

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

July 2020

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.

For more information, call 513.398.6750, visit our website at masonhistoricalsociety.org or friend us on Facebook.

Visit us at:
207 W. Church St.
Mason, Ohio

REGULAR HOURS
1 pm - 4 pm
Thursday and Friday
First Saturday of the Month
10 am - 1 pm
and by appointment

NOTE: Beginning July 9th, we will resume our regular hours at the Museum.

4TH OF JULY IN THE VILLAGE

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

As early as 1884, there was mention of a picnic and a "moonlight hop" organized by the local baseball club in Wykoff's woods to celebrate the fourth of July. In Mason's early days celebrations were much like they are today. They included picnics, family gatherings and fireworks.

While townspeople celebrated, the issue of fireworks became a concern within the Village. So much so that in 1913 town council passed an ordinance that prohibited the use and sale of certain explosives.

Mason's ordinance was supported by the state Fire Marshall who banned all fireworks in Ohio in 1918. When you consider the minimal ability most towns had in fighting fires, it was a wise move.

Interestingly, in 1930 city officials decided that "fireworks could be sold by local merchants, but children should wait until the fourth to use them". Apparently, it was okay for children to possess and discharge fireworks as long as they waited until the holiday to do so.

That year, the Civic Club and the Fire Company teamed up to conduct the annual fourth of July celebration that included refreshments, the corn popper, a cane rack, a baby rack, a wheel of fortune, a pop gun rack and the fireworks.

For many years, we saw no discussion of fireworks in Mason, although in 1938 a mention of enforcing the fireworks ordinance was repeated in council notes. Fireworks displays were common in nearby communities like Lebanon and Hamilton and Mason residents likely traveled to enjoy these displays.

In 1999 Mason's fourth of July celebration was at Pine Hill Lakes Park Amphitheater and featured a popular local band, Robin Lacy and DeZydeco with Rozzi's fireworks at 10 pm.

By 2003 the city dramatically stepped up the fireworks celebrations by combining the event with the city's annual concert series, including some nationally recognized entertainment. The event began to grow into one of the largest Independence Day events in the tri-state area.

In the fall of 2007, Mason's City Council approved a contract with Spectra Entertainment for \$84,500 to bring Kenny Loggins to their 2008 Fireworks display. Somehow Kenny Loggins did not materialize but Grand Funk Railroad and Creedence Clearwater Revisited did.

By 2008 Mason's free Fourth of July celebration, now known as Red, Rhythm and Boom, hosted a crowd estimated to exceed the 32,000 who attended the event in 2007 at Corwin Nixon Park." (As a point of reference, Mason's population in 2010 was 30,712).

After nearly a decade of drawing huge crowds from around the area, the 2010 event was scaled back due to cost. Mason continues to celebrate the tradition of fourth of July but sadly 2020 will most likely see that celebration cancelled.

PRESERVE OUR PAST

Know someone who would enjoy our newsletter?

Enroll them for membership on our website!

It's a great gift and you'll be helping preserve Mason's past!

You may also call the Museum for assistance.

QUITE NAMELY, A PATRIOTIC MAN

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

On July 4, 1875, exactly 99 years after the signing of the Declaration, Elbert Independence Scofield was born in Deerfield Township. Red-headed “Bert” was the third of six children born to Alva and Mattie (Charlton) Scofield. In 1899, at the age of 24, he married Blanche Wilson and had four children: Lloyd, Lyle, Miles and Edna. For the first two decades of their marriage, Bert and Blanche mostly lived locally in Union and Liberty Townships (both areas befitting of Bert’s middle name).



Bert Scofield, c. 1910

Bert was a hard-working, jack-of-all-trades as he started out his professional life as a day laborer and then a farmer. He also dabbled in the logging business, working for John LaMar, who owned a sawmill north of Church St. in downtown Mason. In 1920, Bert and Blanche decided to move to downtown Mason where they purchased “The Modern” boarding house and residence on the corner of Main St. and Section Rd. (now Mason-Montgomery).

The large, brick building at 101 E. Main St. is arguably the most well-known and recognizable building in Mason. Wealthy, retired farmer John McClung built it in 1880 as a private residence for himself and his lovely wife, Rebecca. The home would enter the annals of infamy 21 years later, when Rebecca would be found brutally murdered in her upstairs bedroom on April 12, 1901. To the disbelief of all (then and now), John was acquitted of the murder, but soon received his due when he died 3 years later after spending time in a mental hospital.

(Odd-Job) Labor of Love

In the 1930 census, odd-job laborer Orville Parkhill is listed as a boarder at the Modern. If you’ve ever been inside the Mason Library, you may recognize his name. In 1977 he donated \$100,000 for the establishment of the Library. To honor his generosity to the city, a large meeting room at the front of the building is named “The Parkhill Room.” Orville’s donation is equivalent to almost \$450,000 in today’s money, which certainly must’ve added up to a lot of odd jobs over the course of his life!



Blanche Scofield at The Modern, c. 1920, with its instantly recognizable sign that read “The Modern, Boarding by the Week, Day or Meal.”

The house became a duplex until 1911, when it (and reportedly Rebecca’s ghost) was purchased by Mary Malloy and turned into a boarding house. In 1920, Bert and Blanche Scofield were the new owners and kept The Modern in business until 1956, when Blanche passed away. Bert, still the “firecracker” that his friends and family knew, continued to live in this home and tended his garden until nearly the end of his life. The man with the patriotic name lived to a ripe old age, passing away on July 10, 1970, a week after his 95th birthday. Most *old* Masonites refer to the Modern lovingly as the “old hotel.” Ironically though, it always served as a boarding house, never a hotel. A host of businesses have since made their home in the building over the years, but none found the success that current resident Banana Leaf Modern Thai enjoys.



Blanche and Bert Scofield in their living room at The Modern, December, 1951.

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



Interesting times indeed! Between the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic and the BLM protest in Mason on Sat. June 13, this year seems surreal. I had a chance to take some pictures of the peaceful BLM protest and was amazed at how many people showed up to execute their first amendment rights ending at the Mason Municipal building. Agree or disagree, it is

historic and I took many pictures and videos to ensure we captured the moment.

Good news on the museum. We are scheduled to re-open starting July 9. Please plan on wearing a mask and keep social distancing as required. With the great support of Perry Denehy, numerous display changes have occurred or are in the process of being completed. Exciting stuff!

The board is still considering the feasibility of events and programs at MHS under the current COVID 19 guidelines. We will keep you updated.

Take care and stay well!

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpt from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman, ©1986.

1829: William N. Kirkwood officially became the first Postmaster in Palmira on July 27.

1875: An ordinance was passed to prohibit keeping saloons and confectionary shops open on Sundays. This was to be enforced beginning July 1. If the men were going to do without their liquor, the women and children could forego their candy purchases on the Sabbath.

1890: Nine people were killed and many injured by an explosion of powder on a train at Kings Mills on July 15. Many buildings, including the Peter's Cartridge factory and the railroad station, were destroyed.

1901: John McClung's trial for second degree murder began in Lebanon. It was said the people of Mason flocked there to witness the affair. By July 11 the verdict was given: "Not guilty in the manner and form as he stands charged in the indictment."

1930: The great Mason fire destroys part of the east end of town. See story on pages 4-5.

1935: The school board members passed a resolution in July to comply with the new state law to have school for 180 days a year.

1969: Mason High School graduate, Corporal Teddy Eugene Middleton, son of Theodore "Bud" Middleton and Eleanora Boland, brother of 12 siblings, is killed in Vietnam on July 15.

1975: After serving the city for 28 years, Fire Chief James Knott retires.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story (Bicentennial Edition) is available for purchase at the Alverta Green Museum. This book is an invaluable reference for anyone interested in the history of Mason.

FOURTH OF JULY HISTORY

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Also known as Independence Day, the Fourth of July has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870, and a paid federal holiday since 1938, but the tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution.

On July 2nd, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence.

From 1776 to present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence, with festivities ranging from fireworks, parades, and concerts to more casual family gatherings and barbecues.

That first summer in 1776, colonists celebrated the Declaration of Independence by holding mock funerals

for King George III, symbolizing the country's new-found freedom from the monarchy's rule over America.

In Philadelphia, on July 8, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was publicly read for the first time. Philadelphia also held the first annual commemoration of independence on July 4, 1777 in which they initiated the tradition of setting off fireworks.

Interestingly, John Adams refused to recognize the fourth as the holiday. He believed July 2nd was the correct date to celebrate the birth of American independence and was said to turn down invitations to appear at July 4th events in protest.

Stranger still, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in a bizarre twist of fate, both died on July 4, 1826—the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Some say, while both were ill, Adams 90 and Jefferson 83, intentionally "held on" until they reached the historic July 4th date.

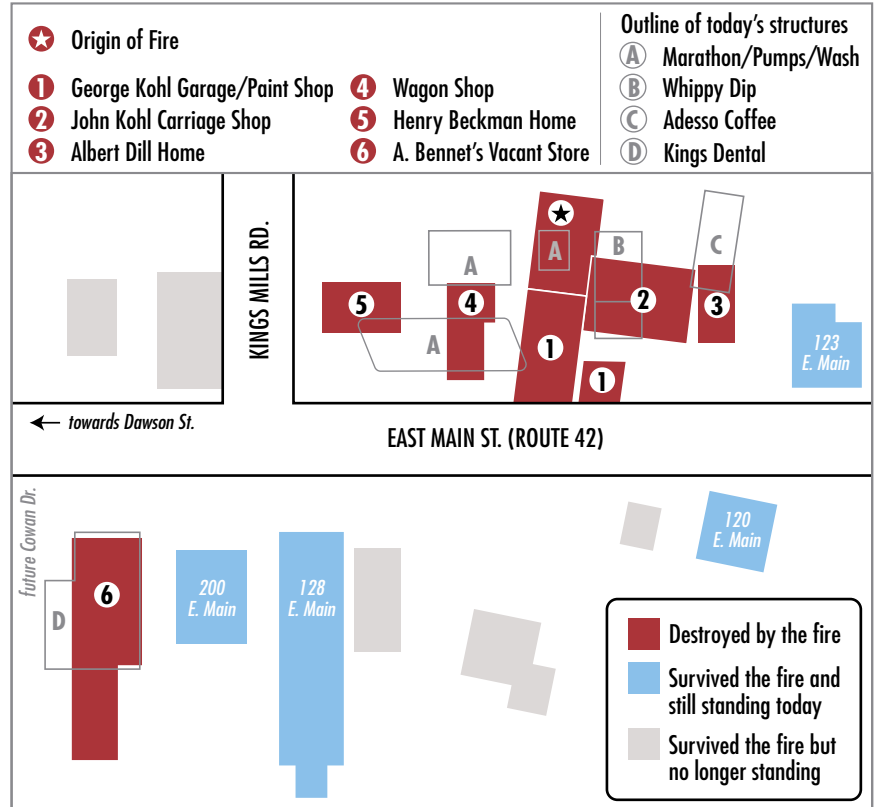
THE GREAT MASON FIRE OF 1930

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

The next time you're enjoying ice cream at the Whippy Dip or pumping gas at Marathon on the corner of E. Main and Kings Mills, take a look around. The view you see today is drastically altered from what this corner looked like 90 years ago. For that was when a catastrophic fire tore through this section of town and capped off a town drama that had been building for many years.

Mason had been trying to install a waterworks since 1908 to no avail. However, the real turmoil started the year before the fire. Water mains had been laid in the town in early 1929, but infighting among the council stalled the acquisition of pumping units and a waterworks plant, so the mains were useless. In early 1930, the town was sued for lack of payment by the bank which held the municipal bonds for the waterworks. Debates were getting heated and the town was truly split down the middle into pro and con factions.

In the early afternoon of July 19, 1930, a fire accidentally started in the back of George Kohl's garage, possibly caused by a backfiring car igniting oil-soaked floor boards. Ironically, Kohl was one of the council members who repeatedly voted down the waterworks. The fire spread rapidly and an adjoining blacksmith shop and garage were soon ablaze. It then swept to several homes and businesses. Fanned by high winds, the flames spread rapidly. Sparks from the fire badly damaged several homes farther east on Main and ignited the roofs of wood-shingled homes on Dawson. Residents and neighbors were on their roofs pulling off shingles as they burned to try to save the homes. Even a field a half-mile away caught fire but was quickly extinguished.



The Mason volunteer firemen who battled this blaze for over 3 hours, quite possibly saved the entire town from going up in flames. They were ably assisted by their counterparts from Lebanon and Morrow, as well as many local residents. It was reported that 26 buildings were ablaze at once. Over half a dozen wells and cisterns, and even Muddy Creek, were pumped dry. With the wind and lack of water, these brave men were fighting an uphill battle all the way.



Marilyn Baysore Johnston

The fire rages through the east end after igniting at the Kohl garage and paint shop.



Mason Volunteer Fire Department, 1930.
Front (L-R) Vernon "Red" Emley, Gene Kaucher, Tom Baysore, Wymer Drake, Bill Pickering, Vernie "Pete" Spaeth, Howard "Suse" Snell, Bill Mosher; *Back* Fire Chief Jim Dumford, Bud Middleton, Herb Richards, Les Franz, Richie Cox, Charlie Fuhr, Harry Snell, Les Spaeth, Charles "Slim" Laymon.

THE GREAT MASON FIRE OF 1930, cont.



“Old” Betsy (just a young “probie” at the time) fills up at the cistern in front of the old hotel to aid in the rescue.

In the following days, sightseers by the thousands poured into town to witness the destruction, as well as the spectacle of fistfights breaking out in the streets. Tensions between the factions had naturally incensed the already heated debate. This was certainly not helped by Mayor Joseph Davis who was quoted as saying a town waterworks would've prevented the fire from spreading beyond the garage and paint shop. One townsman erected a sign stating, “I'm for a waterworks, and a new council!”

Evelyn Landen, who will celebrate her 98th birthday August 21st, moved to Mason in 1951 because of her husband's job at GE Evendale. She raised five children here, moved away three times but always came back. Her love for Mason is powerfully expressed in her letter below.

Mason like Mayberry

Mason, sort of Mayberry, USA, is a city of “Dear Hearts and Gentle People!” That is always what it has been to me. Why else would I have moved away and returned three times – and just thrilled to be back! Like coming home and welcomed each time.*

Having moved in 1951 to Mason, from a busy, big city in Massachusetts, I found a quaint little village of say 1,000 residents. Well never quaint and never sleeping, it sure has grown to a town and then a city of 33,000 plus.

What is that saying, “Bloom where you are planted?” Mason has since bloomed into a thriving city, well developed, planned, lots of high-tech industry, and great schools. Why else does real estate boom and move so quickly? This is and will continue to be a desirable location with much to offer and a great place to raise a family.

Why did or how did Mason grow and become so desirable? People who really cared and would see



The 3-story John Kohl carriage shop was destroyed by the fire.

The damage was estimated to be between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Amazingly, there were no serious injuries, but the fire ultimately claimed three homes and four businesses, and damaged many more. Despite this

devastation, council continued to vote down the waterworks in the days following the fire. However, a referendum on the ballot in November of that year to continue to halt the waterworks got voted down, so the town was finally able to move forward.



Spectators came from all over to view the ruins. From the *Dayton Journal*, July 20, 1930.

all this, served as leaders in the community and on council. No big pay or rewards; this was their village, their home and they wanted to make it better, see it grow and flourish like it is today. Every day can be and should be “Rally Day” for Mason.

*Yours truly,
Evelyn Landen
Mason, OH*

*Lyrics to this song on youtube.com, says volumes about how Evelyn feels about Mason! Published and recorded in 1949 by Dinah Shore and other famous singers of the time (Como, Crosby), the song refers to singer's hometown in warm and wistful ways.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you have any thoughts you would like to share regarding Mason history, please submit them to “Letters to the Editor”. You can mail these to the museum or email them to mason.oh.historical@gmail.com.



BEATING THE HEAT

Mason Swimming Pools

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

At one point in Mason's history there were three choices for summertime swimming. Four if you counted the Muddy Creek. Whether you were a Pine Hill, Al-Char or Mason Bowl swimmer, there were multiple options for heat relief!

Summer in Mason is typically hot and humid. In July of 1952 G.K. Howard introduced **Pine Hill Swimming Pool** as a way to escape the oppressive weather. The pool was built on the Howard farm on Kings Mills Road.

G.K. and Majel Howard and her parents T.C. and Marie LaMar, built a swimming pool to the north of their fishing lake in a natural depression in the ground. Complete with changing areas, lockers and snack bar, admission to the pool was 25¢ to 50¢ to swim all day.



Pine Hill swimming pool, c. 1950s

There were no pool chairs. Swimmers could spread their towels wherever they could find a space. Baby oil was the unfortunate tanning "lotion" preference of the day. Blocking the sun's rays? No one would ever hear of it!

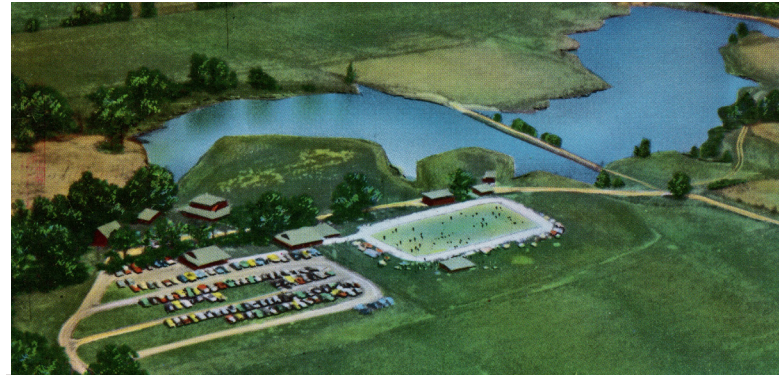
Among the numerous employees were Esther Davis, who worked there the entire 20 years they were open; her daughter, Esther Grisham, employed 18 years and the four Howard children who grew up helping to run the business as well.

In 1972 the Howards sold the recreation area and it was closed by the new owners.

In the 1980s, assisted by state rep. Corwin Nixon, a grant was secured by the City of Mason that allowed them to purchase the 120-acre site developing it into a park for Mason residents.

The site today has hosted summer concerts for the city in the natural amphitheater that was once Pine Hill pool.

Al-Char Farm, owned by Albert and Charlotte Schuholz, was the home of a large public swimming pool known as **AL-CHAR** during the fifties through the seventies.



Al-Char swimming pool and fishing lakes, c. 1950s

Located on Socialville-Foster Road, just a short distance east of Mason-Montgomery Road, AL-CHAR's pool entry was a gradual downward slope. The pool floor was roughly poured concrete that was painted blue and reportedly tough on the feet! There was a diving board you could swim out to in the deep end of the pool.

A 1976 "business opportunity" ad described Al-Char amenities as follows: "Fishing lake, swimming pool, completely equipped restaurant, lodge hall, 2 living quarters and more than 57 acres for home sites."

story continues on next page

The Old Swimming Hole

Who needs a pool?

Back in the 1920s, this was the "swimin' hole" for most of us Mason boys. It was 6-8 foot deep. It was straight back from Fox Drive. We sometimes camped out overnite, on opposite bank, which was part of Mr. Browning's farm.

Dan L. Baysore – Mason HS '30



"Muddy Creek" - Mason

BEATING THE HEAT, cont.



A youthful Perry Denehy lounges in his tube at Al-Char, c. 1968

of summer fun it once was and the fond memories that still linger for those who made this place their summer home?

In 1994 Al-Char was sold to Henry Fischer Homes who developed the property that is now home to 635 residential addresses. Today it is appropriately known as Water's Edge.

Wonder if anyone there knows what an oasis

The **Mason Swim Club** managed the pool for most of the 12 years it was open with Lynn Shaffernocker Kelly teaching and coaching many of the kids. In 1973, its final year, the Mason Swim Club left Mason Bowl. It became too much for the owners to run both and many of the new neighborhoods were building their own pools.



Mason Bowl pool, c. 1970

Mason Bowl offered to give the aluminum pool to the City of Mason to relocate, but the city wanted the property too. In the end the Mason Bowl gave the pool to the Saylor Park Recreation Dept and there you will find a plaque that recognizes Mason Bowl's pool donation.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story,
Rosemarie Springman

Mason, Ohio: A Photographic History,
Sally Sherman Caudill and Sherri Federle

Bill Shroder built Mason Bowl in 1960 and in 1961 he added the **Mason Bowl swimming pool.**

Many former pool members fondly remember the swim team, water ballet and nighttime teen parties.

Our Condolences to the Howard Family

Pamela Howard Stamper, born June 15, 1952, passed away April 27, 2020. Mother of Tony Stamper and the late James Anthony Stamper, sister of Diane Davidson, Karen Kitchell and the late Larry Howard (2015).

Then and Now

202 East Main Street



Moody's Dept. Store, c. 1915.

Once held a Kroger grocery store – building owned by Albert Bennett. Vacant in 1930 when demolished by the Great Fire.



Bennett building's smoldering ruins, July 20, 1930



On this site, Kings Dental, 2020

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From the Mason High School 1973 yearbook.

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