

# THE KENT HISTORIAN

*The Newsletter of the Kent Historical Society*

Spring 2011  
Number 72

## The wait finally over on June 18!

### Grand Opening offers look at restored home, museum

Last December, the Kent Historical Society Board of Trustees voted to purchase the Clapp-Woodward House for its permanent residence and museum. Our goal was to be open for tours for Kent school third-graders at the end of May — but would we be ready in time? Could we be open to the general public by summer?

Thanks to previous owners Mary and Bob Paton's loving restoration, the historic home was basically in very good shape. But its conversion from office space back to an 1883 Victorian home that doubles as a functioning museum would demand some hard work.

The KHS board believed that all decisions should be made in the long-term interest of authentic restoration. Walls needed to be painted in the traditional palette, wooden floors restored, period-appropriate carpeting and window treatments chosen. A team of volunteers already has spent 200 hours beginning to bring back the beauty of the woodwork framing four unique fireplaces and the home's spacious rooms. Decades of tarnish were removed from the original ornamental door hardware. The back entrance door was enlarged to improve accessibility. A complete security and fire system was installed throughout the building and the third floor is being refurbished for storage.

May came, and the students were scheduled. Every school child in Kent's third-grade classes, including Longcoy, Walls, Holden, Davey, Franklin and St. Patrick, were given historic tours. The response from the kids, teachers and parents was enthusiastically positive. We



A new sign and logo are just two of many touches that have been completed at the Kent Historical Society's Clapp-Woodward House. Visitors will be welcomed at the new location on June 18.

can now accommodate a full class in each room of the tour — something that was not possible before.

We will open to the public June 18. Our first "history camp" for kids will begin this July. Our challenges, almost overwhelming in December, have been met through the ongoing generosity of our many contributors, foundations and friends, the work of our volunteers and the skills of our contractors.

Most importantly, we are open because Administrator Tom Hatch and his assistant, Lorie Bednar, have committed to making our board goals a reality. Bravo! We couldn't have a better team.

This new home, sitting grandly at the top of East Main Street, with a history that reaches back to our founding Kent family, will welcome our town, Kent

State students and visitors for decades to come. While we are still a work in progress — accumulating important artifacts, photographs, memories and support — the long wait for a permanent home is over.

We will open our doors on June 18 from noon to 4 p.m. — and we hope to see you there!

### Inside ...

Speaker program set	2
Tribute to members	3
Public project takes off	4
Consultants lend hand	5
KHS awarded grants	5

## 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 exhibits, educational programs and activities. The society offers educational programs to schools, businesses and civic organizations.

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### Museum Hours:

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Fridays and Saturdays  
237 E. Main St.,  
and by appointment.

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# Upcoming 'All About Kent' offers look at historic bridge

Future topics also include book about writer Jim Tully

The Kent Historical Society will host a 134th birthday celebration in downtown Kent this Sept. 25 as part of its "All About Kent" speaker series. The event is being co-sponsored by the Kent Parks & Recreation Department.

The gala will transport visitors back in time to that crowning moment on Sept. 25, 1877, when Hon. Marvin Kent laid the final stone on our city's spectacular three-arch stone bridge.

Actors representing important dignitaries of the time will dress in period clothing — including one as Marvin Kent — and will recreate the scene as it unfolded 134 years ago. Also, a 100-year-old wagon will carry descendants of the family who first crossed the bridge on its opening day. A historian/architect will discuss the features that make the bridge a Kent jewel and tour guides will lead visitors through the area.

The "All About Kent" events are free and open to the public and are held three to four times a year.

Also planned this year is a



The three-arch stone bridge in Kent has been a centerpiece of the community for 134 years. A program celebrating the Kent jewel will be held Sept. 25.

presentation by Kent resident Paul Bauer, who co-wrote "Jim Tully: American Writer, Irish Rover, Hollywood Brawler," with Mark Bawidziak, television critic for the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Tully was the son of Irish immigrants and lived the life of a hobo and vagabond after becoming orphaned at a young age. He eventually settled in Kent, where he found work as a tree surgeon, chain-maker and boxer. He moved to Hollywood in 1912 and made a career as a reporter writing stories — somewhat controversial — about celebrities and writing stories about life on the road.

The lecture about Tully, which features pictures and rarely seen film clips, will be held in Kent on Nov. 1. Look for more details to follow.

## Volunteers needed to help at new KHS home

The Kent Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help at its new site. Volunteers are needed to set up exhibits, refinish woodwork, organize files, set up library space and do gardening and light

maintenance.

Anyone who would like to help with these jobs or who has other special talents or interests should contact Lorie Bednar at (330) 678-2712.

### NEW HOURS FOR KENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Kent Historical Society will offer new hours after it officially opens on June 18. The museum will be open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Special appointments for research and group tours also can be made by calling (330) 678-2712.

# KHS mourns loss of two of its own

## KHS' Halem pays tribute to "builders of community"

By *Sandy Halem*  
KHS President

Within a few days in April, the Kent Historical Society lost two of its most active board members. Both Reed Strimple and John Wunderle were graduates of the 1938 class of Theodore Roosevelt High School, both served with distinction in World War II and both helped shape the success of the Kent Historical Society. Reed and John were builders of their community. They believed that a person should not just live in a place, but make that place better because they had lived there. Each had talents that they gave generously to KHS. I was proud to call John and Reed my friends, and they offered their wisdom and support when I needed their counsel. They gave their best to make us the best, and I am grateful that Reed and John saw that we had a new, historic and permanent home on East Main Street.

Reed Strimple was born Nov. 12, 1920, in Kent to Ross B. and Helen L. (Reed) Strimple. Reed was a founder and board member of the Kent Historical Society from 1971 until 2006. He graduated from Miami University in 1942. After a short stint at Proctor & Gamble, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He had attended Harvard Business School for Officer's Training and then served as Paymaster of the USS Duluth in Admiral Halsey's Pacific Fleet, attaining the rank of lieutenant. He returned to Kent in 1946 to enter business with his father at R.B. Strimple & Son Insurance and Real Estate. His family had a long tradition of service to the Kent community and Reed continued that service on the Kent Board of Education for more than 20 years, seven as president, as well as



Kent Historical Society lost two of its most active board members this year, John Wunderle, above, and Reed Strimple, right.



John single-handedly created a detailed HO scale-model of downtown Kent and its railroad, at left, for the KHS museum. The setup has been a favorite for third-graders when they visit the museum each spring as part of their history curriculum.

president of the Kent Jaycees, Kiwanis, Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and Kent Rotary. He retired at age 90 as consultant with Strimple-Kallstrom-Bartell Insurance Agency, Inc. In 1970, he established the Strimple Christmas Tree Farm in Streetsboro, providing years and years of holiday memories for area families.

Reed Strimple, 90, passed away Saturday, April 16, 2011, at his home. He is survived by his wife, Velma M. (Thomas) Strimple, and his children, Judith (Allen) Redwine of Houston, TX, Bonita (Jay) Graves of Seminole, FL, Dan (Jan) Strimple of Irving, TX, and Julie (Joe) Vickers of Twin Lakes; grandchildren, Scott (Monique) Comernisky of Jacksonville, FL, Derek (Amy) Starr Redwine of Akron, and Dana (Kevin) White of Hillsborough, N.C.; nine great-grandchildren; and

sister, Helen Jane Wilson of Vancouver, WA.

Reed served as KHS treasurer during its previous move from the second floor of the Erie Depot to a more accessible space at 234 N. Water St.

It was an important move which he supported. He knew we needed to serve a wider audience of families and senior citizens than we had coming upstairs in the Depot. Reed and his wife, Velma, enjoyed many wonderful hours at our board picnics and our annual board dinner at the Pufferbelly.

You could usually count on the Strimples and the Troyers to make a lively foursome. Reed's wit and wisdom will be missed.

See *TRIBUTE*, page 6

# Kent fifth-graders become local historians

GeoHistorian project tells stories of Kent historical sites

*By Mark van 't Hooft, Ph.D  
Researcher/Technology Specialist  
Kent State University*

What do a group of fifth-graders, digital technologies and Kent's history have in common? That is the GeoHistorian Project, an initiative from Kent State University's Research Center for Educational Technology that is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project teaches students to become local historians who create stories that are shared with the community at large.

Earlier this year, Robyn Elia's and Christine Lowden's fifth-grade students at Walls Elementary School researched 10 historical sites in downtown Kent and created an interesting story about each one. Did you know, for example, that the silk mill never operated as a silk mill? Or that the Kent Hotel, currently a dilapidated building, was once one of the most popular places to hang out in Portage County? This summer, you will be able to get answers to these questions and more when visiting their respective locations.

So how can a visitor view the stories? This is where technology comes into play. The student-created stories are of the digital variety, and can be accessed by scanning a two-dimensional bar code, known as a QR code, with a Smartphone and a QR code reader. Once the code is scanned, a short video will be accessed online and played, telling the viewer an interesting story about the location he or she is visiting.

Early this summer, the QR codes will be engraved on small metal signs and installed at each site for which students created a story. Initially, 11 sites will be adorned with QR codes and digital stories, including the Erie Depot, the



Photographs courtesy of Mark van 't Hooft

**Fifth-grade students from Walls Elementary School in Kent are telling the stories of 10 of the city's historical landmarks with the use of digital technology. Counter-clockwise, from top, students visit the stone-arch bridge, Marvin Kent House (Masonic Center), and the silk mill as they gather pictures and videos of some of the sites. After gathering information and pictures, the students work on computers to create the stories of the sites.**

former Erie Shops, the Silk/Alpaca Mill, the Marvin Kent Home, the Kent Free Library, the Kent National Bank and mural, the Kent Hotel, the Cuyahoga River Dam, the Main Street Arch Bridge, the Star of the West Mill and, of course, the Clapp-Woodward House,

the new home of the Kent Historical Society. More sites are to follow in the fall, when another group of students from the Kent City Schools will create a second set of stories.

*See PROJECT, page 5*

**Spring 2011**

# Consultants, intern help extend our reach

The Kent Historical Society has added two new team members to help instill a love of our community's history to a new crowd.

Julie Kenworthy and Glenis Siegfried were hired on a contract basis to assist with children's programming, the GeoHistorian project and our photo library.

Kenworthy, who resides in Kent with her husband and children, has a bachelor of arts degree in history from the College of Wooster. In addition to teaching history and geography, she also worked as an after-school program coordinator for youths.



Kenworthy

As the children's program-

ming coordinator, Kenworthy scheduled school visits during the month of May, when 350 students toured the museum. In addition to assisting with the GeoHistorian project, she also is organizing a history camp, which will be held on Tuesday, July 19, and Thursday, July 21, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

"My goal for the historical society is to make it a more recognizable part of our landscape," she said. "Students shouldn't have to look around their own city and wonder how or why buildings and landmarks are the way that they are."

Siegfried is a familiar face at KHS, where she has volunteered her time the last 18 months photographing and organizing our collection. She is a graduate student in the Master of Library and Information Science program

at Kent State University.

In addition to assisting with the GeoHistorian project by digitizing images for students to use, she also will be responsible for managing our photo library and directing volunteers as they create PastPerfect records of visual materials. Siegfried, who has a special interest in textiles, sewed curtains for the new house and a period dress that she wore while giving tours.

Siegfried says even as a child she loved seeing reenactors because it added an element to learning that objects couldn't provide.

"Besides," she said, "there is nothing more fun than being 23 (years old) and still having the ability to dress up!"

Another new face at KHS is Chrissy Marquardt, a student at KSU in the MLIS

program.

Marquardt has worked with museums for the past four years and is working toward a career as a registrar. Marquardt is working with KHS staff to create a procedure flow chart and she also will continue to update the computer catalog.



Marquardt

Although she initially became involved at KHS through a class, the intern says she "felt the warmth even in the middle of a chaotic move."

"KHS is an impressive organization comprised of fantastic people working toward a notable cause and I couldn't be more proud to be a new member of the team," she said.

## KHS awarded two separate grants

The Kent Historical Society has been awarded two separate grants to help with its mission.

The group recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Burton D. Morgan Foundation, in Hudson, and \$1,200 from the Kent Economic Development "Celebrate Kent" program.

The \$5,000 grant will be used to create an exhibit in the museum, "Made in Kent," which will focus on entrepreneurial endeavors that are part of Kent's

heritage. The planned exhibit will highlight innovative products and businesses that have been born in Kent.

The \$1,200 from the city grant will help with components of the "All About Kent" speaker series event to be held in downtown Kent in September celebrating our 134-year-old stone arch bridge. The money will be used for the costs associated with newspaper advertising and rental costs for a sound system, chairs and tents.

### SUMMER HISTORY CAMP SET FOR JULY 19, 21

The Kent Historical Society will host its first summer history camp from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, July 19, and Thursday, July 21, at 237 E. Main St. The camp is for students entering grades 2, 3 and 4.

For more information or to register, call (330) 678-2712.

*PROJECT, from page 4*

QR codes, like this example at right, will be installed at 10 historic locations in Kent.



Keep your eyes peeled for information about these QR codes, and then head on out to visit some of Kent's great historical landmarks. Just don't forget to bring your Smartphone ...

For more information about the GeoHistorian Project, please visit [www.rcet.org/geohistorian](http://www.rcet.org/geohistorian) or contact project directors Mark van 't Hooft ([mvanthoo@kent.edu](mailto:mvanthoo@kent.edu)) or Thomas McNeal ([tmcneal@kent.edu](mailto:tmcneal@kent.edu)).

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*TRIBUTE, from page 3*

John Wunderle, son of Carl V. and Helen Wunderle, was born in Cleveland, Ohio, March 15, 1921.

The family moved to Kent in 1929, and John began to collect the memories of his adopted city that would last a lifetime. He attended St. Patrick's grade school and graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1938.

Enlisting in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II, John taught instrument flying in B-25's, went on to B-17 transition training and then became a commander on a B-29 and was scheduled to go to the South Pacific when the war ended. Returning home, John began working at the Ohio Bell Telephone Company. He stayed for 42 years, retiring in 1981. It was while working for the telephone company that

he met his future wife, Mary Lou, the love of his life. He also began his love affair with history and, in particular, the stories of Ohio's canals, inter-urbans and trains. John was the last-known surviving member of the Akron Railroad Club who had been a member of the club when it was the Eastern Ohio Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. John joined it not long after its 1936 founding. He was an "Honorary Trustee for Life" of The Canal Society of Ohio and active in The Akron Train Club and the Kent Rotary Club. John's passion for both history and Kent led him to become a board member of the Kent Historical Society in 1993. He delivered several talks under the KHS "All About Kent" series, which are available on DVD, and he appears in our "Kent: the Early Years" DVD. He was a constant resource for

people doing research and enjoyed sharing his knowledge with audiences and students. John single-handedly created a detailed HO scale and model of downtown Kent and its railroad for our museum. The exhibit delighted all the third-graders who visited the KHS museum during its annual local history tours. He shared his great love of transportation, whether it was the canal, the inter-urban or the trains in particular. KHS dedicated the room in his honor in 2006. A similar model will be reconstructed in our new home.

John, 90, passed away peacefully April 22, 2011. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Mary Lou, sons John Jr., Tim (Jeanne) Wunderle and daughters, Susanne Blok and Laurie (Gary) Knuth; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; and brothers, Carl and Frank Wunderle.