

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

April 2021

WLW — “MASON’S STATION”

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Ok, so I may have stolen the actual WLW moniker but as the “Nation’s Station” approaches its 100th anniversary, we look back at how the WLW tower and broadcasting station has impacted Mason. Its existence and reach have been a significant part of broadcasting history.

Like all great enterprises there is a man behind the curtain. That man was Powel Crosley Jr. Born and raised in Cincinnati, Crosley was known as an inventor, industrialist, and entrepreneur. He was a pioneer in radio broadcasting and owner of the Cincinnati Reds from 1934 to 1961. Crosley’s companies manufactured automobiles and radios and operated the WLW radio station.

In 1921, soon after he built his first radios, Crosley began experimental broadcasts from his home with a 20-watt transmitter. Soon after, on March 22, 1922, the Crosley Broadcasting Corporation received a commercial license to operate as WLW at 50 watts and in 1925 moved his broadcasting transmitter to Harrison, Ohio.

It was over six years later before the first Mason broadcast on October 29, 1928. WLW had merged with WSAI (formerly owned by the US Playing Card Co.) in May of 1928, and WLW moved its transmitter from Harrison to sharing WSAI’s facility in Mason, now broadcasting at 50,000 watts. Crosley considered Mason an ideal location for his station.

By this time WSAI had put a gravel parking area in front of the transmitter on Tylersville Road and had set up large loudspeakers mounted on the tower. People came in their cars from miles around to listen to the music,

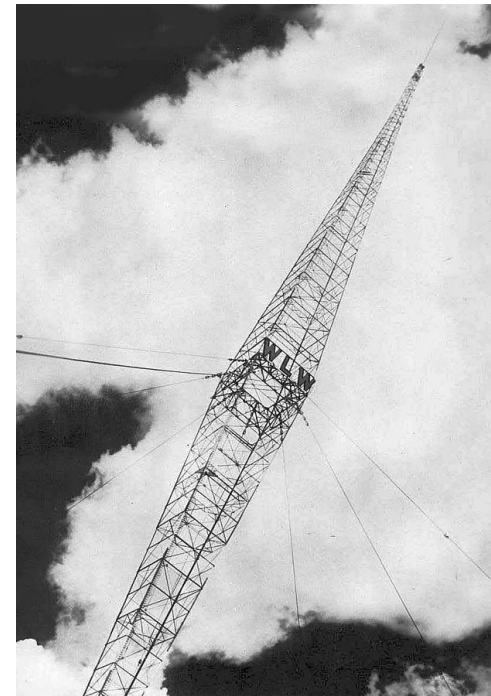
prize fights and other programming right at the transmitter.

The iconic 831-foot diamond-shaped, Blaw-Knox antenna was completed in 1934. The Blaw-Knox company was a manufacturer of steel structures best known today for its radio towers most of which were constructed in the 1930s. The first Blaw-Knox tower was constructed in 1932 in Nashville and was used for WSM’s broadcasting of The Grand Ole Opry. Mason’s tower was the second tower the company had constructed. As of 2020, the tower is only one of six still in use today.

On April 17, 1934, Powel Crosley was granted permission



Powel Crosley, Jr. seated at the control desk, ca. 1933.



The 831-foot, WLW Blaw-Knox diamond tower, ca. 1933.

for broadcasting at 500,000 watts and President Franklin D. Roosevelt pushed the ceremonial button from the White House on May 2, 1934. For the next five years, with a signal 10 times more powerful than any other U.S. station, our tower, the “Nation’s Station”, beamed programs from coast to coast and beyond.

story continues on next page

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established over 40 years ago, the Society’s aim is to create, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER
Join the Mason Historical Society at
Masonhistoricalsociety.org
or Call 513-398-6750

Due to continued Covid concerns, the Museum will be open by appointment only until May 6. Please call 513-398-6750 for an appointment.

WLW, cont.

Programming was being sent thousands of miles but in Mason those living near the station had a constant light supply automatically from the facility. Those familiar with electricity, rigged wiring to light up their yards. The transmission was said to be so powerful that locals could pick up broadcasts on drainpipes, fence posts, bed springs, milking machines, radiators and even tooth fillings!



Setting the base insulator in place for the Blaw-Knox tower, 1933. The total weight on the insulator was about 450 tons.



Field intensity meter and vehicle, used by WLW engineers to verify the station's signal coverage.



The WLW 500 kW transmitter plant, completed and in operation, 1934. The "spray pond" is part of the transmitter's cooling system.

Communications). They later sold the Mason tower property to Vertical Bridge Holdings of Boca Raton, Fla., the nation's largest private owner and manager of communication infrastructure. Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services currently own a portion of the 26-acre area with rights to purchase all but the control buildings and tower areas which Vertical Bridge will maintain and retain ownership.

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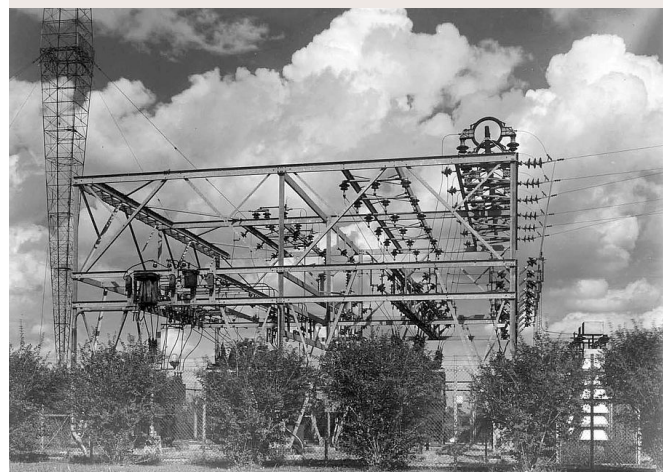
In 1939 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruled that WLW had to reduce its power to 50,000 watts, partly because it interfered with the broadcasts of other stations, but largely due to its smaller competitors, who complained about the station's technical and commercial advantages with its 500,000-watt broadcasts.

However, during World War II, WLW resumed its powerful, 500,000-watt transmissions in cooperation with the U.S. government. WLW's broadcasts from Mason could be heard as far away as South America and Europe. Today WLW can be heard at night in 38 states and parts of Canada, and during the daytime in parts of six states.

Crosley Broadcasting, under contract to the U.S. government, also built and began operating the Bethany Relay Station, located about 2.5 miles west of the tower on Tylersville Road. It was dedicated on September 23, 1944, to broadcast "Voice of America" programming all over the world. The relay station's broadcasts continued until 1994.

Crosley, once dubbed "The Henry Ford of Radio," was posthumously inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2013. He passed away in 1961 and WLW has changed hands multiple times since but was eventually acquired by iHeartRadio (formerly Clear Channel

This 33,000 volt Cincinnati Gas & Electric substation provided the power needed to run the massive WLW transmitter.



For many more wonderful photos (and history) on the WLW tower, visit the following link:

<http://www.theradiohistorian.org/wlwgallery2/wlwgallery2.html>

WLW, cont.

Today WLW-AM's iconic diamond-shaped radio tower and historic transmitter building on Tylersville Road soon will be casting their shadows on retail stores, restaurants, and offices beneath it. The "Tower Park" planned unit development along Mason's booming Tylersville Road corridor, approved by city council, is set to break ground this month.

Around Mason, A Story – Springman
Wikipedia.com
Ohiohistorycentral.org
WVXU.org – John Kiesewetter reporter
Mason Ohio, A Photographic History
– Sherman Caudill and Federle
"Northeast Suburban Life," 7/29/20
Theradiohistorian.org



Plan view of the proposed Tower Park development

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| A Restaurant | E Car Wash |
| B Office | F Storage/Warehouse |
| C Retail | G Daycare |
| D Bank | |

EVERYBODY'S FARM

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

From the beginning, WLW-Radio had a large rural audience. With its high power and clear channel, it provided reliable reception to the most remote farms in a vast area. Farm programs were scheduled early on a regular basis and consequently farmers relied on WLW to bring them market information and farm news as well as entertainment.

To provide an authentic base of operations for its farm program service WLW acquired its own 137-acre farm, dedicated on April 23, 1941. This practical farm called "Everybody's Farm" was located across the street from the WLW broadcasting tower. Earl Neal, an ordinary farmer who had never graduated from any agricultural school, was the first tenant. Earl was heard on the air with Ed Mason, Farm Program Director, carrying on discussions related to farm matters.

At its dedication, James Shouse, Vice President of Crosley Corp. Broadcasting said, "Everybody's Farm is not a show place. It is a practical farm and will not be subsidized with resources from other than its own production."¹

Host to thousands of visitors each year, the program broadcasts brought in agricultural specialists from regional college agricultural programs to discuss issues important to farmers regarding crops and livestock. They would also engage in interesting conversations with visiting farmers.

For the excellence of its farm programs WLW was voted the outstanding farm radio station by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Everybody's Farm celebrated their 25th anniversary in 1966 but by early 1967 WLW had decided to phase out farm programming and Everybody's Farm was shut down.

Today Everybody's Farm has been commercially developed into retail stores, restaurants, and offices.

The Cincinnati Enquirer,
May 31, 1942

Source: Crosley Broadcasting
Corporation brochure



Everybody's Farm,
ca. 1950.

"A NOBLE-MINDED KENTUCKIAN"

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

In the pre-dawn hours of April 23, 1842, a horse-drawn wagon charged at a high rate of speed through Mason heading towards Lebanon. The man driving the wagon had started out his clandestine journey at his home in Glendale. As he made his way through Sharonville, and onto the dirt road that is today Route 42, his wagon caught the attention of two men. These men were bounty hunters and they saddled their horses and made chase as the wagon raced north through Pisgah and on into Mason. The wagon master pushed his horses to the limit to escape his pursuers as he careened along what is now Main Street in Mason, but he was soon overtaken by the two men on the outskirts north of town. When the bounty hunters pulled back the curtains on the wagon, nine frightened sets of eyes looked back at them.

Along with the escapees, the driver was also taken into custody for aiding the fugitives. The driver's name was John VanSandt, and he was a well-known abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor,

Born in 1791 in Kentucky, VanSandt had been a slave owner. Never comfortable with the institution of slavery, he moved his family and his slaves to a farm near Glendale that overlooked the Miami and Erie Canal. He gave all of his slaves their freedom and he settled into his life as a trustee for the Methodist Episcopal Church of Cincinnati and a fervent abolitionist. His home named Mount Pierpont, after a Massachusetts abolitionist, was well known to runaway slaves in search of a friend to help them along the way to Canada. One of the most active "stations" along the railroad, the escapees made their way through underground tunnels that led from the canal to John's home.

After his capture in 1842, John VanSandt was tried for violating the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. He was convicted and ordered to pay damages to the owner of the "property". He refused to compensate the slave owner and his lawyers mounted an appeal. Two of his lawyers were Salmon P. Chase and William Seward, avowed anti-slavery advocates. Salmon Chase was a powerful Cincinnati attorney who would later become Ohio's governor, U.S. senator, secretary of the treasury and finally, chief justice of the Supreme Court. William Seward would later become New York's governor, U.S. senator, and secretary of state under Abraham Lincoln. He also famously negotiated the purchase of Alaska from the Russian Empire.

VanSandt's appeal lasted five long years before ending up in the Supreme Court in 1847. In May of that year, with the trial still not concluded, John died a broken man. He had been excommunicated by his church*, and was financially ruined. Even in death, the Supreme Court ruled against him 9-0. The slaves were returned to their Kentucky master, and Mount Pierpont was sold to cover debts. With their home gone, John's widow and 11 children were soon scattered across various states.

The only known possible image of John VanSandt is a drawing of John Van Trompe from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This drawing is believed to be based on Van Zandt.



In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe was a Connecticut-born teacher and staunch abolitionist who had moved to Cincinnati at the age of 21. The book's emotional portrayal of the effects of slavery resonated and it captured the nation's attention. In part, the book told the story of a slave girl named Eliza, who escaped with her young son to the north. One of the book's characters, John Van Trompe, was an abolitionist who aided Eliza in her escape. He was based on John VanSandt, whom Harriet Beecher Stowe referred to in her notes as a "noble-minded Kentuckian."

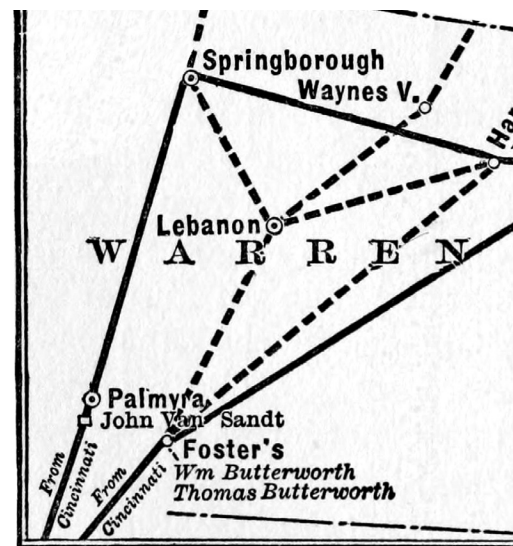
*The church reversed its decision 163 years later in 2006.

Ohio History Connection

The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe. 1853

The Underground Railroad From Slavery to Freedom, Wilbur Siebert. 1898

Wikipedia.com



This section of a late 19th-century Underground Railroad map shows some well-established routes in Warren County. Note that Mason is listed as Palmyra, its original name. (The name was changed in 1835.)

In 2005, the Ohio Historical Society erected a historical marker near the site of John VanSandt's home, known as the "Eliza House" (razed many years ago). This site is today part of the Landmark Christian Schools property on Oak Road, just north of Glendale-Milford Road and west of interstate 75.

MASON'S TECH GIANT

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

Ah, April. The season of Spring, the season of Easter, the season of ... filing your taxes. Yes, the dreaded day of April 15th will soon be upon us. (*But this year we get a one-month reprieve!*) Many people will pay a tax service to do the confusing work for them. My father was a tax professional who ran his business during the 60s, 70s and 80s out of our home on Church Street. From

February until mid-April, a steady stream of what seemed like half of Mason, would make their annual pilgrimage to see my father. His friendly, hopeful mantra of “gonna get you lots of money back this year?” to his customers still resonates in my head, and always makes me smile. With tax laws changing every year, it was difficult for the average person to keep up with it on their own, so these businesses were essential to get people all their entitled tax breaks.

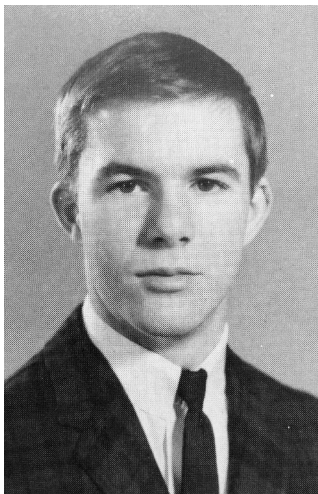


Mike Sherman hard at work on taxes, while granddaughter Katie “supervises.” April, 1984.

In 1984, that all changed with the emergence of TurboTax which was invented by Michael “Mike” Chipman. Born and raised in Mason, Mike’s the son of James and Betty Jean (nee Long) Chipman, and grew up with four siblings: John, Janet, Susie and Cindy. His aunt was Jane (Chipman) Popplewell, wife of long-time High School teacher and athletic director Dave “O.D.” Popplewell.

After graduating from Mason High School in 1965, Mike attended the Air Force Academy north of Colorado Springs, Colorado. He graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science, and then devoted five more years to the basic research arm of the Air Force. He attained the rank of Captain before resigning his commission to pursue a civilian career. The next few years were spent working as a research scientist in the area of computational physics in La Jolla, California.

In the early 1980s, Mike and his wife, Evelyn “Evy”, started a new company in a spare room of their home, calling the company ChipSoft. (This sort of brings to mind Steve Jobs’ garage.) It was here in 1984 that he



Mike Chipman’s MHS senior photo, 1965.

invented TurboTax, a tax preparation software package for consumers and small businesses that took the world by storm.

Over the next nine years, Mike grew ChipSoft into a 550-person public company. In 1993 he merged with financial software titan Intuit, in a deal valued at \$225 million. Not bad for a spare room company!

During his “retirement”, Mike invested in and developed various businesses, banks and real estate. One of those businesses was the Arizona Diamondbacks, a Major League Baseball expansion team in Phoenix. Mike is one of three general partners and has the largest financial stake in the D-backs.

Along with being a shrewd investor, he is also an avid hiker. In 2008, he undertook his long-time dream of hiking on foot the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest trail, from the Mexican border in California up into British Columbia in Canada. He completed most of it in four months that year, and finished the remainder in 2010. Since then, he’s tackled many other trails including the Grand Enchantment, Washington Coast, Tahoe Rim, Colorado and John Muir Trails.

In 2010, Mike was honored as the first “Mason High School Distinguished Alumni.” He received his award during the school’s commencement ceremony that year. During his speech, he offered advice to the graduates... “Find something you like to do, and then take the time to get good at it.” He went on to tell them “I’m very sure that, like me, you will be proud to say you’re from Mason, Ohio.”

Nowadays, Mike and Evy make their home near Lake Tahoe, Nevada, where he has a model railroad that he has built himself with over 1,700 trees. Sounds like this 74-year-old “Mason boy done good” is not about to slow down anytime soon.

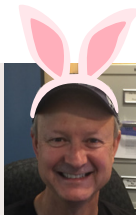
Major League Baseball / San Francisco Times / The Cincinnati Enquirer



Mike Chipman looks on as Chad Oswalt, MHS class of 2011, marvels at Mike’s 2001 World Series ring. The first MHS Distinguished Alumni ceremony honoring Mike was held on June 6, 2010.

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



An unknown author once wrote “Why are people so tired on April 1st? Because they just finished a 31-day March!” It is a long trek getting through March but look at the reward as we stroll into April. Warm sunshine, birds singing, kids playing outside and flowers pushing through the winterized soil. If there was ever a year, we have earned a wonderful Spring this is it! Hopefully by now most everyone who wants to take the Covid vaccine has done so as things slowly begin moving back to normal.

As I mentioned last month in the Newsletter, we are planning on having the Ice Cream Social this year. The date is set for Monday, June 14. Monday works well since Two Cities Pizza is closed and we can use their parking lot. Mark your calendar and hope for nice weather. Rain or shine we will have the event on June 14. Should be a lot of fun and a great chance for members to gather at the museum for the first time in over a year.

Just a reminder that the museum will be opening for the first time this year on Thursday May 6. We

are looking for members who would be interested in becoming the Curator or a docent to help support our open museum hours. Since most of our Board members still work, we are limited on the capacity to cover the scheduled Thursday & Friday open museum hours on a weekly basis. On days we do not have coverage we will not be able to open the museum. If you are interested in becoming the Curator or a docent then please call us or send us an email and we will get back with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Please keep in mind that we are always looking for articles for our Newsletters. All of you have stories you remember about Mason and we would like to share them in the Newsletter. Whether you have a 25-word memory you want to share or a 500-word story, we’d love to hear it! The biggest obstacle about writing a story is taking the first step which is to begin! Once you start your story, you will remember more and more about the history you are writing about. Old friends, crazy neighbors, poor drivers, mean pets, special events, traditions and so many other memorable items you bring back to life when you write a story. We look forward to being overloaded with articles as we move into Spring.

Stay safe, stay well & thank you for your support of MHS.

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpt from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman

1835: On April 25 the town of Palmyra in Deerfield Township, Warren County, Ohio, became the town of Mason. The federal post office system, which had listed the post office in the town on their records as Kirkwood, possibly a clerical error because the local postmaster was named William Kirkwood, had been asked to change their records and call the town Palmyra. The town fathers were notified that another town in Ohio already used the name. Consideration was given to the name Van Buren but the final choice for a new name was MASON in honor of William Mason who had originally purchased the land and platted the town.

1880: David W. VanDyke became the village mayor for the sixth time in the election of April 8th. Between 1850 to 1882 VanDyke served a total of twelve years as mayor.

1898: The Spanish American War began in earnest in April and Harry Baysore, Harry S. Chesney, Sr., and William C. Cox, among others, volunteered from Deerfield Township. They all returned home safely.

1911: The council gave building permits to the Mason Canning Co. and the Mason Lumber Company.

1912: A “Grand Masquerade Dance” was held at the Mason Opera House on April 6. Music was provided by the T. D. & P. Orchestra.

1936: Lon Maddox purchased the property on the southwest corner of Main and East Streets from H.C. Hutchins and H.B. Johnson and on April 1 he began a service station business there. It was to become his life’s work. After 27 years he sold the station to William Walker in 1963.

1972: Kings Island amusement park, owned by the Taft Broadcasting Company, opens. Fifteen-thousand people attend the opening weekend with admission costing \$6 for an individual (children under 3 free) and \$5 after 6:00pm. The park employs 1,500 college and high school students. The first fireworks were held on Labor Day and last 10 minutes.

1974: On April 3, Mason is caught in the Super Outbreak, the largest tornado outbreak on record for a single 24-hour period. The tornado comes through Mason, leveling the Thriftway Store on Reading Road and severely damaging several buildings downtown, including the fire station and the Dream Theater. There is widespread damage, but the Sherman Terrace subdivision south of the city is the hardest hit. One hundred and fifty permits are issued by the city to repair damage caused by the tornado. The Red Cross sets up a disaster center at Mason High School after the tornado. It was in place for two weeks.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story (Bicentennial Edition) is available for purchase at the Alverta Green Museum.



Carol in 1950

Our sincere condolences go out to the family and friends of Carol (nee Allee) Reed. Carol passed away on February 28, 2021 at the age of 90. She was preceded in death by her husband, Kenneth “Kenny” Reed. Carol is survived by her three children: Karen VonBargen, Sherri (Bill) Federle and Doug (Katey) Reed; four grandsons; and one great grandson. Raising her family was her pride and joy.

Carol was born in Cincinnati in 1930 and grew up in Madisonville, graduating from Withrow High School. She attended the Belz Sisters Secretarial School, and then worked as a secretary for several companies over the years. She and Kenny moved to LA soon after they were married in 1954 as Kenny was stationed there when in the Navy. They moved back to Ohio and later settled in Mason in 1959. They built a house on part of



Carol ca. 2005



The Reed Family, 1967.

the old Harter Farm land on Cox-Smith Road and resided there for many years. She volunteered as a brownie leader, room mother, and tutor at Mason Schools. Every student at St. Susanna from 1973-1995 knew Mrs. Reed, the school secretary with the kindly smile and even kinder words—which were especially appreciated after being called to the Principal’s office. It was very evident that she just loved children.

St. Susanna’s original church in the 1940s.



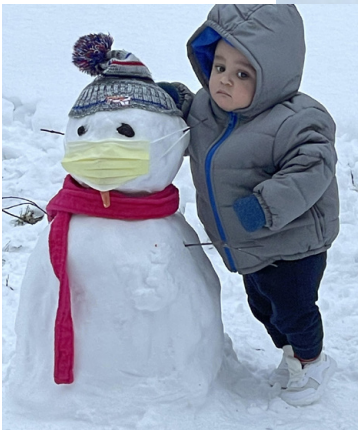
On April 6, 1938, Easter Sunday, The Reverend Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati came to Mason to celebrate the first mass to be held in the Catholic mission church built on Reading Road. Funds for the structure came from Mrs. Susanna Hinkle and other benefactors and the church was named St. Susanna Catholic Church. Fifty families from the area became the nucleus for the congregation. Monsignor Joseph Schneider was assigned to the parish. From a little white chapel to a church that seats 1500, by 2018 there were just under 4500 registered families at St. Susanna.

SNOWMAN CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to our February snowman building winners. They each received a copy of *Mason Ohio: A Photographic History* book.



above Sydney Melvin and her friend, Eden. Their snowman was built on Avalon Trail to the delight of all the neighbors.



left The adorable son of Mudassar Muhammad poses with his Covid-responsible snowman.

ORDER NOW!

Secure your place in Mason History with a memorial, commemorative or tribute brick that will be installed on the Museum’s walkway.

Brick orders are only placed a few times a year so now is the time to order! Brick purchases not only honor an individual, family or organization but help support the Mason Historical Society.

Bricks may be ordered through our website; go to “Support Us,” select “E-Commerce,” then select “Gift Shop Items.” Or call the Museum for assistance. Engraved bricks are \$50.



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CONGRATS!

To the American Legion Post 194

It was 76 years ago this month that Harley Brunk, a WWI veteran, founded the organization in 1944. He named the Legion in honor of his friend, Ralph S. Penquite, who died from battle wounds received during WWI.

The Legion is now named in honor of Joe Barr, who was Harley Brunk's son-in-law and a WWII hero.

We urge you to support our wonderful business members and partners, who have been so generous with their support of the Mason Historical Society.