

FIRELANDS

HISTORICAL • SOCIETY • 1857

Value of History and Importance of Preservation Firelands Historical Society

No doubt we have all been impacted by the events of 2020, and the Firelands Historical Society likewise has had its share of difficulties. This past year, we have seen a decline in attendance and donations, the cancellation of fund-raising events and school visits; in short, activity has come to a near standstill.

Our board nonetheless has been quite busy during this time. They have had numerous meetings, many by way of ZOOM, to focus on the above-mentioned issues and are determined to confront these and other challenges ahead.

The history of the Firelands, as you know, is one that is unique to our nation. The “Fire Sufferers” were literally given a new lease on life here when their Connecticut homes were destroyed during the Revolutionary War. Steadfast pioneers, many were innovators, industrialists and inventors who revolutionized America and changed the world. It is our responsibility to not only preserve their memory and acknowledge their accomplishments, but also to celebrate the legacy of future generations.

The Firelands Historical Society is planning on expanding its complex to further highlight the many treasures within our archives, representing ALL communities within the Firelands area. New ideas are being discussed to showcase the contents of our museum and research center, making it one of the destinations for the tourists who frequent north central Ohio. Workshops and speakers are being discussed, along with online programs to assist in this venture. In a few weeks we will share with you our vision, our short and long-term goals, and explain our plan in detail.

We are fortunate to have the support of Mr. Richard Black and his wife Marjorie. It is through their generous donation that we now have on display our amazing Native American and Giant Sloth LifeForms exhibits. We likewise encourage you to share in this undertaking and make this expansion a reality by contributing however you can. We are always in need of volunteers to help at the complex and assist in fund-raising events.

You can see the progress we are making by hitting “Like” on Facebook and visiting our website at FirelandsMuseum.com. We think you will be amazed at what is instore for our future.

“Never let the things you can’t do stop you from doing what you can.” Ronald Reagan

*Dan Rood
President Firelands Historical Society*

The Firelands Historical Society will have our first live program on February 10 at 7:00pm. This will be through ZOOM. You will need to connect with your computer to.... <https://zoom.us>

Go to “Join a Meeting” and enter information below:

Meeting ID. 875 9506 7436

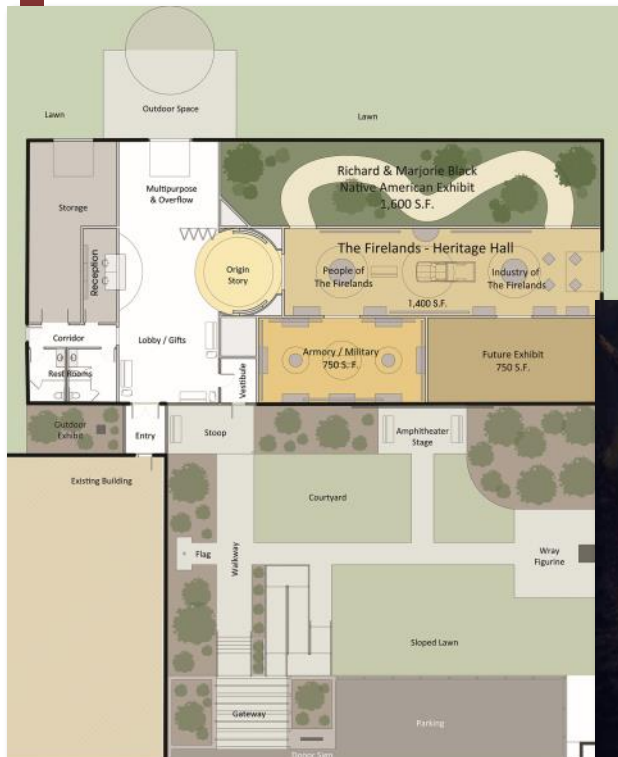
Passcode FHS

We will be discussing the future plans for the museum.

This is our first attempt so please be patient when signing in.

PREVIEW OF OUR VISION

Artist rendition of future FHS expansion. 7800 sq ft addition on north side of current building.



Proposed Schematic Plan
New Gateway, Courtyard & Museum
Not To Scale



Richard & Marjorie Black - Exhibit

Never Enough Buttons!



Bertha Daisy Dolbee had an active imagination. She saw in buttons' shapes, sizes, and decorations, stories waiting to be told.

Bertha was born into this world in 1882 and left it in her wake 90 years later. She was the eldest of seven children born to Frank M. Lutts and Mayflower descendant, Mary Eliza Soule. We lovingly knew her as aunt Bertha, though she was our mother's aunt.

She began collecting buttons about the time of the Second World War when she was given a number of old ones belonging to her grandmother. Other buttons she received from "pick boxes" which were sent to collectors. Bertha cherished those that called out to her to be set aside and later stitched into a folk art button picture. Of special importance were her faith and the family's pride in their connection to Mayflower passenger, George Soule. *That* is what inspired Bertha's creativity.

The Button Church, pictured here, is the culmination of her search – with her family's participation – for interesting buttons. Not content to add everyday buttons to her growing collection, Bertha wanted buttons obtained from peo-

ple of note: General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mussolini, Britain's Queen Mother. An inveterate letter writer, she contacted people far and wide in hopes of acquiring a button with significance attached to it. She succeeded.

When I was a teenager, I visited aunt Bertha at her Christie Avenue home in Norwalk, Ohio. There was a stern word of warning before being ushered into her house, "Do not disturb the cardboard box under the chair." Aunt Bertha had a lifelong fondness for snakes. A harmless snake lived in that cardboard box under the chair. It scared the dickens out of me! I brought up the topic of her Button Church which she happily pulled out from storage to tell me a few stories found in the more than 3,000 assorted buttons.

Lost to time is the booklet created which told the origin of her special buttons and their placement on her Button Church. We can look beyond that loss to note some special features.

Take a close look at the center top where the white mayflower is represented; to the right is a button portraying the Mayflower ship. Various birds perch in the tree seen behind the church's roof, which is shingled with jet and black buttons. A Christmas tree is festooned with baubles and lit candles, and a winged angel in white is seen in the right window. Underwear buttons made of bone, luster, and china comprise the walkway where, she told me, "Little elves are at play in the flowers."

Buttons with an historical significance are segregated in the lower center section (above the toy soldier's feet). Included are two buttons which picture George Washington, Daniel Boone, Captain John Smith, Molly Pitcher, and the Statue of Liberty.

Her oldest button, made by American colonists over 200 years ago, is located within this historical group. It's a crude brown button, hand-made from the horn or hooves of an animal.

A close look at the white triangular area on the lower left tells the story of Bertha's love of fishing, with boats and fish prominent on the buttons. It is in this same area that a swastika button has been sewn in place, whose story we do not know.

Cast your eyes upward and to the right of this triangular area. Do you see the bright blue glass button? Most prized of all her buttons are the miniature paperweights. Rare today, these were popular a number of years ago. Aunt Bertha owned at least one button that, in her words, "Is an original, a first issue...and in fact, the only one like it in the world." It was designed and made especially for her. The button reads: Bertha, 9-13-1882.

Aunt Bertha lived in a one-bedroom apartment in this house at 86 Christie Avenue; it was entered from the porch on the left.

Aunt Bertha was a loveable character of the first order. She truly loved snakes: she wove them into her hair! Her husband deplored them – and I think that is why she kept one in a box throughout their marriage. Fly fishing was one of her many passions. Her adult daughter lived across the street where they would go for evening walks, but her daughter was quite afraid of the dark. Aunt Bertha tied a string around each of their fingers and walked her home with this safety from across the street. My sister Melba visited Shady Lane Rest Home - the "old folks home" - where she asked directions to Aunt Bertha's room. The ladies smirked and pointed thumbs 'that-a-way'. She spied a peanut butter jar with a knife stuck in it, cracker crumbs littering the dresser top and Aunt Bertha engrossed in writing letters, mindless of cleanliness being next to godliness. And, oh, could she write. She penned memories that were published in the local newspaper, sending brief articles about the scourge of starlings, tree roots, tomatoes; the picture of a Hun story, and the maple syrup pie recipe (which I made) for winter enjoyment when canned fruit was low in the cellar, and a poem about apples; and, she had songs published. Each Christmas I post on Facebook her memory of a wax doll she received for Christmas, having placed it under the coal stove to keep warm overnight – and, oh, how she bawled in the morning.

Note: Aunt Bertha's Button Church is in the loving care of a great-granddaughter in Norwalk, Ohio.

Lineage: George Soule¹, John², Moses³, Isaac⁴, Moses⁵, Charles Williams⁶, Charles Williams⁷, Charles Williams⁸, Mary Eliza Lutts⁹, Bertha Lutts Dolbee¹⁰

Respectfully submitted,
Anna L. (Gregory) Bristol

Recent Activity

The Firelands Historical Society recently sponsored a "Sloth-Naming Contest" to christen the prehistoric ground sloth in our museum's latest exhibit. "Speedy the Sloth" was the name chosen from the participants from all the Huron County area elementary schools. Naming rights went to Jennifer Meagrow's 3rd grade classroom at Monroeville Elementary, where they currently fly the banner that represents the actual size of this creature, whose remains (also on display) were found in the Willard area by Roe Niver sometime before 1915.

The class will have its photo, school name and their winning name placed on a placard in front of the exhibit. New London Elementary won recognition for having the most classrooms involved, and their 4th grade digital class won the random drawing for a field trip to the museum – when the risk of CoVid 19 subsides, of course! A big "Thank-you" goes out to all the teachers who took the time to get their students excited about our museum and our local history!

Also, the FHS now features a monthly article showcasing an artifact from either the Preston-Wickham House or the Laning-Young Research Center in the online news *norwalkohionews.com*. Thus far, readers have been introduced to the Monroeville quilt, which was sewn to raise money for the Monroeville town hall, our giant ground sloth, and the implements used by Alman Ruggles to survey the 500,000 acres which was granted the Fire-Sufferers of the Revolutionary War and which later became known as "The Firelands". **We've really got something here**, and we believe it's important that everyone share in our historical treasures, as well as our dedication to preserve them and our history!

2020 Accessions

The following are gifts received during the year 2020

<i>Betty Weber</i>	27 Berry Restaurant pictures
Ramona Keefer	<i>James Van Dusen</i> - military related articles
Karen Seager	Patty Play Pal doll
Zoltan Takacs	Rocking Chair
Michael Bick Family	Small circa 1919 Corona Typewriter
Norwalk Arts Center	Edison cabinet phonograph and 50 Edison records
Tami Robinson	2 theater folding chairs from former Schine Theater
Jeff Barton	Ohio House of Rep desk & chair used by George Thomas - 1899 -1905.
Shirley Hazelwood	8 depression "Penny Dolls"
	Norwalk Souvenirs - 6 ruby glass & 1 china plate, wooden cabinet toilet, Vapo-Cresolene vaporizer,
	Child's player piano with 6 player rolls.
Robert Martin	German emblem removed from a plane's tail.
	Painted picture of Cory Mill, Monroeville, Ohio

Donations to the Laning Young Library

Jamie Ebert	Knights of Pythias poster
Shawna Raymond	Rouse Bly family history
Luane & Eric Ford	Blinsley Furniture Store pictures, etc
	Norwalk Softball scrape book for 1935, 1937, 1938
Jennifer Grose	2 Norwalk High School postcards
Rachel Daniel	5 Rob Harst Renderings
John White	Searles Family updated editions of Vol 4 and Vol 5
	Mathys Family of Adams, Co. Indiana history (some local)
Zoltan Takacs	7 Postcards of Huron, OH, 3 Milan Square Daguerrotypes
Firelands Fed Credit U.	5 metal storage files
George Myers	"Memories of My Heart" poems by Frances Myers – 1920

2020 Accessions

The following are gifts received during the year 2020 ..continued

Margaret Drury
Terry & Rick Back
Summit HS, NJ
Roger Dickman
Huron Co. Gen Soc

Poem by John Wesley Sage of Richmond Township
2 photos of W & L Erie Railroad Wreck, Norwalk – 1914
“Ephemera” - Early Norwalk School paper
His publication - Monroeville, OH history “Our Town”
2019 Obituary Book

Diane Ruggles Meyer—2nd Vice President

Diane was born at Willard Mercy Hospital and was a graduate of South Central High School in Greenwich, Ohio and Stautzenberger Business College in Toledo, Ohio.

Her childhood was spent on the family farm in North Fairfield. She spent a lot of time at her grandparent’s dairy farm down the road with much family living all around. Many years of 4-H lead me to being a 4-H advisor for 15 years and a supervisor at our Huron County Fair.

Married with 3 children who attended who St. Joseph Elementary School in Monroeville, she was part of the development of Helping Hands of St. Joseph and became President for 8 years. She led a team of volunteers who started Helping Hands of St. Joseph Craft Bazaar and raised enough money to put a new roof on the school, turned a storage room into a library, added a computer room and multiple other endeavors.

She is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Mayflower Society, Jamestown Society, Charlemagne Linage Society and First Families of Huron County where my Ruggles family settled in Peru Township in 1818. Currently she is President of Huron County Genealogy Society and 2nd Vice President of Firelands Historical Society. Retiring from the Monroeville Public Library in May, 2020 she currently has made of new career researching family trees for clients who seek to find out from where their family comes.



Chris Hipp—1st Vice President

Chris is currently the 1st vice-president of the Firelands Historical Society and has been on the board since 2014. He grew up in Norwalk, attended St. Paul High School, and graduated from the University of Dayton and Southern Illinois University. Since 1992 he has worked as a financial advisor with Hipp and Associates, a firm he established , and recently brought on his daughter, Emily, as his successor in the business. Chris lives in Norwalk with his wife, Janet, and has three grown children and two grandchildren. In addition to his board position, Chris is also an advisor for the Norwalk Parochial School Trust and the Thomas Reynolds Trust for the benefit of St. Mary parishioners. Previously he was a member of the Huron County Mental Health and Addiction Services board for 11 years.

Chris has always had an interest in history. "With history, you always know what has happened. With the future nobody has a clue. There are many exciting things going on at the museum and I am proud to be a part of the recent additions as well as the long-term plans we have for the expansion of our facilities."

Firelands Historical Society
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Norwalk, OH 44857-0572

Firelands Historical Society Officers:

Dan Rood, President
Chris Hipp, 1st Vice President
Diane Meyer, 2nd Vice President
Sally Jenkins, Secretary
Kathleen Schaffer, Treasurer

Annual Membership Dues:

Individual - \$20
Husband and Wife - \$35
Business - \$100

Life Membership Dues:

Individual - \$500 (or \$50 annually for 10 years)
Business - \$1000 (or \$100 annually for 10 years)

Send Correspondence to:

Firelands Historical Society
P.O. Box 572
Norwalk, OH 44857-0572
Museum phone: 419.668.6038
Research Center phone: 419.663.0392
E-mail: curator@firelandsmuseum.com

Museum Hours

May, September and October - Saturday and Sunday 11-3.

June thru August - Thursday thru Sunday 11-3.

Closed Monday—Wednesday

For group tours and other special arrangements, call 419.668.6038
or E-mail: curator@firelandsmuseum.com.