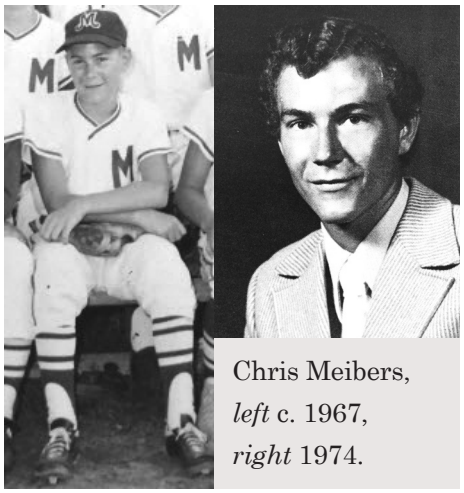
Newsletter of the
MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
and Alverta Green Museum
Mason, Ohio
June 2024

THE DIAMOND FROM BEHIND THE PLATE

Umping in the 70s

By Chris Meibers

In August of 2020 we published an edited story that Chris Meibers (WMHS '74) submitted about his experience as an umpire with the MAAA (Mason Amateur Athletic Assn) during his senior year in high school. Chris passed away on March 29th and as a tribute to his memory we wanted to run the story again, this time in its entirety. It is especially relevant as we find ourselves in the midst of summer baseball season.



Chris Meibers, *left* c. 1967, *right* 1974.

I left Mason for good back in 1984. I completed my 4-year stint with Uncle Sam's army in '80, returned home, got a job, started college on the G.I. Bill, fell in love, got married, got my degree in Computer Science and headed to Florida.

I have been very fortunate over the years to maintain a relationship with Mason as I've had family residing there since my folks moved into the Meadows back in 1953.

Coming from a family of six boys and constantly playing one sport or the other, it's easy to see how sports played a huge part in my upbringing. Who I am today was formed largely by the people I met through sports. I found great friendships, great experiences and exceptional adults who managed, coached or were just there to support the players.

In 1973 and 1974, while still in high school, I had the opportunity to head up the umpires for the Mason Amateur Athletic Assn (MAAA). George Kleinman was the head of (MAAA) and lived in the Meadows too, right around the block from where I lived.

I had gotten the umpiring bug a year earlier when Randy Andrews asked if I was interested in umpiring the bases for one of his games during the annual 4th of July celebration at the high school. His brother Charlie and I had played baseball together for years, sometimes against Randy, so we all knew each other well. That one game got me hooked.

Each week I had a list of games and my job was to find people to ump them. I had plenty of friends interested in making money, so I never had trouble filling the schedule. Plate umpires got $6, base umpires got $4. Most games were done in less than 2 hours, so it was easy money.

I remember carting the umpiring equipment from George's shed to our house, so it was available for the umpires scheduled each night or Saturday afternoon. I would deliver the equipment to Heritage Park, drop off 2 new baseballs to each plate umpire and then go to my assigned game since I umpired a game just about every night. At the end of the night I would collect the equipment, clean it up best I could, then drive home and do it all over again the next night.

On Saturdays I would collect a check from Hank Ritchie to pay umpires for the previous week. Back in the 70's making $10-$20 umping a week wasn't a bad gig.

During my two years umping there were several memories that stand out above others. One included my older brother Larry. He was my 'go to' man for the T-Ball games held at the Meadows Park every Saturday morning. The field was too small for anything but T-ball, but perfect for that. One morning, as Larry tells it, a t-ball kid goes up to his coach, says something, the coach nods and the kid makes a beeline for the creek. He scuttles down the 5-foot embankment, drops his drawers and gets to business. Within a few minutes there is a line-up of kids following suit, all standing there with their colored shirts and hats, pants down at the ankles. Classic Mason Meadows story.

story continues on next page

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established in 1979, the Society's aim is to promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

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Join the Mason Historical Society at Masonhistoricalsociety.org

Call: 513-398-6750

Email: mason.oh.historical@gmail.com

MUSEUM HOURS

The Museum is open from 2-5 pm every Thursday, and by appointment.

Umping in the '70s, cont.

At the beginning of each season, I met with the umpires to spell out plans and expectations and leave them with one word of advice. For the first two to three weeks of the season, if anyone (managers, coaches, parents, players) gives you any lip, give them the boot! I felt it was important to set a standard early on as some of the guys were not necessarily cut out to umpire and some of the coaches and parents tended to take advantage of that.

Our umpires were guys who played baseball, but not everyone knew all the rules. Some of the rules can get a little complicated. The way I saw it, we were not paid to be professional grade, but they should be able to expect some level of consistency.

For the most part, I think we did well. We hardly ever had issues with the kids; they just wanted to play. Back then, as it is today, too many parents see their kids playing in Williamsport or signing an MLB contract.

The Meibers family, ca. 1969:

standing Chris, Greg, Larry Jr., Steve.
seated Jay, Jane, Larry Sr., Matt

In time, as I started coaching my own kids, I would begin each year explaining to parents my philosophy, which did not particularly line up with Little League rules. What it did was guarantee all kids played multiple positions and no less than 5 innings a game. Granted, that probably cost us some games, but I never had a kid quit my team in all the years I coached.

Getting back to the 'give them the boot' advice, no one followed that more than I did. I kept the game moving, made my calls loud and if there was a difference of opinion, there was a right way and wrong way to deal with it. When I ejected someone, they had to leave the field area, which was normally enough. There were occasions when they would have to leave the park or forfeit the game. That's when it got fun.

Normally you had a stare down for about 30 seconds until I asked the opposing coach if I could borrow a watch, which they were always willing to provide. I would stand on the pitcher's mound and give the person I ejected 5-minutes to leave the park. That is the last thing I would say and just look at the watch. It didn't take long before they would get enough 'incentive' from their coaches and fans to beat it.

One time after I had ejected a guy, he intentionally drove off the road and ran over my equipment. I wasn't ever in harm's way, but he was definitely sending a message. This guy was one of my 'regulars' and after that game I spoke to George and he was banned from the park for the rest of the year.

Once I had to umpire an MAAA championship game that featured Mike Simon for one team against my brother Jay's team. It was a classic pitcher's duel with not much scoring. Both Mike and Jay were pretty dominating on the mound. Late in the game, with Mike's team leading by a run, Jay comes up to bat with two outs and runners in scoring position.

It was, without question, the pivotal point in the game. The count got down to 3-2 and Mike lets the pitch fly. It is knee high and paints the outside corner, Jay flinches to swing and holds back. I can recall thinking this call can go either way, and I really did not want to call strike three on my brother.

I hesitated, stood straight, threw my right hand out and yelled strike three! I felt terrible and honestly, did not believe Jay's coach thought I would do that. It was the right call and what really stuck in my mind, even to this day, was Jay looking at me, smiling and saying, "I should have swung at that one." Classic Jay.

Mason was always full of good folks and it's nice to see the good fortune that has been bestowed on Mason over the past few decades. Who knows, maybe that is its reward for being a small town with an abundance of goodness and heart.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ron and Donna Pennington – We wanted to compliment Gina Burton Arens on the Gold Star article she wrote in May's newsletter. I knew both Marty & Ted and Marty was in the same US Army division I was assigned to while there – First Infantry Division. Ted was in the 4th Division. Jonathan Kamm was a career soldier I understand, and I briefly knew his father. All US Army warriors fighting our wars with no glory or fanfare but people such as you are aiding in keeping their memory alive in many people's hearts and for that THANK YOU!

THE ORGANIZATION OF GRANGES IN MASON

Susan Chace, Guest Contributor

The mid-1870s was a time of falling crop prices, increasing railroad shipping fees and a financial crisis created by the federal government's switch from paper currency to gold and silver.

With their livelihoods devastated, U.S. and Warren County farmers turned to the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry for help. The fraternal organization was founded in 1867 to promote social and economic needs of rural communities, as well as educate farmers about improvements in agricultural methods and technology.

In early 1873, about 20 Mason area farmers approached Seth H. Ellis, a Quaker farmer near Springboro, about chartering a local Grange chapter in Mason. Ellis was deputy of the National Grange and responsible for organizing many of the subordinate Granges in Warren County and Southwest Ohio.

Mason Grange No. 49 was organized on May 10, 1873, with R.H. Bennett as Master (president) and B.F. Lee as Overseer (vice president). But declining interest and membership led to the chapter's demise sometime in the 1880s.

Although Mason Grange No. 49 was Mason's first Grange, it was not its last. By 1907, a group of area residents decided there should be a farmers' club. Some who knew of the Grange's work, suggested the Grange would reach more people in a social and business way.

On February 22, 1908, the second Mason Grange – Mason Grange No. 1680 - was born during a meeting at the house of W.K. Williamson. Mason's second Grange began with 66 charter members, many with names still familiar today: Mossteller, Stitt, Cox, Scott, Bercaw, Voorhis, Ayers, McClung, Boyer, Hageman.

Mason Grange No. 1680 grew steadily to a peak of more than 300 members in the 1950s, when the group was known for dinners and square dances in the Mason Grange Hall and for the many luncheons and dinners it prepared and served for various organizations around town.

Today, Mason Grange No. 1680 still exists and is the only remaining Grange chapter in Warren County. The modern Grange still advocates for issues concerning rural communities and agriculture, but it is open to anyone who believes in working together to make our communities better places in which to live. The more than 30 members of Mason Grange No. 1680 live throughout Warren County.

Mason Grange has become known for its homemade peanut brittle, available only during the Thanskgiving-Christmas holiday season, and for multiple community service projects. Those projects have included:

- Donating funds to state programs for the hearing impaired and to Mason's Common Ground Playground at Makino Park.
- Organizing Empty Bowls events that raised and distributed more than $74,000 to area food pantries and organizations that help feed Warren County residents.
- Making stuffed toys, blankets, and colorful pillowcases for the young patients at Cincinnati Children's Hospital.
- Offering educational programs, such as how to make a rain barrel to collect water for your garden or yard.

Mason Grange members decided in 2023 to donate a marble bench in recognition of their long support for the Mason Public Library. In addition to collecting and donating books to the library, members raised more than $8,000 in 1976 (nearly $44,000 in 2024 dollars) toward construction of the library by selling U.S. Bicentennial commemorative items. The bench, installed along the sidewalk in front of the Mason Public Library, depicts the Grange medallion surrounded by images familiar to Mason's agricultural past.

Email MasonOHGrange@gmail.com if you are interested in learning more about Mason Grange membership, activities, or peanut brittle.

The Mason Grange bench depicts the Grange medallion surrounded by familiar images of Mason's farming history, including the Mason Grange Hall and an RFD mailbox. Granges were instrumental in promoting establishment of the Rural Free Delivery system in 1896 when more than 60% of the nation's residents lived on farms and in rural communities.

Residents of Rose Hill

'MEAT' THE BREWSTERS

Helen Fox, Contributor

Brewster's Meats was a thriving Mason business and the Brewster family was well known and an integral part of the Mason community for many years. From the 1920s through the 1960s, they were often mentioned in the "Out in Society " or "Mason News" columns of the Western Star. The paper wrote of Brewsters hosting family visitors, visiting and vacationing in Milford with relatives, participation in picnics and dancing parties, announcement of births of children, elections to St Susanna and Mason Council positions, and the like.

Nicholas Brewster, originally of Milford, Ohio, and John Brown went into the meat business in 1915 when they bought the downtown Mason shop from butcher John Barr. In the first years of the business, the partners peddled their meat in a horse drawn wagon. They had two routes, the Foster-Kings Mills area, and around the vicinity of West Chester. Later the horses were replaced by engines with horsepower in the form of trucks and vans.

Nick married his partner's sister, Elizabeth, in 1916. The couple had four children: Jack, Paul, Mary Jo and Frank. In 1945, the Brewster family plot at Rose Hill Cemetery Section C2 was purchased on the tragic occasion of son Paul losing his life during his service in the Army.

Working the meat market business was always a family affair. Jack and Frank worked alongside their father, then later both brothers ran the shop together for a couple of years before youngest son Frank bought out his brother's share. Frank and Margaret Brewster had seven children who continued the tradition of working in the family business. Bill Brewster, the only son, remembers working in the slaughterhouse as a young boy. The slaughterhouse location, and where the family lived for many years, was on Route 42 near where the Four Season Apartments now are. Back then it was considered rural and out of town a bit. Bill accompanied his grandfather Nicholas and father in their cattle truck down to the stock yards on Spring Grove Avenue to buy cattle. I-75 didn't exist yet so the trip was made traveling down Route 42. Bill says his butchering skills were developed "as soon as I was tall enough to reach and cut on a meat block."

His memories of his grandfather and father include watching them interact with customers. "Dad had an excellent personality for dealing with customers, and he impressed upon us to be nice to people." Theresa Sliger Popplewell recalls accompanying her mother on her frequent shopping trips to Brewster's Meats. She said that the families had a connection through their affiliation with St. Susanna and Theresa's mom always felt well taken care of at the butcher counter.

The Brewster's Meats downtown storefront advertising prices of the day. The store and family residence was located at 115 /117 Main where Revolution Mortgage and eXp Realty are currently. This picture, estimated to be 1948, features the prices of the day. The 2024 US average cost of chuck roast according to a USDA website listed it as $7.06/lb. A federal website showing Inflation rates for those 76 years would result in a $2.59/lb price, illustrating that meat prices have considerably outpaced inflation.

Hard work and long days were the hallmarks of Brewster's Meats. "In third grade, we moved up into downtown Mason. I got up before school, and helped Dad get the school orders ready." Orders were delivered to the school before class began. As soon as Bill could drive, he would make deliveries and return home before the school day began. "In hindsight, it was good discipline," summarizes Bill. "And we all learned how to make change," he adds. Debbie Brewster Harvey, Bill's sibling, waited on customers and helped wrap the meat for the freezer, among other things.

Nicholas Dominic Brewster is flanked by his sons Frank (left) and Jack. The hardworking family used the van to deliver to homes on a designated day.

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Brewster's Meats, cont.

Frank made the decision to close the shop in 1979. Bill explains that his dad did not want Bill to continue the business. "Competition from big stores like Thriftway and Kroger pushed the little guy out," explains Bill.
And government inspections required costly requirements for new equipment or processes. However, Bill and the other Brewster children fared well and pursued different directions.

This 2014 picture of the offspring of Frank and Margaret Brewster.

Five of the seven still live in the area. From top: Debbie, Frannie, Linda Marilyn, Bill, Kim and Chris.

Sources: *The Western Star;* Theresa Popplewell, Bill Brewster, Debbie Harvey; findagrave; ancestry; USDA website

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpts (up to 1965) from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, R.M. Springman, Edited (and post-1965 excerpts) by Gina Burton Arens

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.

1815: A graveyard was started a short distance north of Lot 14 on William Mason's plan for his town. It lay along the Beedle Station Road (Mason Montgomery Rd) and it was at least the fourth cemetery in the township by that time. The bodies from this cemetery, located where Mason Central was built, were later moved to Rose Hill when it opened in 1868.

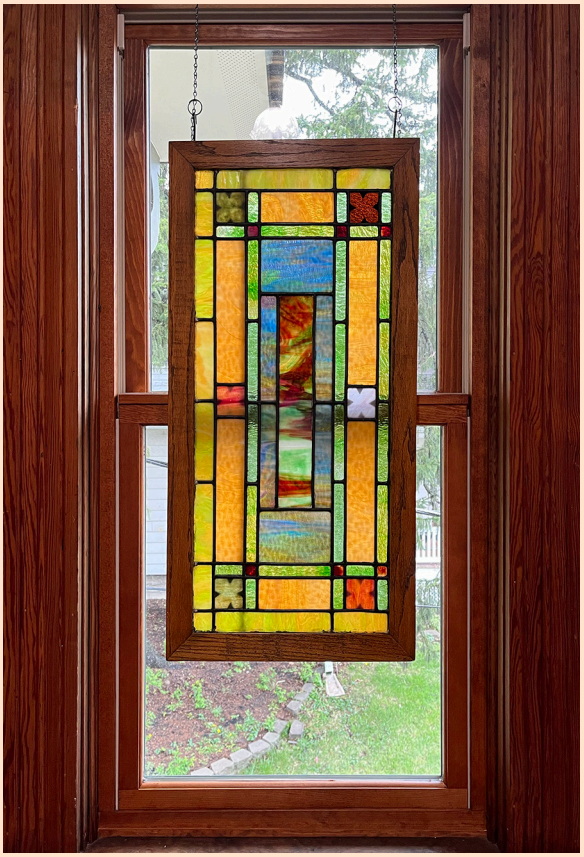
1929: The week of June 10 was labeled by the council as "Clean Up Week" and it was suggested that weeds, rubbish, and other undesirable things be removed from private property during the designated time.

1957: Bill and Frances Gilbert bought a lot on Main Street from Francis's father, F. A. Hudson. Hudson had purchased the same property thirty years before from John Drake who had a livery stable on the lot. The Gilberts, who had operated a dry goods store at 212 W Main since 1946, constructed a new building on the land and officially opened their new store at the end of November. The business remained open until their retirement in 1988. Subway now occupies the location.

1961: A request had been made by the village to the state of Ohio that access to the newly planned Route I-71 be made from Mason-Montgomery Road. In June the village was informed by the Middletown Branch of the State Department of Highways that such access was not feasible. Later it proved to be possible.

1973: The 88th Annual Mason High School Alumni dinner was held on June 2 at the American Legion Hall. Each year the 25-year class assumed responsibility for planning the affair but in 1980 a plea for help organizing the dinner/dance was announced in *The Western Star*. The event which had been a long-standing Mason tradition since 1888 seemed to end around this time.

JUNE MUSEUM FEATURE

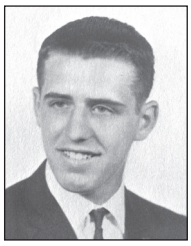


Stained Glass Window, Circa 1926

This stained-glass window was originally hung in a classroom in the old Mason Methodist Church location across the street from the Museum. It was recently donated to the Alverta Green Museum and is displayed in the window above the interior staircase.

IN MEMORIAM

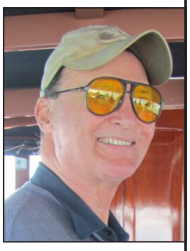
We recently learned of the passing of two Mason High scholar/athletes, who both went on to great heights in thier chosen fields after graduation. Our thoughts go out to all of their family and friends.



Rich Fox was born on April 17, 1946, and passed away on May 15, 2024 at the age of 78. Dr. Richard Thomas Fox, OD was a 1964 MHS grad, and was a star athlete in football, baseball and especially basketball. His junior season basketball scoring record still stands, and he is the second all-time Mason scoring leader. He was recruited to play on the court by legendary Univ. of Dayton Coach Don Donoher, who made a personal visit to Mason to recruit the 6'4" center. He was one of the top players on the team and his senior year in 1967 saw UD go to the NCAA Division I finals against powerhouse UCLA, with none other than 7'2" Lew Alcindor.

After his UD graduation, Rich went on to OSU medical school, graduating with honors and he became an optometrist. He practiced in Mason until 2016, when he and wife, Sandy moved to Madison, IN.

Besides his parents, Rich is predeceased by his son Bryan, and he is survived by wife, Sandy; daughter Jennifer (Anthony); brother Dr. Robert Fox, DDS (Terri); step children and step-grandchildren. *Rich's NCAA journey is chronicled in the March 2022 MHS newsletter.*



Tom Peters passed away on April 18, 2024 at the age of 75. The son of the late Frank and Edith Peters, Tom was born on Nov. 23, 1948 in Mason, and was a 1966 graduate of MHS. He then went to Princeton where he majored in history and played tight end on Princeton's football team. He served in the Navy as an officer on the USS Manatee (1970-73) which was engaged in operations during the Vietnam War.

Tom then studied law at Univ. of Cinti, where he met his wife, Sue. With his Juris Doctor degree in hand, Tom took civilian jobs for the Navy which took him to Washington DC, Japan, and South Korea, among other places around the world. His final naval assignment was counsel to the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. In 1991, he retired to Minneapolis and then finally to Wellfleet, Mass. in 1998.

His wife, Sue said, "Tom's intellect and photographic memory complemented his thoughtful, kind, and generous nature. He was almost archaically polite."

Besides his wife, he is survived by his brothers Erik (Martha), and Mark (Jane), and several nieces and nephews.

PURPLE HEART TRIBUTE

On Memorial Day the City of Mason officially dedicated its Purple Heart Tribute area at the Mason Municipal Building. Ron Ferrell, Director of Special Projects for the city, coordinated the project which involved identifying the Mason soldiers awarded this honor, overseeing completion of the granite markers and finally the placement of these in the Purple Heart Tribute area.

The Tribute area was created last year when the city refurbished the Veteran's Memorial and decided to include a place to recognize purple heart recipients. Those honorees will have their names, branch of service & years of service engraved on black granite stone which will be placed in the floor or the bed of the Purple Heart area.

Purple Heart recipients that will be honored include George W. Berry, Joe Barr, Ron Pennington, Jay R. Pennington, Harry Ennis, Douglas E. Laws, John Looker, Roger Coates, Newel C. Thompson, Oliver Patterson.

To order a commemorative brick, and for info on other programs, see the below link:
https://www.imaginemason.org/about/veterans-memorial/honoring-veterans-and-active-military/

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President

June brings back great memories as a youngster. One example is that we would meet every day in the Meadows and walk over to St. Susanna to play baseball using a tennis ball. We would play all day then head back after supper to play again. On Saturday nights, St. Susanna had church and if we hit the ball on the blacktop and hit a parked car it was an automatic out. Also, right field was an automatic out since we only had about 3 or 4 kids on a team. We did not have a first basemen so pitcher's mound was used as first base. If the ball got to the pitcher before you made it to first base you were out. Crazy rules and crazy fun. Lifelong friendships were forged during those wonderful June days as a kid. The grass field which was next to the rectory has long been absorbed by the incredible growth of St. Susanna school and the multi-purpose building.

Don't forget our annual Ice Cream Social & Baked Goods Auction on Monday June 10. The Ice Cream Social will be from 5:30 – 6:30 followed by the Baked Goods Auction. Gene Steiner will be back too as the main event and a very entertaining auctioneer! This is a great social event and one of our fundraisers for the year. Please consider donating yummy baked goods for Gene to auction off. This will be a rain or shine event but please pray for good weather.

On Friday June 7 we will have a booth supporting Music in Mason. Stop by and say hello and enjoy some good food & music. The event starts at 6:00 and is located at the downtown plaza.

A special thanks to my brother Matt (Meibers) for his great effort in enhancing our landscaping in numerous areas around the museum. It looks great so check it out.

One last item, next month we will be rolling out details on our 2024 raffle. We are looking to spice things up this year so stay tuned!

Stay safe & stay well!

Ice Cream Social & Baked Goods Auction

Join us at the Alverta Green Museum, 207 W. Church St.

Featuring Local Auctioneer Gene Steiner & Live Music

Monday, June 10th

Social Hour at 5:30 pm
Auction begins at 6:30 pm

Your baked goods donations continue to make our annual Ice Cream Social one of our best annual fund-raising events!

Baked goods may be dropped off at the museum on Sunday 6/9 from noon-1 pm or Monday 6/10 from 10-noon.

Please call or email us if you need to arrange another time to drop off your donation. Your assistance is always greatly appreciated.

email: mason.oh.historical@gmail.com or call: 513-398-6750

Thanks to all of our wonderful bakers out there who make this annual tradition such a successful fund-raising event for the Museum and MHS.

Street parking is available, as well as in the Two Cities parking lot (enter Museum thru back gate)

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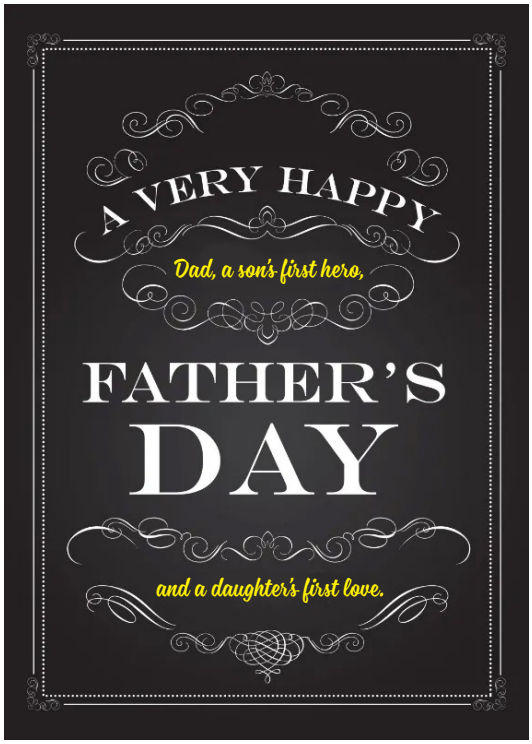

We urge you to support our wonderful business members and partners, who have been so generous with their support of the Mason Historical Society.

WARREN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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