

# Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

August 2021

## A REAL WIN FOR MASON BASEBALL

### 1977 Team Joe Barr Award Recipients

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Baseball has always been known as the “Nation’s Pastime.” According to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, “We play it as kids, we watch it and listen to it as adults, and we pass down our love of the Game through generations. Baseball is an American family tradition.”

Baseball was first mentioned in Mason in 1884. Apparently, the town had an adult local baseball club that played in and around Warren County. On the high school level, we see evidence of baseball teams beginning around 1920. But for younger players, baseball was a pick-up game, played in the street or a vacant lot. In fact, in 1883 John McClung and other citizens wanted council to “prohibit the throwing and catching of balls on the street of the village.” An ordinance was drawn up and a fine was set at \$2 or 24 hours of imprisonment for the playing of ball on Mason’s streets.<sup>1</sup> Things were tough for the youngsters back then!

Knothole baseball came to Mason some eighty years later. Knothole, a youth baseball organization, started around 1926, evolved from the “Knot-hole Club.” Knot-hole clubs began informally in the 1880s when kids would watch professional games through the knotholes in the fences surrounding the ball fields. In 1889 Abner Powell, known as the father of New Orleans baseball, established the Knothole Gang, letting the neighborhood kids into the ballyard free once a week if they showed good behavior. Powell had been a professional ball player and even played for the Cincinnati Redlegs in 1886. In 1917, W.E. Bilheimer, a St. Louis insurance man, introduced the idea of a ‘Knothole Gang’ club. With each fifty dollars’ worth of stock purchased [in the Cardinal franchise] went one bleacher seat that was

opened up free of charge for the city’s youth.”<sup>2</sup> By the 1920’s YMCAs began organizing ‘Knothole Gangs’ and those eventually transitioned into actual ball teams.

In 1963, Mason got its first, Class D, 8- & 9-year-old Knothole team, sponsored by Gilberts Department Store. The coaches that year were Dale Burnside, Norb Koepfle and Hiram Andrews. Dale Burnside had three daughters but no sons. Somehow, he was recruited to coach the 8- & 9-year-old Knothole team. After a couple of years Burnside wanted to turn the team over to a new coach. That coach was Floyd Richards. He told Floyd that if he would take the team the following year he would let Floyd’s son Greg, too young to play, be their bat boy and he would even try to get him in some games. Greg, 3 to 4 years younger than the boys on the team, enjoyed his bat boy job and he did get to play a bit.

The next year Richards took over the team and they continued to play in a Knothole league in Sharonville, securing Bob’s Carpet as team sponsor. Later they moved to the Warren County Knothole league but after

*story continues on next page*



Bob’s Carpet Knothole Team, ca. 1967.

*front L-R: Dave Davis, Greg Richards, Steve Kline, John Gregg, John Sowders, Jay Jones, Jay Meibers.*

*2nd row: Jimmy Rager, Dave Smith, Steve Burton, Dave Pugh, Mike Easterling, Blaine Adams, Jeff Cash, Jimmy Bradley.*

*Coaches: Floyd Richards, Roy Gregg, Jim Bradley and Ron Kline.*

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](http://Masonhistoricalsociety.org)  
or Call 513-398-6750

### New Museum Hours

The Museum is now open Thursdays only from 2-8 pm. We hope the addition of evening hours will allow more opportunities for visits. Museum tours outside these hours will still be available by appointment.

## Mason Baseball, cont.

just two years, Richards said they were kicked out because they won too much!

For the next couple of years, the team stayed together under Richards leadership, organizing an independent team one year and then securing sponsors afterwards. Richard's independent team was called "M.A.A.A." which stood for Mason Amateur Athletic Association. That season he arranged games independent of any league with a variety of other competitive teams. For the next two years Don Sowder's Lockland Motors became team sponsor, competing in the Babe Ruth league while the boys were 11 and 12. Don helped coach and his son, John, played on the team.

All the while the kids played together off the field. They were friends who spent their summer days playing wiffle ball in the Richards backyard or a pick-up baseball game in the Meadows Park. As Richards would later say, it was a good time to be a kid in Mason.

Coach Richards admitted he was always strict about appearances. He required them to wear their socks a certain way and made them tuck their hair under their ball caps. He insisted a team must look sharp. His son Greg recalls he would often say, "Look sharp, feel sharp, play sharp!" He and dedicated assistant coaches taught discipline and the fundamentals of baseball and when these kids reached high school this preparation showed up in spades.

From the ages of 13 to 15 the boys continued to play for Richards, maintaining their team winning streak through their teenage years. When they reached the age of 16 summer ball saw them split into several select teams. Jim Bradley and Steve Burton played for Midland Guardian in the Babe Ruth league. Their team won the National Championship in 1976 and 1977. Jim Bradley went on to play ball for Indiana University. Greg Richards, a year younger than Bradley and Burton (by league standards), also played for Midland Guardian and Storm Club, winning the World Series tournament his final year.

In High School Coach Ken Gray admitted they were an easy team to coach. Having



played together so many years with such solid coaching, the boys, becoming young men, were well trained on the field. Coach Gray said they all got along well, were all "hitters" and "were an excellent defensive team."

In fact, it was Gray who in 2014, nominated the 1977 Varsity Baseball Team to receive Mason High School Hall of Fame's esteemed "Joe Barr Award." Established in 2004, the Joe Barr Award recognizes Mason High School graduates who distinguished themselves through their efforts or achievements. Whether occurring during their years of interscholastic participation or after graduation, the Joe Barr Award acknowledges individuals, or groups of individuals, for their contributions to the Mason High School athletic programs.

Eight of the fourteen players on the 1977 Varsity



1977 Mason Varsity Baseball Team. *first row: **John Sowders**, Jeff Hill, **Dave Davis**, **Todd Carter**, **Jim Bradley**-Captain, Greg Muennich, **Jay Jones**, **Greg Richards**-Captain, Ken Gray-Coach.*

*2nd row: Jeff Elder-Mgr., Bart Dunavent, Gary Kirby, Ken Criss, Jon Reinhard, **Dave Smith**, **Steve Burton**, Mark Holland-Mgr.*

*Names in **bold** are the players who were coached by Floyd Richards.*

Baseball Team had played for Floyd Richards. Six of them had already been inducted into the Hall of Fame: Jim Bradley, Steve Burton, Dave Smith, Greg Richards, Todd Carter (Mason's current police chief) and John Sowders. The first four along with Jay Jones had

Floyd Richards (*far left*) and his 15-year-old players in 1974 who were 1977 First Team All-League – *L-R: Greg Richards, Steve Burton, Jim Bradley, Dave Smith, Jay Jones.*

## Mason Baseball, cont.

made First Team All-League in '77. First-time District Champions that year, the 1977 team still holds the best record of any team to date with a 30-3 record. Coach Gray asserted, "The 1977 Varsity Baseball Team was the first team that put Mason on the map with baseball and Mason athletics. They had a powerful impact on the way teams in Cincinnati and surrounding areas viewed Mason as a competitor."

But just as important as the 1977 Team's winning record were the coaches who taught them the discipline and fundamentals they needed to be successful. Men like Floyd Richards who devoted time, effort, and energy into what would become a championship team. Perhaps more important to Richards, was the development of boys into good, respectable, and productive men. It is well known that team sports have many benefits that result in success as an adult. Teamwork, problem-solving and self-confidence to name a few.

Floyd's son Greg played college baseball for Austin Peay University and went on to play minor league ball for the Montreal Expos for three years. Afterwards Greg became a successful basketball coach at Mason High School. Greg believes, "What he learned in the years he played on his Dad's team definitely had an impact on him and he has carried these lessons with him

throughout his life."

Floyd Richards is proud that none of his "boys" have ever been in trouble and have all done well in life. Many have come back as adults to thank him for the experience. Ultimately this seems to me to be the greatest "win" here, but what do I know about baseball?



1977 District Champions Trophy – Class AA; This was a first for Mason baseball, the prior year they came in second, also a first. The team was ranked #2 in the City of Cincinnati. Richards and Smith were named first team selection All City Team, *The Cincinnati Post*.

A huge thank you to Floyd Richards, 87 years young, for his help in providing information for this story. Also thanks to Ken Gray and Greg Richards for their help with team memories, and finally to Mark Sowders for the team photos that no one else could find!

<sup>1</sup>Around Mason: A Story, Rose Marie Springman, p.85.  
<sup>2</sup>www.wikipedia.org

## MHS 2021 PROGRAMS

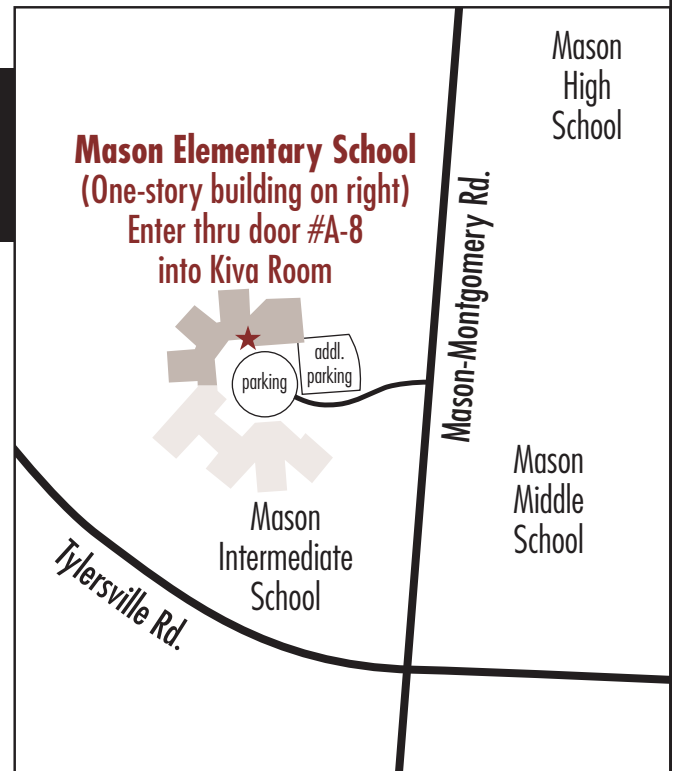
# FATAL FLIGHT & THE NUCLEAR SCARE IN MASON

**WED. SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2021 @ 7 PM**  
**MASON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
**KIVA ROOM – ENTER AT DOOR #A-8**

Sally Sherman Caudill, author, designer, researcher and newsletter editor, will be giving an in-depth look at the crash.

### Program highlights:

- Uncensored Crash Report
- 8mm Crash Site Video
- Photos and previously unpublished details
- Special guest speaker, Ron Hoffmann from Wright-Patt – Ballistic Missile Division will discuss area military plane crashes over the years.
- Display of Crash Artifacts



**SEATING IS LIMITED –**  
**RSVP at 513-398-6750,**  
**or email [Masonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:Masonhistoricalsociety.org)**

# MUSIC IN MASON

## And the Band Plays On

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

This summer we had music in Mason's downtown plaza every Friday (weather permitting) from June through July. The Courseview Restaurant at Mason's Golf Center has hosted a steady stream of musicians all summer. It is obvious, music in Mason is an important entertainment element in the community. Of course, it has always been so.

In 1890 we see reference to a "bandstand" located on the town lot on Main Street, currently the parking lot of Two Cities Pizza. It had been constructed by Gibson Lowe who was a councilman and happened to own the Mason Lumber Company. Gazebo bandstands appeared in the United States after the Civil War to accommodate the brass and percussion "cornet" bands found in towns of every size. Mason was no different. Sadly, in 1907, the bandstand fell into disrepair and the city council ordered the man who originally built it to tear it down. In the late 1920s another bandstand was built where Barnes Service Station sits today. It is unknown when it met its demise.

Even without a bandstand, there was never a shortage of music in Mason. Orchestras and bands were abundant and played frequently at dances at Rebolds Hall and events of every kind at Mason's Opera House. The Opera House frequently hosted dances, parties, graduations, alumni gatherings, and family socials, all demanding music.

A favorite band for dancing was The Harry McVay Orchestra. People from other areas who lived along the interurban train line would often come in big crowds to the popular Mason dances. Harry McVay, a skillful clarinet player, was a constant in the Mason music scene for many years. Harry organized his own orchestra with local talent, playing at events throughout the tri-state area. The McVay family were well known in the community for their musical talents. His wife played the piano, and his daughters played the clarinet, violin and bass violin.

By 1911 two music groups were active in the village. The Mason Orchestra, consisted of Ramona Conover, who was the director, Jean VanDyke, Hester Moody, C. P. Sweny, Percy Spurrier, Robert Bennett, J. R. VanDyke and Goodsell Spurrier. By 1929 there was a 24 member Mason Community Band



The Mason Cornet Band on stage in Sprinkle's Opera House in 1907. The group founded in 1887, held concerts for decades that were popular cultural events in the village.

performing around town which may have evolved from this small group. The second group was The McDowell Club, a national association for the furtherance of music appreciation. They had six members: Florence and Jean VanDyke, Hester and Irene Moody, Ramona Conover, and Leota Bruner.

During the summer of 1914, the first outdoor platform dances were sponsored by the Knights of Pythias in the yard outside their building on Main Street. The Knights of Pythias are a fraternal organization who

*story continues on next page*



The 1929 Mason Community Band was true to their name, as its members were both male and female, young and old. This group photo was taken at 108 North East Street.

**1st row seated:** Harold Bennett, Howard Bennett, Paul Conover, Alta May Compton, Harold Roush, Sid Markwell, Everett Aylstock, Joe Muennich\*, Leonard Palmer, Harry Sexton, Luther Case, Charlie McNeely. **2nd row standing:** Eugene Gutermuth, Walter Compton, Clara Lueken, Ida Mae Rhodes, Willis Loth, Julia McNeely, Alma Koch. **3rd row:** Dave Devere, Clarence McNeely, Halleck Bowyer, Clem Muennich, Carl Stouder.

*\*hat on display, see page 5.*

## Music in Mason, cont.

promote cooperation and friendship between people of good will and believe that friendship is an essential ingredient of life. Their dances, waltzes, foxtrots and the two- step, were done on a large sectioned wooden floor and proved to be a popular activity. Later the wooden platform was moved to a vacant lot on the southeast corner of Church and West Streets. Music accompanied the move.

Music continued to bloom in Mason. In 1921 efforts were underway to form a brass band and women were urged to join. Organizers assured parents that “the strictest rules of morals and decency would be enforced”. Another local source of musical talent emerged from the Mason Grange. Music was an important part of their entertainment, and they had often hired The McVay and The Green Orchestras to perform at their meetings. Finally, the idea of a Grange Orchestra emerged and soon they had their own group who would play at membership meetings, lawn fetes and dances.

Throughout the decades of Mason history, the band plays on. The music has changed, and genres have multiplied over the years, but clearly music remains a constant of the rhythm of life in Mason that will never change.

*Around Mason, A Story, Rose Marie Springman / pythias.org*

## Your Historical Museum Collection

### Featured item of the month



The Alverta Green Museum has several artifacts that fit in with the “Music in Mason” theme. One of them is this wool Mason Community Band hat, with beautiful embroidery. Worn by Joseph Muennich who was the band’s snare drummer in the 1920s.

# HISTORY AWARENESS MONTH

## City Council to Issue Resolution in September

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

In conjunction with the Mason Heritage Festival, scheduled for Saturday, September 18th, Mason City Council will issue a Resolution that will proclaim September as “History Awareness Month” in Mason. The Resolution will be made in Council Chambers on Monday, September 13th at 7 pm. Council meetings are open to the public so anyone can attend to witness the Resolution.

This is the fourth time the city has declared a “History Awareness Month” in Mason. Our first was back in

April 1979 when the Mason Historical Society was first formed and requested the Proclamation. At that time, Mayor Rea Boone was quoted as saying, “I believe in our heritage. It’s important that we know and recognize our historical landmarks...” To celebrate the month, historical society



Rea Boone, Mason’s mayor from 1978-1980

members worked with local merchants along Main Street to create window displays that would showcase artifacts from Mason’s past. Proclamations were also made by Lou Eves in 1980 and 1983.

This year the historical society will honor the Resolution\* by having a special program on the Wednesday before the Heritage Festival called “Fatal Flight & the Nuclear Scare in Mason” and will host a Member Open House on the Friday before the festival for the unveiling of our new wall mural at the Museum that depicts the 200+ year history of Mason. We also plan to have a booth at the Heritage Festival the following day highlighting significant events in Mason history.

This year the Heritage Festival is being combined with the postponed Red Rhythm and Boom Fourth of July event. A parade will kick-off the day at 10 am, starting near the downtown plaza and ending at the Mason Municipal Campus where the festival will be held. The event runs from 4 pm to 10 pm, ending with a Rozzi fireworks display. Kid-zone activities and carnival games begin at 4 pm and stage entertainment begins at 6 pm. Grammy award winner Clint Black is scheduled to take the stage at 8:30 pm.

Mason’s event website says that “*Mason City Council hopes you enjoy this FREE regional event intended to showcase the quality of life that Mason has to offer!*” It will be our intent to show what a rich and fascinating history Mason has accumulated over the past two centuries!

\*In 1979 a “Proclamation” was issued. Council has since changed the wording of this action to a “Resolution.”

# The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



Did you know that in a standard year there is no other month that begins on the same day of the week as August? However, in a leap year August begins on the same day of the week as February. With this amazing knowledge you can now look at August as much more than hot & humid and a great month for those who own a pool!

Things are also heating up at the museum. The mural has started and will hopefully be close to completion by the time you receive this newsletter. The mural work area in the addition has numerous scaffoldings in place

so please enter with caution if you visit the museum prior to completion of the mural. We will also be rolling out the 2021 raffle in August. The raffle is one of our biggest fundraisers each year and we hope that we can meet or exceed the stellar results from last year. We will be mailing tickets out to our members sometime in August. By purchasing or selling raffle tickets, you not only support MHS but you may also end up being one of our lucky winners!

Thank you to all the members who have renewed their 2021 memberships. In December we will begin the process of gathering 2022 membership dues with the goal of having the dues paid by the end of January 2022. This timing helps us bring in some revenue in the winter months before we begin programs and fundraisers starting in the Spring.

Enjoy the summer & stay cool!

## THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpt from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman except where noted.

**1788:** John Cleves Symmes, a congressman and judge, came from New Jersey down the Ohio River to the area between the two Miami Rivers to oversee the surveying and selling of 311,682 acres he hoped to own there. This tract of land came to be known as the Symmes Purchase and Mason was part of the acreage sold.

**1835:** A group of men, David Hoffman, George Murphy, Peter Wikoff, James Fugate and John McKinney, trustees of a congregation of the Universalist Church, passed a resolution to build a 30 x 40-foot frame house of worship on the street just north of Main Street (*at 300 W Church St*). This structure was to remain a church for over 180 years. Today it is Elemental Om Yoga studio.

**1894:** In August Dr. VanDyke asked for and was granted the right to have telephone poles put on the streets and alleys of Mason so that local service could be augmented.

**1913:** The last Mason Fair was held in August at the local fairgrounds also known as Wikoff Woods.

**1939:** The new town hall was to be completed by early August, but the date was not met until the end of the month. On August 10, the ceremony for the laying of the corner stone drew an audience of 500 people. The building currently is home to Two Cities Pizza.

**1947:** On August 16, the local fire company along with the aid of the American Legion Auxiliary and the fireman's wives held its first "Mason's Firemen Annual Street Fete." East Street beside the municipal building was blocked for booths and entertainment with the women supplying the food. The event was held to help raise funds to purchase a new fire truck but became a much-anticipated event in the Village for many years.

**1972:** The Partridge Family cast arrived at Kings Island to begin filming episode No. 66 in Season 3 of the popular prime-time ABC sitcom. Filming lasted a total of five days, from August 7-11. During the episode titled "I Left My Heart in Cincinnati", The Partridge Family actors were shown enjoying attractions that are still in operation today, like the Racer, Grand Carousel, Monster and Race for Your Life Charlie Brown, then known as the Kings Mills Log Flume.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[visitingisland.com/2021/january/10-notable-events-in-kings-island-history](https://visitingisland.com/2021/january/10-notable-events-in-kings-island-history)



Siblings Keith and Laurie Partridge (played by David Cassidy and Susan Dey) putter along in one of the antique cars.



Shirley Partridge (played by Shirley Jones), the matriarch of the family, on the Kings Mills Log Flume with kids "Tracy" and "Chris."

# "CONCRETE HIGHWAY" CELEBRATION

## Mason Finally Gets Its Paved Road

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

In today's society, if there was a citywide celebration over the paving of a road, you would think that was ludicrous. But that's precisely what happened in Mason in 1933.

In the early part of the 20th century, Mason's streets were humorously named the "Mason Jars." In a 1973 *Pulse* interview, L. Earl Thompson recalled the "exceedingly slow and wearisome, if not impossible trip" for a car to travel on the roads.<sup>1</sup> Between the deep ruts, rocks and no shock absorbers, well, you get the picture (and feel their pain).

That all changed in August of 1933, when the Lebanon Pike/Rte. 42 was paved. This new "concrete highway" as it was called, was cause for great celebration. The day started with a parade that featured 66 "gaily-decorated automobiles."<sup>2</sup>

The keynote speaker was Clarence J. Brown, Ohio's former Lt. governor and secretary of state. He hailed from Blanchester and was a powerful civil-rights advocate. He would go on to serve Ohio in Congress from 1939-1960. Brown stressed the importance of this event, since "this part of the state has been handicapped because of the condition of this road in the past."<sup>2</sup> The state highway's traffic engineer noted that "2400 vehicles pass over this road every 24 hours."<sup>2</sup>

In a more lighthearted speech, the mayor of Lebanon jokingly remarked that "the one good thing about the new road is that it will enable the fire departments to get back and forth quicker than before."<sup>2</sup> Just a few months before this celebration, Mason had assisted Lebanon when fire demolished the Lebanon opera house, and threatened the entire downtown. Three years before, Lebanon's fire dept. had come to the aid of Mason during the Great Fire in the east end.<sup>2</sup> (Featured in the July 2020 newsletter).

In addition to the parade, the festivities included games, prizes, picnics and dances. Just a few of the many games included: a ladies' milk drinking contest;



The crowds turned out in force for the joyous event.



K. Paul Johnson



left "Spark Plug" parades along. right Dick Herzer and Clyde Baysore won the "special stunt" prize. "Momma" pushed "baby" down the street as baby enjoyed an oversized bottle of milk.



The town's new fire truck sported signs that read: "Yes-We Have No Mason "Jars" To-day" "Mason Has Stepped On The Gas" "New Fire Truck" "No-It Can't Be Did" "New Electric Lights"

sack races, cigarette races, barrel races and a married ladies' foot race.

In the evening, a dance for the younger crowd was held at Rebold's Hall (upstairs at 108 W. Main St.). The older folks danced the night away at the Knights of Pythias Hall (the former W. Main St. school, which was located in the parking lot of Muennich Motors and was razed in 1963).



K. Paul Johnson

Colorful costumes were the order of the day.

This "great and colorful celebration"<sup>2</sup> surely put smiles on the faces of all the town's residents. And after the gala ended, the smiles continued for years as residents drove down their newly-smooooth concrete highway. Ah, the simple joys (and necessities) we so often take for granted...

<sup>1</sup>The Mason-Westchester Pulse, July 25, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>Dayton Daily Herald, August 27, 1933.

Note: This author stated in *Mason, Ohio, A Photographic History* that this event took place in 1923. However, I've discovered new information which conclusively proves it took place in 1933, 10 years later than previously thought.

# BUSINESS MEMBERS *and* PARTNERS

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Air Authority Heating and Air Conditioning  
Al's Heating and Cooling  
American Legion, Post 194  
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 194  
Brunk Excavating, Inc.  
Chris Champ – State Farm agent  
Jeff Hill Video  
Mitsubishi Electric Automotive  
People's First Savings Bank  
R.E. Middleton Construction LLC  
Senour-Flaherty Insurance  
Shorten and Ryan Funeral Home  
Voorhis, Slone, Welsh and Crossland, Architects  
Walldogs – Mason Sign Company  
Yost Pharmacy, Inc.

## BUSINESS MEMBERS

Artis Senior Living of Mason  
Lt. Robt. N. Mount V.F.W.  
9622 Aux.  
Mason Bowl, Inc.  
Mason Health Care Center  
Minuteman Press of Lebanon  
Mueller Funeral Home  
Terry's Lawn Care, Inc.  
Warren County Historical Society  
16 Lots Brewing Co.

## PARTNERS

City of Mason  
Culver's – Mason  
LaRosa's – Mason  
Mason City Schools  
Mason Community Grange  
No.1680  
Mason-Deerfield Chamber  
Mason Public Library

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**Please join us in welcoming  
the following new members to  
the Mason Historical Society.**

Maureen Campbell  
Barbara Cole  
Don Eberhard  
Linda Edwards  
Dori Eliot  
Marlene Flannery  
Randy Grambsch  
Jason Kaufman  
Gloria Smith Migal

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