

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

May 2021

A MOTHER'S DAY TRIBUTE

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

As we celebrate Mother's Day this month, who better to (subjectively) honor than the greatest mother of all time...my own mother, Trudy Sherman. If you were a student at Mason Central between the years 1971-1989, then I'm certain you have a memory of her as your art teacher.

Gertrude Rosselot was born on February 24, 1925, in Hollywood, California. In the five years the family lived there, they moved 19 times. In one home, a famous movie star lived nearby...Rin Tin Tin. "Rinty" was a male German Shepherd who found fame and fortune in silent films.

When he was out in his yard, my mom recalled, "we weren't allowed to play with him. Mother feared he might be short-tempered."

The Great Depression had started, and her parents who grew up in Middletown, decided to move back to their hometown in Ohio. They eventually settled on a farm on the northwest corner of Millikin Rd and Old Rte. 25 (Cin-Day Rd.). Her parents, Leo and Mary (Coles) Rosselot were loving parents to a total of eight children: two boys and six girls. Gertrude was the third oldest and always responsible. She was like a second mother to her younger siblings, and was a great help to her parents during the Depression years when my grandfather tried to make a living as a housepainter.

She knew art was her calling from early on. After graduating from Lemon Monroe High School in 1943, she attended the University of Cincinnati in the Applied Arts program. On her first day at school, she told everyone her name was "Trudy." She was thrilled when her family soon fell in line with her new nickname as well. While at school, she became an accomplished watercolor artist.



Trudy Rosselot (Sherman)
ca. 1948



After graduating from UC in 1947, she continued her education at the College of Mt. St. Joseph on the Ohio, and received her Fine Arts degree in 1950. In addition to school, she was also working as a window display designer at Shillito's in downtown Cincinnati.

She started her art teaching career in the Cincinnati Public School district. During this time she was introduced to a dashing young man named Mike Sherman. As she used to say "he chased her till she caught him," and they married a year later. Trudy soon put her teaching career on hold to raise their children, which would soon number seven.

Our family was living in Blue Ash and outgrowing our home quickly. In 1964, after a six-year search, the perfect house became available at 106 W. Church St. in Mason. Our neighborhood was kid heaven and we had a wonderful time growing up downtown. Dad was working at the Mason Post Office at this time, and I am

*story continues on
next page*



Trudy was a volunteer counselor and art teacher at the first Children's International Summer Village in Glendale, 1950.

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.

—• **New Museum Hours** •—
Beginning **May 6th**, the Museum will be 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.

Trudy Sherman, cont.

still in awe of my parent's sacrifices and dedication.

In 1969, when the youngest child started school, Trudy went back to teaching. She started as a substitute, but within three years, was offered an art teacher position. She taught at Mason Central on M-W-F, and at Western Row on T-H. She had 1200 students in her classes every week. After six years of this grueling schedule, a new teacher was hired for Western Row. Trudy then taught at Central exclusively for over a decade more. Her lesson plans were not the run of the mill "easy to do, easy to cleanup" variety. She taught her students the potter's wheel and clay firing, linoleum block carving, copper relief, contour drawing, perspective, ink calligraphy, and many more lessons too numerous to mention. One favorite class was doing tombstone rubbings at Rose Hill every Halloween.

To her children and students, Trudy always stressed the importance of education. Vacations unflinchingly included museums and historical sites. During summer break, she would hold art lessons in our side yard for us, as well as all the neighborhood kids. Every day in her art classroom, she would have a new dictionary word on the board that she expected her students to learn.

In addition to her teaching career, Trudy was very community minded. She served as secretary for the Mason Recreation Commission, assisted and judged local art shows, and designed banners and posters for local organizations, including the official city seal. She also was very involved with the Ohio Education Association. In the mid-80s, she was tapped to write a new art curriculum for the entire state of Ohio. It goes without saying that she was one busy lady.

In 1985, Trudy's adventurous side came out when she was a candidate for the NASA Teacher in Space Program. That spirit, as well as her love of travel, was something she imparted to all of her children. When I decided to move across the country to Los Angeles in the mid-80s, despite her inevitable worry, she never for a moment considered clipping my wings and was incredibly supportive.



left Trudy Sherman and her design for the official seal of the City of Mason, 1968.

below Trudy and Mike Sherman, 1980.



In 1989, Trudy retired from teaching. Mike had retired the year before, so they took full advantage of their free time and traveled the world.

They visited Thailand, Amsterdam, Alaska and many points in between.

In February of 1999, just two weeks before her 74th birthday, Trudy passed away after a five-year battle with multiple myeloma. Her light burned incredibly bright during her life, and the loss of that light was devastating for her family. The week after the funeral as we went through her papers, we came upon letters she had received when she retired. They were from past students simply thanking her. One very poignant letter read in part, "I want to pursue a career in the art field. I never really got a chance to thank you for what you did for me. You really changed my life, and no matter what I do or become, I'll never forget you." The fact that she saved these letters for so many years shows how much they meant to her. They were confirmation of what she had hoped to accomplish as a teacher, and they were a great comfort to us as we came to terms with our loss.

I know that I would not be the artist, the researcher and writer, the person, or really...the anything if it weren't for my mom. My wish for everyone is to be as blessed as I was, and to be able to say without reservation that their mother was the greatest of all time.

Homeless & Hospitality in Mason

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Historically Mason has been known to be compassionate to those less fortunate. Often council allowed money spent for indigent in the village who needed help with food, shelter, or medical care. This kindhearted attitude was even extended to those homeless individuals passing through town known as "tramps". City council notes indicate reimbursement to town marshals for things like housing, food and even transportation out of town! One evening a very demanding fellow drifted into Mason and made news in the Cincinnati paper. The story was as follows:

Cincinnati Enquirer, November 8, 1892

A Tramp's Wants

"The nerviest tramp that ever struck the village of Mason, approached Marshal Jack Biggs on Friday night and asked for shelter. The officer sized him up as a member of the light-fingered gentry and lost no time in getting him in the village prison. Once inside, the wanderer made a survey and asked the marshal if something could not be done to make his stay more comfortable. Jack nodded assent and asked what was wanted. The tramp coolly said he wished a fire, a lamp, a pair of slippers, a dressing gown, a ten-cent cigar, and a copy of Shakespeare. As Mr. Biggs originally came from Kentucky, the rapid and painful exit that tramp made from Mason can better be imagined than told."

MOTHER'S DAY REMEMBERED

Mason Traditions

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

It was a long-standing tradition at Mason's Presbyterian Church to hold a Mother and Daughter banquet. In 1964 the banquet was held the day after Mother's Day on Monday, May 11th. The highlight of the program, chaired by Mrs. Ann Hill, was a fashion show that featured "Fashions of Yester Year", with styles dating from 1872 to 1940. The ensembles and accessories featured were acquired from local friends and family with many being heirlooms, treasured by their families.

Checking in with the Heritage Presbyterian Church (the name changed in 1992) we find the banquet has not been held in at least 15 years, they were unsure as to why. According to the *Western Star*, it was "truly one evening which will long be remembered and treasured by the large assembly in attendance."



Closing the program was "The Living Portrait", a heart-warming scene of a mother and daughters portrayed by Mrs. Libby Batsche and daughters, (L to R) Jenny, Priscilla, Betsy (Elizabeth) and Margaret. Poems dedicated to "Mother" and then "Daughters" were recited during the scene expressing the love, good wishes, and appreciation each has for the other. Mrs. Batsche received special recognition for having the most daughters present at the event. *The Western Star*, May 14, 1964.

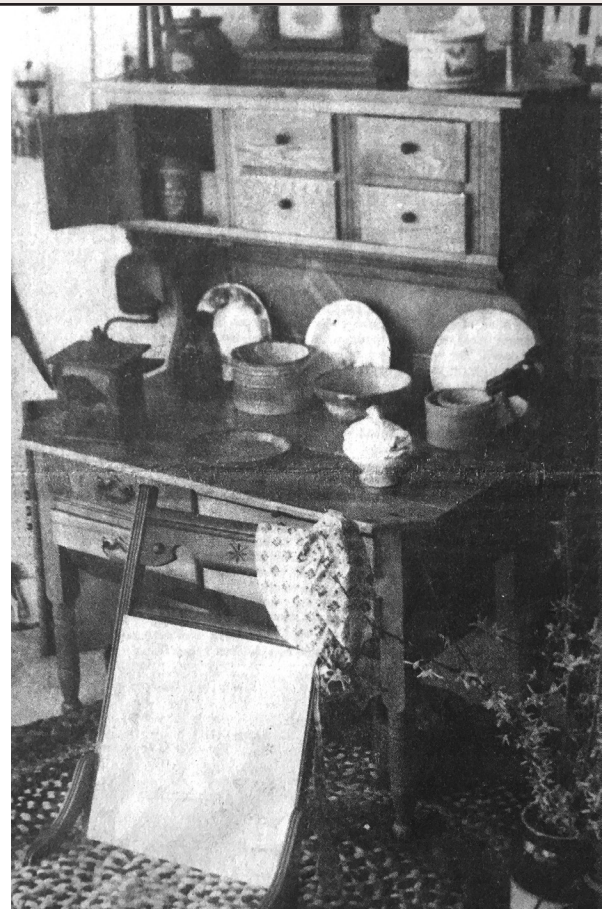
HISTORICAL AWARENESS MONTH RETURNS

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

In March of 1979, the year the Mason Historical Society was formed, *The Pulse-Journal* reported that Mason's mayor, Rea Boone, was preparing a proclamation declaring April as "Historical Awareness Month." The article related that the newly formed Mason Historical Society had requested the proclamation to showcase some of Mason's artifacts and antiques in the storefront windows along Mason's Main Street.

Investigating the April 1979 proclamation further, I called Mason's city hall to find out the status of "Historical Awareness Month". Sadly, these proclamations are typically only good for the month in which they are declared. They do not carry over year to year. But the good news is that the City of Mason has offered to issue a new proclamation, celebrating September as "Historical Awareness Month" in Mason once again. Quite appropriately, they will tie this proclamation in with the Mason Heritage Festival scheduled for Saturday, September 18. Just recently Mason decided to postpone their Fourth of July celebration, Red, Rhythm & Boom to this date as well making it an even bigger event.

The Mason Historical Society will be included in meetings for the festival and will be asked to submit ideas for our involvement. Participation in this event will not only increase the visibility of the Historical Society and what we offer but will also allow an opportunity to promote and increase membership. We will likely require volunteer assistance during the festival so stay posted for future updates.



Assembled by Ann Hill and showcased in Gilbert's store window, this display featured items from a 19th-century kitchen, 1979.

HOMEGROWN SUCCESS STORY

A History of Deerfield Manufacturing

Sally Sherman Caudill, Contributing Editor

This year marks the 75th anniversary of one of Mason's oldest businesses. Five local men established Deerfield Manufacturing in 1946. The company was the brainchild of Vernie Spaeth, who had been working at National Cash Register (NCR) in Dayton. NCR had an in-house, screw-machine manufacturing department, but couldn't keep up with their own company's demands. Because of this, NCR was constantly looking for parts distributors. Vernie, in a shrewd business move, decided to open up his own company to meet the demand. His manager at NCR, Ralph Smart, came on board as an investor. The other original investors were C.W. "Bill" Bercaw, Russell Dumford and Glenn Ball.

Vernie Spaeth had previously owned Spaeth Bros. Trucking with his brother, Les Spaeth, but had moved onto working at NCR during the war effort. During WWII, NCR built aero-engines, bomb sights and code-breaking machines along with cash registers.

Deerfield Manufacturing rented the old electric light plant (*featured in Dec. 2020 newsletter*) at 408 4th Avenue from the village. They started business in May of 1946 with NCR as their first customer. Ralph Smart, still working at NCR, was their connection. Deerfield's first employee was Les Spaeth and they soon had 25 employees making cash register parts.

Business was booming, and they ended up adding onto the building several times over the next two years. Glenn Ball had been working at a punch press/stamping business in Cincinnati and he thought the business would be a good match for Deerfield. The other owners agreed and in 1948, they built a large two-story building across 4th Ave. to house this new venture. Just a few years later, they doubled the size of the new building, and moved their screw-machine manufacturing into this new annex, and started a new tool and die business in the old electric plant.

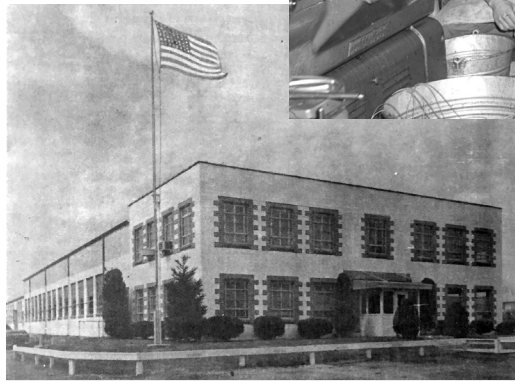
Ralph Spaeth, Les' son, started on the night shift at Deerfield the day after Labor Day in 1946. He had just graduated from Mason High the year before. He recently recalled "I loved the work. It was pretty easy, and there was no heavy lifting. Sure beat digging ditches!" Ralph went on to say that they worked 55-hour weeks; 10-hour shifts on weekdays, and a half shift on Saturdays.



Second Shift L-R: Carl Roberts, Leslie Franz, George Palmer, Earl Swigert, Harold Huff, Walter Rhodes, Charlie Oliver, (? Swigert's brother-in-law). 1949.



L-R front row: Ralph Spaeth, Jim Knott, Barney Wolfe, Les Spaeth. Back row: Jim Baysore, Ella Shurtz, Lydia Calvert, Jack Runyan, Harold Bennett, Roscoe Case, Art Christman, Tim Monce, Vernie Spaeth, Bill Bercaw. January, 1949.



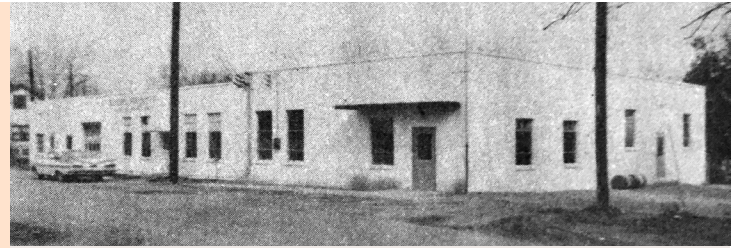
Deerfield's punch press/stamping building, 1965.

The workers would usually brown bag their lunch, but in the 50s, a lunch wagon would stop by and they could buy sandwiches from it. Looks like "lunch wagons" have made a comeback these days in the guise of food trucks.

In the early 50s, Russell Dumford sold out to the others due to health reasons. A year later, Vernie Spaeth and Bill Bercaw sold out as well. Ralph Smart made his exit a year after that and Glenn Ball became the sole owner. The business continued to prosper and eventually moved out to North Mason-Montgomery Road. Glenn Ball later sold Deerfield Manufacturing to the Stolley Corporation. In 2003, the downtown buildings were sold to Grace Chapel and are part of their campus today.

A "Manufactured" Sequel

In 1956, Ralph Spaeth quit his job at Deerfield Manufacturing to start his own screw-machine manufacturing company. He approached his father and uncle Vernie to rent him the use of their former Spaeth Bros. Trucking garage on E. Church Street. Vernie was intrigued with Ralph's business plan and he, along with his original Deerfield partner, Bill Bercaw, asked to come on board as investors. Ralph agreed and Bilvern Products (named for Ralph's business partners) was born.



The former Spaeth Bros. Trucking garage became Bilvern Products at 108 E. Church Street, 1965.

A huge thanks goes out to 94-year-young Ralph Spaeth for his recollections and stories about Deerfield Manufacturing and Bilvern Products.

Your Historical Museum Collection

Featured item of the month

As the Museum reopens for the first time since last year, we hope you'll come by to see our amazing collection of artifacts. This month we're highlighting one of our finest pieces: a massive Victorian-era, antique hall mirror. This gorgeous furniture item is nine-feet-tall and sits majestically in our main entryway. It originally was used in John Buck's clothing store in the Opera House/Bank building at the turn of the 20th century.

It was then inherited by the Palmer & Girton Store who moved into the same location. It's so tall, it was hard to photograph. The photo doesn't do this piece justice; you need to see it in "person" to truly admire its craftsmanship and beauty.

This piece was graciously donated by Leonard Palmer.

The Western Star,
June 26, 1982

Mason Historical Society recently was given the old nine-foot mirror that stood in Palmer's men's clothing store in downtown Mason for many years. A society work crew picked up the donated mirror on Saturday at Morrow Antiques.

From left are:
Norman Bucher, Buck Barnes, Chuck Beatty, and Russ Moore.



The John W. Buck store was on the west side of the bank building/Opera House, ca. 1905.



The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



Snap, Snap, Snappy Cicada Pizza... I fondly remember this jingle from 34 years ago mimicking Snappy Tomato Pizza regarding the Cicada invasion at that time. Incredibly, here we are again with the Cicada's ready to cause chaos for a few weeks once they launch sometime in May. I remember watching softball games near Kenwood Mall in 1987 and the Cicada mating sound was deafening from the nearby tree line. Everyone was afraid to open their mouths in fear of one of those crunchy critters flying in. Players were ducking to dodge the unending swarm of invaders while trying to focus on the game at hand. I still smile when looking back on that comical scene. The emergence of the 17-year Cicada's reminds us of how quickly time goes by despite our best efforts to slow it down!

The Board has decided that starting May 6 we are going to change the open hours for the museum to only Thursdays from 2:00 – 8:00. This will allow residents who work during the day to be able to visit the museum. This will also allow more coverage by members who work to help support open hours.

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

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

1909: The annual Memorial Day program began with a march from town hall to the cemetery in the early afternoon. The parade was led by the Brecon Band. Eighteen young men from Kings Mills, members of a patriotic order, acted as a guard of honor to the old soldiers who took part in the parade. Little girls with baskets of flowers preceded the soldiers. The graves were decorated with flowers, many of which had been gathered by local boys from the swamp area north of Mason.

1917: The Mothers Club members took on more responsibilities during their May meeting when they formed a Red Cross Society to help in the war effort.

1928: John Cunningham, a ten-year-old boy who lived on a farm just south of Mason, won the right to compete in the National Marble Tournament in Atlantic City, NJ. John, the son of Richard and Mary Cunningham, placed first in the tournament and was called a world record breaking champion. John represented the smallest town in the United States to be entered into the nationwide championship sponsored by the Scripps Howard Co. Afterwards a film made in Atlantic City of John's marble playing was shown in local movie theaters.

1934: WLW, The Nation's Station, begins broadcasting with 500,000 watts.

1935: The Mason High School alumni held their fiftieth anniversary celebration at Memorial Hall in

We are still planning on having the **Ice Cream Social** on **Monday, June 14**. However, the situation with COVID 19 is still very fluid. The Board will continue to monitor the situation including any State of Ohio guidelines which may impact our June 14 plans. **We also would like to receive your feedback** if you are comfortable or not in attending the Ice Cream Social under the current COVID situation. Your feedback is very important to us so please call and leave a message or email us your opinion on having the ICS on June 14.

The mural design for the museum addition is close to being finalized and I have to say it looks incredible. Once the design is finalized we will begin working with the artists to begin painting the mural. Very exciting indeed!

The last item is just a reminder for those members who have not paid their 2021 dues to please do so. We will begin revising our membership logs in July and we do not want anyone to miss out receiving the August Newsletter and beyond. Also, please ask your family, friends, and neighbors if they may be interested in joining as a member. Memberships are the lifeblood of MHS and without you MHS would not exist.

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

Lebanon. One hundred and fifty-two graduates and one hundred and thirty-five guests were served a dinner for \$1 each. (It was actually the 47th party since the first was held in 1888.)

1937: Hot lunches were started by the Mother's Club at the school on May 1.

1943: The High School Masonian was a homemade booklet because as the preface stated, "No one has to tell you there is a war on."

1945: A third consecutive championship in the county was won by the high school varsity baseball team. Never defeated were team members Louis Rapp, Gordon Tracy, Don Wolfe, Walter Tucker, Bill Mellish, Don Spaeth, Fred Ruscher, Don Allison, Bob Miller, and Dick and Bob Middleton.

1946: The Deerfield Manufacturing Company, makers of screw machine products, was formed by Glenn Ball, C.W. Bercaw Sr., V.E. Spaeth, Russell Dumford and Ralph Smart.

1970: An eight-alarm Memorial Day fire causes \$800,000 damage to the Valley Kitchens Co. on Rt 42.

2014: Mason is ranked #7 out of 50 Best Places to Live by Money Magazine. Jobs, proximity to Cincinnati and Dayton, and the schools are among Ohio's best were noted as selling points for the community. In 2020 Mason, once again, made the Best Places to Live list ranking #21.

Around Mason, Ohio: A Story (Bicentennial Edition) is available for purchase at the Alverta Green Museum. 6

OHIO LEGENDS REVISITED

May Event at WCHS - Lunch & Learn

On May 19th author Jeff Wilson will return to the Warren County Historical Society to discuss his books, *Ohio Legends* and *Ohio Legends Volume 2*. Every page in his books has a short story with an original, expressive illustration drawn by Jeff that brings to life Buckeye trivia or an oddity about an Ohio inventor, ghost, visionary, crackpot, hero or criminal.

Jeff will be showcasing a special “Librarian’s Edition” which includes never before published stories.

The cost for the event is \$15 for members and \$18 for non-members, and includes a boxed lunch. Program without lunch is \$5 members/\$8 non-members. Social distancing will be in effect, and only 40 tickets will be sold. Order your ticket early as these events typically sell out. Location is at 121 S. Broadway in Lebanon. Parking and entrance are located in the rear of the building. Call 513-932-1817, or visit wchsmuseum.org, to reserve your seat. See you there!

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 Editor:

I read to my surprise, “Time and Tradition – Senior Superlatives” article written by you. I never imagined that the topic of Senior Superlatives would ever see the light of day again.

I am a Senior Superlative – Class Clown along with my partner Vicki Terry – Class of 1963. Our humor was such that we kept humor as a tool to light humor to put a smile on our face so to speak. We knew those days would soon end and we would move forward to a world that would take us to reality, challenges, and serious days. Classmates and others wrote notes in my yearbook telling me that the humor I shared with them would always be remembered. Our class has a monthly “Lunch Get Together” and some of the “shenanigans” I pulled still gets a mention. Humor needs to be a part of life. Our humor never hurt anyone and usually got others to share their humor with all of us. We were serious when needed, but overall, we were a happy class and enjoyed high school as much as possible.

I came to Mason in my sophomore year. I noticed that the 1961 and 1962 yearbooks did not have Senior Superlatives. Is it possible the 1963

yearbook was the first to have the title “Class Clowns” above the picture of the seniors? Just saying.

There was a sighting by myself and two of my friends (not named due to obvious reasons – ha ha) one evening on Brewer Road facing east about a half mile from the corner of Brewer Road and Mason-Montgomery Road. The corner sat lower in elevation than where we were parked on the side of the road enjoying some liquid drinks in the dark. Suddenly there appeared several floating lights in the area of that corner. We quickly finished our drinks and drove there to see what was causing these floating/moving lights. When we got there, the lights disappeared.

We went back to the spot for several more nights and discovered the lights could be seen from the elevated area where we parked but disappeared when we approached the corner. Later we brought some other friends along to see if they saw what we had seen. They did! And that started the story of the Mason Lights.

News travels fast and before you know it there were traffic jams on Brewer Road causing police activity and news coverage by Channel 9 News and Al Shottlekotte’s Spot Light Report. We used this event to spread stories about all sorts of things which were not true and when the stories were found not to be true we all had a big laugh. In a country town, humor was found in different ways.

What caused the Mason Lights? Since the corner was a lower elevation than the upper flat area where you see the lights, water collected at the corner causing what was called “swamp gas”. See we not only enjoyed some humor from the Mason Lights, we got a science lesson too.

Thanks for listening and writing the “Senior Superlatives” column. It brought back many memories. Thanks to the staff and volunteers for keeping the Historical Society alive and well.

Sincerely, John B. Hackman Jr.



Vicki Terry “introducing” John Hackman, exiting the “Girl’s” restroom.

BUSINESS MEMBERS *and* PARTNERS

LIFETIME MEMBERS

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BUSINESS MEMBERS

Artis Senior Living of Mason
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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



MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE SCHEDULED

According to Commander Charpentier of the American Legion Post 194, a ceremony is planned for 12:00 noon on the holiday at the Mason Veterans Memorial in front of the Mason Municipal Building. The ceremony is open to the public, and the American Legion Post 194 will also stream the event via their social media page for those unable to attend in person. There will be no parade this year.