunteers in the Spotlight

Volunteers in the spotlight for the fall are Ann Phillips (top) and Jean Giulitto (bottom).



"I love being able to help the historical society out, and it's a pleasure working with Mary Ann Green and other volunteers."

"Volunteering let's me travel in time through Kent's rich and diverse history. It's a pleasure to help preserve this heritage."



APPLE

Continued from p. 1

for family members helping out around the house in 1893. A list of chores for one day included blacked stove, swept buttery twice along with several other rooms, labeled fruit cans, made beds, mopped kitchen floor, renovated flower bed, got dinner, wash, dried, and put away dishes, drew eight pails of water, picked tomatoes, got a small bouquet of flowers, made some cakes, washed cans, and pails, fed chickens and got a good supper.

An entry from Christmastime provides a reflection on growing up. Take December 15: "Today I am 15 years old. How aged I seem." The writer continues with a Merry Christmas greeting and a list of gifts for family members in 1893 that included a few dolls, an alphabet book, a harmonica, soap, a brush, a watch, neckchains, ribbons, handkerchiefs, a satchel bag, candy ornaments, a sketchbook, Tom Browns, schoolbooks, tiddley winks, checkers, dominoes and other knickknacks.

And now, in the present day, Beckwith Orchards is still a busy place for the Beckwith family, along with entertainment for visitors, including the Green Blossom Irish Special performing October 18. Performance times are from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

For a photo gallery and information on field trips, programs, and harvest dates for your favorite apple, go to <http://www.beckwithorchards.com/>.

Source: This article was written by Margaret Garmon.

KHS Garden Tour Blossoms

The Kent Historical Society's first progressive garden tour was a great success. More than 200 people strolled through gardens that spotlighted gardens in varying stages of bloom. What beauty! This unique idea was conceived and carried out by Pat Morton, who passed away in July shortly after the last tour.



Assisted by an enthusiastic group of volunteers headed by Dawn Carpenter, this fund-raiser and community "fun-builder" brought oohhs and ahhs from delighted participants. The society is grateful to those community-minded gardeners who graciously opened their treasured spaces to the

public: Gerry Orr, Amy Pennell, Sue and Dick Abbott, Suzanne Burns, Connie Baeseman, Sue Dahl, Sue Kandell, Anna French, Kathy Imler, Rick Dorr, Chris Mastroianni, Melissa Sink, Gingr Vaughan and Marilyn Sessions.

If you took photos during your garden tour and would like to share them with the society, please e-mail them or send a copy (including a note granting us permission for duplication in our newsletter or Web site) to the society office.



Kent Historical Society
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Kent, OH 44240

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