

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

June 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: We will be closed through June as a safety precaution due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please check our website for updated information as the situation evolves. We hope you all stay safe for the health of your family and your community.

MASON'S D-DAY HERO

Newell Cummins Thompson was a platoon leader in General George Patton's Third Army that landed during the D-Day invasion of Omaha Beach and Normandy in June of 1944. Newell led an armored tank platoon during the breakthrough of enemy lines at St. Lo, France. While his unit was attacking a fortified enemy position in Metz, France, Newell suffered a life-threatening head injury when his tank was struck.



Sue Thompson-Jackson
Army 1st Lt.
Newell Thompson,
Spring 1944

After a six-month hospitalization in England, he came home and married Annabelle Gerhardt. Anna was a Cincinnati girl he met on a blind date set-up by Mason friends while in college and had been his pen pal when he was overseas.

After the war, Newell found serenity in his hometown of Mason. He purchased a hardware store at 105 E. Main and later the house next door for his family. In 1983 after spending 37 years serving the needs of his many customers, Newell retired.

Newell Thompson's family came to the area by raft from Pennsylvania in the 1800's. He was a charter member of the Mason Historical Society and active in several community organizations. Newell passed away at age 85 in 2002.

Sally Sherman Caudill & Sherri Reed Federle, *Mason Ohio A Photographic History*, (Dayton, OH, Greydon Press, 2014), p. 127.

CELEBRATING D-DAY—JUNE 6

Gina Arens, Editor

It has been 76 years since the Battle of Normandy, which lasted from June to August 1944 and resulted in the Allied liberation of Western Europe from Nazi Germany.

Codenamed Operation Overlord, the battle began on June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, when some 156,000 American, British and Canadian forces landed on five beaches along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified coast of France's Normandy region. The invasion was one of the largest amphibious military assaults in history and required extensive planning.

Prior to D-Day, the Allies conducted a large-scale deception campaign designed to mislead the Germans about the intended invasion target. By late August 1944, all northern France had been liberated, and by the following spring the Allies had defeated the Germans. The Normandy landings have been called the beginning of the end of war in Europe.

history.com



VICTORY GARDENS IN MASON

Demonstrating Patriotism

Gina Arens, Editor

Throughout both world wars, the Victory Garden campaign served as a successful means of boosting morale, expressing patriotism, safeguarding against food shortages on the home front, and easing the burden on the commercial farmers working arduously to feed troops and civilians overseas.

In 1942, roughly 15 million families planted victory gardens; by 1944, an estimated 20-million victory gardens produced roughly 8 million tons of food—which was the equivalent of more than 40 percent of all the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States.

While we are not sure of the exact number of Victory Gardens in Mason, aerial photographs of downtown Mason at the Alverta Green Museum, shows the many gardens planted throughout the village during this time. Their efforts were part of many across the country that helped the US avoid a food shortage during both wars.



Aerial photo of downtown Mason Victory Gardens in the South West St. area, c. 1944.

www.history.com/news/americas-patriotic-victory-gardens

DIPLOMA DELIVERIES FOR 2020 GRADS?

Gina Arens, Editor

This is a graduation year like we have never seen before. Diploma deliveries? Virtual graduations? Ceremonies with social distancing and less than 10 attendees in a graduating class of almost 900? Sadly, this year the long-standing tradition of high school graduation must be altered to satisfy the state's safety guidelines. The two most likely options are diploma deliveries and online graduation.

According to the Cincinnati Business Courier (10/19), Mason High School, with an enrollment of 3,433, is Ohio's largest High School. This year they will graduate 881 students.

Mason has had a graduation class since 1886. That year they awarded seven diplomas. In 1912 there

was no graduation as the school system changed the graduation requirements from three to four years. At that time there had been a total of 204 graduates from Mason.

The school system began in 1827 but records were purposely destroyed in 1912 when they moved to the new building on East Street, so it is unknown if there were graduates before 1886.

Another long-standing Mason tradition, started in 1888, was the meeting of the Mason Alumni Association. For many years, the Alumni Assn met, typically right after graduation. The event began as an afternoon social with cake and ice cream, but eventually evolved into a full-blown dinner with dancing and live entertainment.

In 1965 the 80th annual Alumni Banquet was held at the elementary school, where they had dinner and dancing. Dinner was served by the Grange members and music provided by Whitey Elfers' Orchestra.

This was the last entry in the "Around Mason" book about the Mason Alumni Assn.

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



I hope everyone is doing well as we all continue to deal with COVID-19. As the late great Yogi Berra used to say, "It's Deja-vu all over again." Hopefully, things will return to normal soon! Based on the current COVID-19 situation the board has decided to keep the museum closed at least through June.

We are targeting the Ice Cream Social to be held on Monday August 24. However, this may change depending on how things proceed with opening the economy and state directed guidelines.

We are making some display changes within the museum including the Comet Room. Once we can open, we hope you can stop by to visit the museum and enjoy the modifications.

We will be rolling out the MHS annual raffle tickets in the next month or so. We still need to finalize what we will be raffing but the prizes will be similar to what

we had last year. Once we finalize the raffle prizes, we will get raffle tickets printed and distributed to members for sale or purchase. We appreciate everyone's help with this annual fundraiser!

On the membership front, we have developed a new membership form. There has always seemed to be some confusion as to when the annual dues should be paid. We are now targeting January 31 of each year. This helps clarify the timing and assists with our cash flow during the winter months.

Thank you to all members who have paid their 2020 dues. If you have not renewed your membership and would like to do so, please complete your renewal by June 30th. Membership payment can be mailed or paid online on our website.

Take care and stay well!

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

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

1803: John Briney was unable to meet his contract with John Cleves Symmes for Section 36 in Deerfield Township and on June 1, 1803, William Mason had his bid of \$1,700 accepted for the same 640 acres. The Brineys remained in the area.

1884: Lectures on temperance were given by Dr. Teacey at the Methodist Church on June 13 and for the next five days. By June 1893, the Mason Division of the Sons of Temperance was reorganized.

1893: When Ohio Telephone and Telegraph Company wanted permission to erect and maintain its poles and fixtures upon the highways of the village, permission was granted.

1906: Drillers strike a strong flow of natural gas in Mason. A Cincinnati newspaper tells of the latest excitement in the village with an article that was headlined: GAS IS MAGIC WORD THAT FIRES MASON — VILLAGE HOPES FOR FAME AND RICHES FROM RECENT DISCOVERY.

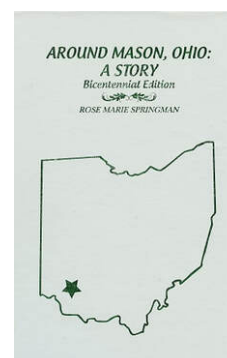
1909: The Heber Bros. Greater Show exhibited in Mason under the mammoth tent set up on the local school grounds. An adult admission of 25¢ included three shows, circus novelties, minstrels and vaudeville.

1914: In June the local council was approached by a representative of the Middletown Gas and Electric Company to "offer to run a line here from the Middletown plant, construct poles, etc., furnish lamps and meters" at a specified rate.

1929: City council decided the cost of construction for water mains, fire hydrants and other necessary apparatus would be assessed to property owners. Almost at once work began on the laying of mains within the corporation. An ordinance for bonds for \$25,000 for the water system was also passed.

Note: There was continuous delay and disagreement on the establishment of a water works and the issuance of bonds. The next summer a great fire burned down 10 buildings on the east end of Main Street. With no running water or hydrants, the extensive damage was estimated at \$100,000.

1957: Bill and Frances Gilbert bought a lot on Main Street from F. A. Hudson. Hudson had purchased the same property thirty years before from John Drake who had had a livery stable on the lot. The Gilberts had a new store building constructed on the land and officially opened the business at the end of November.



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.

A FASCINATING FAMILY

A History of Four Generations of Colemans

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

This is certainly an unprecedented time, when we're unable to head out to a ball game or even enjoy a night out at the movie theater. As a stand-in for the "real" thing, this story highlights the Coleman's, an early Mason family, some of whom found their fame however fleeting, in baseball and Hollywood.

In 1832, 21-year-old Asa Coleman, moved to what was then the town of Palmira. He married local girl Anna Scott and purchased a farm on the northeast corner of Bethany Road and (what is now) Mason-Montgomery Road. As a widower 11 years later, Asa married Sarah Coulson. Between his two marriages, he fathered 13 children, but only six lived to adulthood. Asa Coleman was so prosperous that he was able to gift all his children with farms.



Asa Coleman owned 320 acres of farmland where today you'll find prime residential real estate.

William Coleman was one of Asa's sons from his second marriage. Born in 1854, he married Amanda Florence "Flo" McVay in 1875, and became a successful farmer like his father. William and Flo's son, Percy, was born a year later on October 15, 1876.

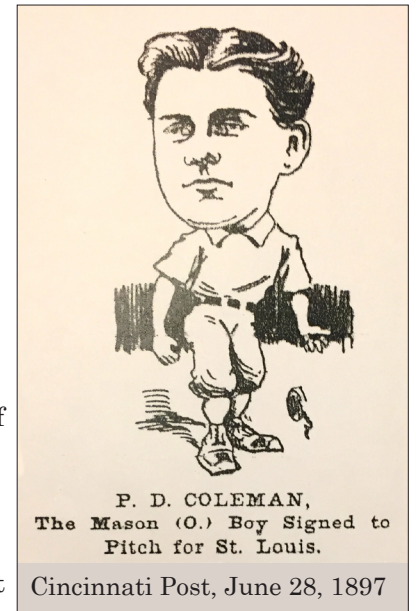
Growing up, Percy was more of a restless spirit than his parents and grandparents, and knew that farming was not his calling. He yearned to move beyond the small town of his birth. A gifted athlete, he was pitching for semi-pro ball teams in the area. In the summer of 1897 he was called up to the St. Louis Browns in the Major Leagues. At nearly six feet tall, the 20-year-old, blue-eyed, black-haired Percy must've cut quite a striking figure on the mound. The right hander pitched for the Browns that summer with a less-than-stellar 8.16 ERA. Despite that, he showed



William and Flo Coleman with unknown family members, c. 1910. After following in his farmer father's footsteps, William retired in 1907 and he and Flo moved to a large, stately Victorian home in downtown Mason, across from the bank corner. They lived here until William passed away in 1937. Today, the Plaza stands on this site.

promise because he was called back to the Browns in 1898, but ended up getting cut during spring training.

In July of 1898, he enlisted in the Spanish-American War, and became a private, fighting with the 6th Regiment for Cuban independence from Spain. He was involved with the famous charge up San Juan Hill. After the war, he returned home in September of 1898, and was picked up by the Cincinnati Reds. He pitched one game and gave a "fairly good show" but did not get the win.



P. D. COLEMAN,
The Mason (O.) Boy Signed to
Pitch for St. Louis.

Cincinnati Post, June 28, 1897

This was his final big league game. Percy Coleman pitched in a total of 14 games with an ERA of 6.69 and a record of 1-3. Over the next two years, he played for six different teams in the minor leagues, compiling a record of 22-18, before hanging up his cap.

In 1900, Percy returned to Mason and married Grace Swayback. Their only child (a daughter, Majel) was born in 1903. When Majel was in school, Percy worked as a traveling salesman, and they moved to Cincinnati. Majel graduated from Hughes High School in Clifton in 1921. During high school, Majel won some beauty contests and found work as a model. Like her father, she had big ambitions and the tenacity to act upon them. After Majel's graduation, the Coleman family packed up and moved to Southern California, so that Majel could pursue her dreams of an acting career.

story continues on next page

A FASCINATING FAMILY, cont.

Majel's career moved quickly, as she appeared in her first film in 1923. She soon became an ingénue of Cecil B. DeMille and appeared in almost a dozen silent films during the 20's, acting alongside the likes of Gloria Swanson and Loretta Young. Her big break was fleeting however, as her career did not survive the advent of "talkies." In 1937, she married Victor Gangelin, a successful set decorator. The couple had no children.

Percy continued working as a salesman out west, and after retirement, he and Grace lived the rest of their lives there. He died in 1947 at the age of 71. In 2007, Percy Coleman was posthumously inducted into the Mason Athletic Hall of Fame. Majel Coleman Gangelin died in Los Angeles in 1980 at the age of 77.

FORMER MASON GIRL IS TO APPEAR IN MOTION PICTURES

Chosen In Contest By
Paramount — Notes
Of General Interest

Most Beautiful Hands
Miss Majel Coleman, granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Coleman who now lives at Hollywood, California was recently selected in an international search to appear in Paramount's world court of beautiful models in a lavish production now being filmed. Miss Coleman was one of two contestants of beauty for face and figure in Cincinnati shortly before going to Los Angeles.



In her 1921 senior yearbook, classmates wrote of Majel in glowing terms:

"Majel is the pride of us all. Her beauty is renowned, and Majel, with her laughing eyes and Titian hair, is "such as dreams are made of." Majel wants to be in California and we know well that there's a reason. When she is the great actress we all expect her to be, how proud we shall be to say we used to know her."

(Left) From the Hamilton Evening-Journal, February 25, 1925.

(Right) Hollywood beauty, Majel Coleman, c. 1925.

WHAT IS THERE TO DO?

Tour Still Open for Business

Gina Arens, Editor

With Governor DeWine's recent announcement that all entertainment venues such as bowling alleys, playgrounds, amusement parks, theaters, water parks, concerts, you-name-it, will be shut-down indefinitely, the question becomes, what is there to do?



(Above) The Alverta Green Museum is stop #1 on the tour.

(Right) Four-page tour brochure, available free at the Museum

We have a suggestion for an outdoor activity that is engaging, educational and allows for plenty of social distancing.

The Mason Historical Society offers a detailed, self-guided walking tour of 25 of the city's historical landmarks, with almost all within walking distance of the museum. Tour pamphlets are always available in the holder outside the front entrance to the museum.

The historical structures tell the story of a small town founded in 1815. The businesses, churches, and schools which formed the physical foundation for the city it is today are featured. It is an interesting account of the roots of Mason. Where it all started.

MASON HISTORICAL TOUR

An early view of Mason, painted circa 1900 by Lou Wibelj Van Harlingen, granddaughter of Maj. William Mason. Original painting is in the collection of the Mason Historical Society.

Presented by
THE MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY &
THE MASON BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

START YOUR TOUR HERE:

① Alverta Green Museum, 207 W. Church St. - This beautiful 19th-century Victorian "painted lady" was the residence and antiques shop of life-long resident Alberta Green. In 1988, Mrs. Green bequeathed her home and property to the Mason Historical Society for their exclusive use as a Museum and archive/resource center. Filled with treasures from Mason's past, this gem in the heart of the downtown historic district is a must-see attraction.

Most of the sites featured are still standing but a few structures have been torn down or as in the case of The Dream Theater, destroyed by a tornado.

After your stroll through history, there are several restaurants in downtown Mason that offer carry-out so you can wrap-up your walk with take-home dinner.

Due to the COVID-19 virus, the Alverta Green Museum will be closed during May and June but may be reached at 513-398-6750 or at mason.oh.historical@gmail.com.

HISTORICAL TOUR TRIVIA

After your tour, take our quiz to test your Mason history trivia knowledge!

- 1 What building constructed of bricks from an old church was THE place to be on Saturday night in the early 1900s?
- 2 What infamous man built the structure where the Banana Leaf Modern Thai resides today?
- 3 What Mason School was built on the grounds of the town's former cemetery?
- 4 What two catastrophic events forever changed the look of Downtown Mason's Main Street?
- 5 What is the oldest church in Mason? (Hint: it's on a very apropos-named street.)
- 6 What business did Alverta Green run from her home?
- 7 Where can you find the building that once housed Sprinkle's Opera House, Mason's premiere entertainment venue from 1886 until 1936?
- 8 What understated structure is considered to be the oldest building in downtown Mason?
- 9 Kroger grocery stores were once in business in how many different locations in downtown Mason?
- 10 In what downtown building, which served sweet treats in the 1940s, can you now hear the sweet sounds of a violin?

Answers at right.

MUSEUM JOB POSTINGS

Museum Tour Guides

One of the most important services we offer the public are museum tours. If you are an outgoing individual who likes interacting with people and loves talking about Mason history, we need your help! Volunteers are needed to serve as Tour Guides, 1-2 days per month on Thursday or Friday from 1-4 pm. Training and notes will be provided.

Museum Receptionist

Seeking friendly, part-time volunteers to serve as museum Receptionist. Individuals needed Thursday and/or Friday from 1-4 pm. Duties include greeting and welcoming visitors, answering telephone calls, and receiving and sorting mail.

If interested in either position please call or email Perry Denehy at 513-444-9882, perrydenehy@gmail.com

-
1. 105 E. Main (was once Rebold's Hall)
 2. John McClung
 3. Mason Central at 211 N. East St.
 4. Great Fire of 1930 and the tornado of 1974
 5. Universalist Church at 300 W. Church St.
 6. Antiques
 7. Upstairs at what is now 5/3 Bank at 225 W. Main St.
 8. Small brick building at 125 W. Main St.
 9. 3 - 201 W. Main, 202 E. Main, 127 W. Main
 - (later is only building still standing)
 10. Antonio's Violins at 214 W. Main St.

Trivia Answers

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



Dear Mason Historical Society,

I want to thank you for the mention of radio station WLW in the May newsletter. My father-in-law Wendel Lewis Whitehouse and his sister Jaqueline Whitehouse Archer grew up on the site of the station, as their Dad, Joe Whitehouse, built the tower and managed the site for many years.

We visited the place in 2013 during a nostalgia trip with Jacquie's family on her 90th birthday year. She regaled us with stories of her late brother and herself as children climbing on the tower.

It was a real pleasure to walk where those forebearers feet had trod. Again, our appreciation for the mention of WLW.

Sandy Whitehouse, Corona de Tucson, AZ

Editor: We would like to thank all the people who have expressed their support and enthusiasm for the new newsletter format. We appreciate your comments and encouragement.

2020 MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Jay Meibers - President
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The following positions are currently open.
Anyone interested in serving on the Board,
please contact Jay Meibers at
jmeibers1@zoomtown.com

Secretary
Historian
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Trustee (2 open positions)

NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL STAFF

Gina Arens, Editor
Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

SECURE YOUR PLACE IN MASON HISTORY WITH A MEMORIAL, COMMEMORATIVE OR TRIBUTE BRICK

Bricks will be installed on the walkway to the Alverta Green Museum. Your brick purchase not only honors an individual, family or organization but also helps the Mason Historical Society. Purchase your brick today and secure your place in Mason History!

Order online at www.masonhistoricalsociety.org
Click on "Support Us" at the top.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

Emerson Brown—upgrade to Silver
Larry & Bev Dowler—Family Silver
John Hackman—Individual
Avani Iagdale—Student
Everett Landon—Individual
Katie Maier—Student
Tina Orlando—Individual
Jimmy & Rebecca Rapp—Family
Tony Rapp—Individual

Business Members:

Jerry Craft —Artis Senior Living of Mason
Mike & Karen Geygan—Minuteman Press of Lebanon
Jack Mueller—Mueller Funeral Home

Lifetime Business Member:

Chris Champ—State Farm Agent

LAROSA'S FUNDRAISING EVENT



3RD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

DINE IN at Triway and Rte. 42
CARRYOUT by calling 513-347-1111
or **VISIT** www.larosas.com

LaRosa's will donate 20% of your pre-tax bill back to the Mason Historical Society.
Present your Golden Buckeye card and receive a 10% discount.

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

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No.1680
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New Member Former Museum Neighbor

Chris Champ, State Farm Insurance Agent and new Lifetime Business member grew up next door to the Museum. In fact, he remembers Alverta Green and her family as nice people.

Seventh of eight children, Chris remembers his mom and dad bought the house in 1969, spending a year to remodel the two-family residence. When his mother moved on in 2001, he and his wife Barbie moved in and stayed until 2008.

His parents owned Champ's Dairy Whip from 1970 to 1979. Now known as Tucker's Whippy Dip, Champ's was THE place to hang out in the 70s.

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