

Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter

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Bainbridge Township, Ohio, 44023

Summer 2013



Douglas DH 4B Mail Plane

Air Mail Plane Crashed in Bainbridge

On the cold morning of Monday, December 2, 1929, a mail plane crashed on the farmland of C. P. Haskins. The pilot leaped out, but the parachute could not open soon enough to break his fall. Pilot Thomas Nelson had refueled in Bellefonte, PA and headed west around midnight for the two hour trip to Cleveland. He never arrived. News was broadcast throughout the flight area in hopes of locating him and the plane.

By Thursday, some twenty-five flyers were buzzing in the area between western Pennsylvania and north-east Ohio in a systematic search. On Thursday afternoon the remains of the lost plane and its frozen pilot were located on Haskins' farm by rabbit hunters. Nearly one thousand people came to the tragic site, watching the National Air Transport Company, which held the mail delivery contract, salvage and clean up the crash debris.

Throughout the week, Geauga County residents were anxious to learn any related news. Word had spread that Charles Lindbergh, himself a member of the mail fleet, was to land at nearby Parkman Field and many rushed there in hopes of seeing the flying legend. On that Friday, over the crash site, Colonel Lindbergh did appear. He circled the crash scene several times and dipped his plane wings in a farewell salute to his former friend. Then he promptly headed his plane for New York.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer of December 6, had as its front page headline - "FINDS PILOT FROZE TO DEATH." It reported that the Geauga County coroner

Continued on page 2

Heritage Park Dedication, October 13

Bainbridge Township will officially dedicate Heritage Park, just south of the fire department complex, on Rt. 306, Sunday, October 13. Activities start at 2:00 p.m. followed by open houses of the fire department and Bissell-Tucek House with extensive tours until 5:00 p.m. The dedication will focus on the Veterans' Memorial, the new Pavilion, the BTHS museum, new park grounds and ball fields. Music will be provided by the Geauga County Fair Band. Refreshments will be served at the fire station.

At the House, residents will see the many improvements made by the township and volunteer labor of the historic society. Non-members will be encouraged to join the society and "buy a brick" for placement along park sidewalks.

1811 and 1817 Celebrating Historic Years

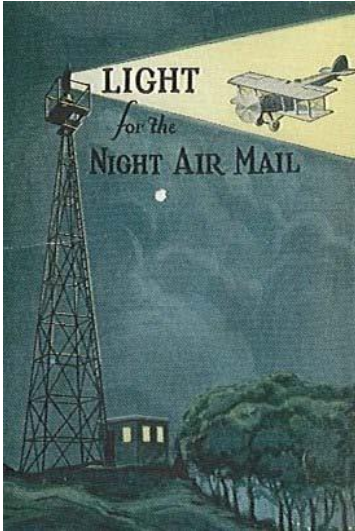
The fall of 2017 will mark the bicentennial anniversary of Bainbridge receiving official status as a "township" in Geauga County of the State of Ohio in 1817. The new township had twelve resident families numbering 72 people. Six years previous, in 1811, the first white pioneers settling in this area were David McConoughey, Jasper Lacy and Gameliel H. Kent.

Interestingly, the two areas presently known as Bainbridge and Auburn were together officially designated as "Bainbridge Township" in 1817. Early historians do not explain why the two adjoining township "units" were

Continued on page 4

In This Issue

Air plane crash & mail delivery	1,2,3
Heritage Park dedication	1
Two Historic years	1,4
Renovations continue	5,6
Township Helps	5
Clothesline History	6
Bissell-Tucek House Garage Sale	4
What's in a Name	3
Dues & Meetings	7
Meeting Calendar	8



determined that pilot Thomas Nelson died of exposure. The superintendent of the Eastern Air Transport and other air mail pilots tried to reconstruct the tragedy. They knew that farmer Clarence Haskins heard a plane flying overhead and a couple of Chagrin Falls residents, some four miles from the crash site, had also heard a flying plane not long before 2 a.m. No one recalled hearing any crash. The plane was discovered, belly-up, in a ravine facing in the opposite direction of its flight path. They believed severe weather, and engine problems caused the pilot to turn back and head for the emergency landing field in Parkman Township. The instrument panel had stopped at 1:55 a.m. The pilot probably bailed out at about 200 feet, some 100 feet too low for the parachute to slow down descent sufficiently for a safe landing. Tommy Nelson fell hard and became unconscious. The rabbit-hunters said they found him crouched forward with his head resting on his hands, the position parachutists were taught to use upon landing. His open parachute was trailing behind his frozen body. This air plane crash not only aroused tremendous interest in our farming community of 1929, but it also brought considerable sadness. Beyond two heavily treed areas on the Haskins farm, where the frozen pilot lay for over three days (near today's Tanglewood water plant), one could see the warm Clarence Haskins farmhouse.

(Information for this article was taken from articles printed in the Geauga Republican Record (December 11, 1929) and The Cleveland Plain (December 6, 1929) that was provided by former resident Bob Haskins.

Note: The Bainbridge Historical Society & Museum has a piece of the wing from the crashed plane and hopes to display it in the near future.

Early Aviation History

Flying the mail in the early days was not for the faint-hearted. Between 1918-1927, forty pilots died in crashes. In 1934, a frustrated President Franklin D. Roosevelt assigned responsibility for flying mail to the Army Air Corps which was not trained nor equipped for the task. In 78 days of operation, there were 66 crashes with 12 dead pilots. Public outrage over what General Billy Mitchell called "legalized murder" led Congress to pass strict regulations for civilian air carriers, establish the Federal Aviation Commission (forerunner of the FAA) and provide funding for better training and equipment for the Army Air Corps -- including the first simulators for instrument training. Eventually the corps purchased Link Trainers, some of which were still in use in the 1950s. In August, 1920, just 60 years after the Pony Express had closed due to the expedience of new railroad delivery, the United State began its first coast-to-coast airmail delivery. Without good aviation charts, pilots had to eyeball across the country using landmarks. Bad weather and darkness made flying very difficult, if not impossible, in those early years. To solve the problems, the U.S. Postal Service established the world's first ground-based

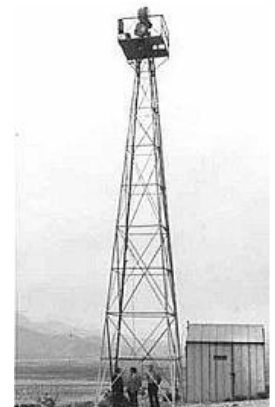


1920 eastern air mail route

civilian navigation system. Giant yellow concrete "aero" markers were laid every 10 miles along the flight path of mail planes. By 1924, the great concrete "Yellow Brick Road" stretched between Rock Springs, Wyoming and Cleveland, Ohio. By 1929, it spanned the continent. A series of lighted Airway Beacons were a substantial help, perhaps even more than the yellow "aeros." Twenty-four inch diameter rotating beacons were mounted on 53 foot towers, and spaced 10 miles apart. Spacing was closer in mountains and densely forested areas; it was further on open plains. Airports used green beacons. The beacons flashed



Giant Concrete Aero



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identification numbers in Morse Code. At that time, our expansive "aero" and beacon light system were the envy of the world's other postal systems. The development of radio and radar navigation gradually replaced these early systems. The big ground arrows became obsolete and by the 1940s even the lighted tower beacons were de-commissioned. The steel towers were torn down and went to the war effort. But hundreds of arrows remained. Their yellow paint is gone in cold frost areas their cracks continue to widen; no one even crosses their path much, except maybe coyotes and tumbleweed. But they're still out there. By Jim Pierson

The airplane that crashed— The DH-4 was a British two-seat biplane day-bomber of the First World War. It was designed by Geoffrey de Havilland (hence "DH"). It first flew in August 1916 and entered service with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in March 1917. The majority of DH-4s were actually built as general purpose two-seaters in the USA, for service with the American forces in France.

As the United States entered World War I, the Cadillac division of General Motors was asked to produce the new Liberty aircraft engine, but William C. Durant was a pacifist who did not want General Motors or Cadillac facilities to be used for producing war material. This led to Henry Leland leaving Cadillac to form the Lincoln Motor Company to make Liberty engines. He quickly gained a \$10,000,000 government contract to build 6,000 engines. Subsequently the order was increased to 9000 units, with the option to produce 8000 more if the government needed them. Other manufacturers in the program included Packard, Ford and Marmon. Lincoln had delivered 6500 of the 400 hp, V-12, overhead camshaft engines when production ceased in January 1919. Although it is widely reported otherwise, a few Liberty engines did see action in France as power for the American version of the DeHaviland DH4.



After the war, a number of firms, most significantly Boeing, were contracted by the U.S. Army to re-manufacture surplus DH-4s to DH-4B standard's. In 1919, the DH-4B was standardized by the US Post Office, being modified to be flown from the rear cockpit with a 400 lb (180 kg) watertight mail compartment replacing the forward cockpit. The airmail DH-4Bs were later modified with revised landing gear and an enlarged rudder. DH-4Bs were used to establish a coast-to-coast, transcontinental airmail service between San Francisco and New York, a distance of 2,680 mi (4,310 km), involving night flight, the first services starting on 21 August 1924. The DH-4 continued in Post Office service until 1927, when the last airmail routes were passed to private contractors.

Information from Wikipedia, Saga of U.S. Airmail Service, Airmail & Airway Beacons

What's In a Name?

Ever hear of Beacon Hill or Beacon Hill Drive? What did the names come from? In the early days of flight, pilots had no modern navigation aids to help them find their way. Pilots flew by watching for visual landmarks or by using automobile maps. These were fine for daytime, but airmail planes operated around the clock. In 1919, the U. S. Army Air Service experimented with bonfires built along the routes to help night pilots. This led to building lighted rotating beacons by 1923. Spaced some 10 to 25 miles apart, their lights were visible for 40 miles in clear weather. By 1933 the country had 1500 beacons across air routes covering 18,000 miles. Their 5 million candle power searchlights beamed a light parallel to the ground pointing the way. For daytime identification each tower had painted site numbers on its shed.

Bainbridge Township had one of the beacons along the route, at the top of the hill just beyond what has come to be called "Beacon Hill Drive." The tower was built on Joe Zeithami's property, which was later purchased by Charles English to become Beacon Hill housing development.

In 1928 the Aeronautics Board began experimenting with radio warnings for pilots about weather conditions. This led to radio beacons, the improvement of radio technology in the 1930's and during World War II. By the 1950's all of the visual beacons had been replaced with radio communications. *From the History of Flight by the US Centennial and a Bainbridge Historical Newsletter, Spring 2007.*

1811 and 1817 from page 1
 combined at that time; neither is it clear as to why Auburn was separated from Bainbridge Township about a year later. Perhaps officials realized they had created a single township much larger than originally intended by the earlier plans for 16, approximately five-square miles in size, townships in Geauga County. Or perhaps disagreements between leaders in the two areas led to the split. At any rate, "Bainbridge Township" was officially designated as a named, governed, and mapped township in Geauga County, state of Ohio in 1817 and our area never dropped the designation.

Having said that 1817 was the official date we became a town-

ship, it is noteworthy that residents in 1911 held a large, colorful "Bainbridge Centennial" celebration. An article from the "Gauga Republican Record" of October 25, 1911 mentions over 400 people attended a large parade with bands, floats, autos and pioneer representations. Pupils from Troy, Auburn and Bainbridge schools participated in races. Dinner was served under large tents. Prominent men like Judge J.O. Cunningham of Illinois, the husband of a daughter of Porter McConoughey, spoke, as did Judge F.A. Henry of Cleveland, a former Bainbridge boy. Albert Haskins spoke about the history of the early settlers as did Martin Miner, father of Clare and great grandfather of Ron Miner, who still lives in Bainbridge. Pianists and violinists played and there was dancing. The town hall was an "old curiosity shop" displaying historic artifacts, enjoyed by all. The newspaper quoted the welcoming speaker saying, "It is a solemn thing to be 100 years old, and celebrate the centennial anniversary of your birth." Hence, it is clear that Bainbridge residents in 1911 believed "the birth" year of Bainbridge to be worthy of celebrating, indeed.

In 1976, Bainbridge Township residents again remembered their early history when they had an extensive celebration coinciding with our country's bicentennial celebration of the Declaration of Independence and the "birth" of the United States of America. In 2011 no celebration was held in Bainbridge to remember the "birth" of our community when pioneers first settled. It does appear that initial ideas are being considered for some form of commemoration in 2017.

Barbara Hess



1911 centennial parade float in front of the Sons of Temperance Hall on Rt. 306. The Hall was later moved to become the rear portion of the town hall where trustees now meet.



Everyone enjoys a garage sale! It's an opportunity to clean out closets, donate unused stuff to a good cause, and make space for "new" items. The historic society held such a sale on June 8. Tables lined the sidewalks laden with organized low-priced bargains. An estimated 300 people came by; probably three-fourths of all items displayed were sold, with about \$1,000 being raised. Not a bad first outing.

Everyone helps with renovation

In early 2013, township trustees granted to the BTHS the right to manage the north side of the Bissell-Tucek House. That portion had been added to the original house in the 1870s by the Edick family, the second owner of the famed structure. Various owners of the large home rented to tenants over the past one hundred + years, either on a temporary or long-term basis. We know, for example, that Jack and Dottie Batchelor lived in the house when Jack was teaching at the Bainbridge School. Bruce and Gerry Chittock were tenants also. This section contained a kitchen, living room, two upstairs bedrooms and bath.

Recognizing that historical paper documents and water don't mix, and the possibility of water leakage damaging the lower floor, the decision was made to gut the two adjoining upstairs bathrooms and create a research/file room and library. Due to a myriad of holes caused by plumbing in the old flooring and major leveling problems, new cherry flooring was required. Several hundred tongue-and-groove board feet, were donated by a member, but installed by Glenn Wozniak, a retired professional carpenter and also a society member. Here Glenn takes a rest while installing a floor board. After all his work on the south side of the House (originally built

by Justus Bissell), which was the principal home for 9 families since 1835, Dick Newton then took his talents to the north side and framed the area that creates a research/file room. He leveled ceiling areas as well. He suggested we use extra knotty pine boards that had become available as a result of our enlarging the master bedroom on the second floor to frame-out a closet area that will be used for display purposes. These boards had probably been added to the house by Frank Tucek in the 1950s when he made significant updates. Our group is blessed to have the carpentry talents of both Glenn and Dick and other members - like Mareen Wolfe who refinished floors and steps and painted rooms in the 1835 section.



Dick Newton



Glenn Wozniak

Township Supports BTHS

A good marriage occurs when partners "give and take." We are pleased with the joint objectives of township trustees and the BTHS to preserve the historic home and create a museum to contain notable artifacts from "old Bainbridge." As responsible landlords, the township has assumed costs to install code-required electricity, insulation and roofing - all on the north side of the Bissell-Tucek House.

The BTHS, through the talents of its membership, but limited treasury, removed all carpeting, tiles and plywood to reach original floor boards. Several members of the township service department assisted with removal of certain walls and ceiling damaged during relocation. We will assume responsibility for internet and scanner wiring, drywall, restoration of the original floor boards, wall painting, and eventual installment of a chair lift. When you see Trustees Chris Horn, Jeff Markley and Lorrie Benza, **please thank them for supporting this joint endeavor.**



Everyone helps with renovation

When we recognized that very little of the old flooring in the two bathrooms at the Bissell-Tucek House could not be saved and re-used in any fashion, the call went out to BTHS member Hugh Edwards, who has a family-owned barn and workshop in the township. Here Hugh looks approvingly as son, Hugh, runs a board through a molder to create tongue-in-groove that creates a tight fit when flooring is laid. About 300 board feet were donated. The cherry trees had once grown in the Canyon Lake subdivision. **Thanks Hugh, and sons Joe and Hugh!**

Clothesline History

Remembering Mom's Clothesline. There is one thing that's left out. We had a long wooden pole (clothes pole, we called it a "clothes prop") that was used to push the clotheslines up so that longer items (sheets/pants/etc.) didn't brush the ground and get dirty. Uncles went into the woods and cut small trees about 8 feet long with limbs (prongs) at the top.

Use to put apples on the tips and "fling" them 50/75 yards...what a blast..

You have to be a "certain age" to appreciate this one.... I can hear my mother now.....



THE BASIC RULES FOR CLOTHESLINES:

(If you don't even know what clotheslines are, better skip this.)

1. You had to hang the socks by the toes... NOT the top.
2. You hung pants by the BOTTOM/cuffs... NOT the waistbands.
3. You had to WASH the clothesline(s) before hanging any clothes - walk the entire length of each line with a damp cloth around the lines.
4. You had to hang the clothes in a certain order, and always hang "whites" with "whites," and hang them first.
5. You NEVER hung a shirt by the shoulders - always by the tail! What would the neighbors think?
6. Wash day on a Monday! NEVER hang clothes on the weekend, or on Sunday, for Heaven's sake!
7. Hang the sheets and towels on the OUTSIDE lines so you could hide your

"unmentionables" in the middle (perverts & busybodies, y'know!)

8. It didn't matter if it was sub-zero weather... clothes would "freeze-dry."

9. ALWAYS gather the clothes pins when taking down dry clothes! Pins left on the lines were "tacky"!

10. If you were efficient, you would line the clothes up so that each item did not need two clothes pins, but shared one of the clothes pins with the next washed item.

11. Clothes off of the line before dinner time, neatly folded in the clothes basket, and ready to be ironed.

12. IRONED????!! Well, that's a whole OTHER subject! Tuesday was "ironing" day

Officers 2013

President

Charles Hesse
216-407-2616 (C)

VP & Program Chr

Donna Yuse
543-3199

VP & Membership Chr

Marge Cook
440-338-5375

Secretary

Harriet Novy
440-543-9206

Treasurer

Donna Lucas
440-543-9206

Editor & Publisher

Bill Takacs
440-543-4991

Meetings of the Bainbridge Township Historical Society are held the second Wednesday of the month (September through June) at 7:30 p.m. generally in the Burns-Lindow Building at the corner of Route 306 and Bainbridge-Solon Road.

**Bainbridge Township Historical Society
17870 Chillcothe Road
Bainbridge Township
OH 44023-0363**



Town Hall—Circa 1914
Now—Burns Lindow Bldg

Everyone enjoys the refreshments of our monthly meetings; so remember when the refreshment sheet gets passed around to please pick a convenient date and add your name to the list to provided a voluntary item. This makes the job of our Refreshment Committee much easier. Barb Phan and Lois Little are our chairwomen; besides their setting up tables and making beverages, they too often have to make numerous calls to find bakery volunteers. Call Barb Phan at 440-543-7972 if you can help.

Thank you to the following for hosting refreshments.

May, 2013 -- Joyce Southerland, Mary Ann Moreno and Danya Morgan

June, 2013 -- Picnic -- Everyone came with a dish

September, 2013 -- Carol Malz, Cyndy Vogley, Lois Little and Janet Novak

Welcome New Members

Franklyn and Marion Perry

Robert and Shirley Reed

We will have the Bissell-Tucek House & Museum open on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 1-4 p.m. through December. Extra days will likely be added around Thanksgiving and Christmas. The House contains numerous memorabilia depicting old Bainbridge history. The public is encouraged to visit and receive a tour from one of our docents. Admission is free.

Check out our web page www.bainbridgemory.org

The historic society's acting curator Elaine Witmer requests that those desiring to donate or loan artifacts to the Bissell-Tucek Museum to please delay donations at this time. (If you absolutely cannot delay, contact Elaine at 440-543-3442, and we'll see if we can find a temporary storage area.) The on-going refurbishing of the north section of the House has us very cramped with much dust. Elaine and Maren Wolfe are currently busy consolidating and cataloguing the many artifacts already received. We will be most welcoming of additional historic memorabilia in a few months. *Thank you.*

We're always looking for ideas and articles for this newsletter. If you have a story to share, please let me know. If you would rather not write it, call me at 440-543-4991 and we'll try to get on tape or take notes. We really need to hear from you. *Bill Takacs*

Just a reminder – Our constitution states that membership dues are to be paid in September of each year. Deadline for payment is December 1. Those current members who have not paid by December 1 will not receive a newsletter. New members who joined May-August of 2013 will be carried through September 2014. Annual dues are: \$10 for singles, \$20 for family. Life Membership for Individual or Family - \$100. Make checks payable to Bainbridge Township Historical Society (BTHS). Payment should be given to Marge Cook at meetings or mailed to her at 116 Leaview Lane, Chagrin Falls, OH 44022

Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter
17870 Chillcothe Road
Bainbridge Twp.OH 44023

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

2013 Meeting Schedule

October 9th, 2013 - Molly Serbi, KSU, Geauga Campus, Families settling in Geauga County brought religion and cultural values from the east. Churches had revivals and placed symbols on the tombstones representing this new spiritualism.

November 13, 2013 - Cheryl McClellan, genealogist, Chardon Library, the "pre-historic era". Stone tools, pottery, and camp site remains tell us how these people lived.

December 11, 2013 - Holiday Party, more to follow.

January 8, 2014 - Bill Jackson. "The Resorts of Little Mountain."

February 12, 2014 - Dan Ruminski, telling us about John D. Rockefeller.

March 12, 2014 – Cathie Winans. Ex. Dir., Shaker Historical Society. "The story of the Van Sweringen Brothers; developers of Shaker Heights, and the S.H. Rapid

April 9, 2014 - Foster Brown as "Sergi, the Voyager" an early American fur trader

May 14, 2014 - Ralph Pflingsten. "The History of the Ravenna Arsenal," the story of the former defense complex that employed 16,000 people and built 36 million bombs.

June 14, 2014 – Picnic