



A Walk Through History

The Westerville Public Library
Local History Resource Center Newsletter
November 2006

Pieces of History



**State Street Parade
circa 1900**

At the Local History Center we collect pieces of Westerville history – photographs, clothing, objects, and written accounts. Residents and former residents of Westerville drop off and mail items to us that have a connection to events that happened in Westerville, groups that met in Westerville, and people who lived in Westerville. Through these donations the collection of interesting items related to our history continues to grow.

With the new display cases in the Local History Center we are able to showcase items from our collection.



**State Street Parade
circa 1930**

When we receive items it is our responsibility to protect them by making sure they are handled carefully and stored properly. The library places items in acid-free boxes and folders to preserve them. When individuals handle the items they wear gloves to prevent the oils and dirt on their hands from damaging the items.



**Earliest photograph of
State Street**



N. State Street in winter

In this issue of *A Walk Through History* you will see some of the items in the library's local history collection. On this front page we are sharing several of the photographs from our collection.

Maud's Diary

In 1880 when Maud Dwyer was 15 years old she kept a diary of her activities. This diary is part of the local history collection at the library. Below are excerpts:

January 31 — Nice & bright but cool today. Came home about 10 o'clock not feeling very well. Have not been out of the house today. Pasted a lot of pieces in my scrapbook this afternoon and evening. Dr. Coble was up a little while.



February 11 — Was at school and had fun, snow-balling. Rose lost her knife and I got a new one. Stopped at the milliner store and selected a hat to keep off freckles.

March 3 — Very nice today. Was at school and took Lill with me. Somebody I know was very glad to see her. We cousins were at a taffy party at Titia's. Had a splendid time and lots to eat. Staid to practice for public after school. Arthur went away on the 8:30 train.

May 17 — Nice and bright today. Blacked the stove this morning, helped Eddie paint his bricks, got dinner, was up town a couple times. Got my Youth's Companion. Aunt Julia's folks didn't come down this evening. Bishop Hanby died today.

June 11 — Got up at half past four this morning to get ready. We started at 7:30. There were 3 buggies, 1 spring wagon The falls are lovely. We had such a nice time, but am very tired this evening.

June 23 — Minnie King was married this morning and went right on the 9:20 train to Dayton. Ma, Aunt E. and Uncle G were at the wedding and gave them a fruit dish. The census taker was around this morning.

June 29 — Ma and I washed this morning but didn't get our clothes quite dry as it has been drizzling and raining a good deal. Some of the clothes dried and we ironed them. Did not get any mail but a card from Pa. Practiced a good deal this afternoon.

July 29 —Commenced reading Oliver Twist this morning. This afternoon all of us girls went out to Lockharts to see a match game of baseball. The Johnsville boys beat. Pa, Ma and Edie came over today. We were all at Cousin Marie's for supper. Went to singing with the girls.

August 11 — Nellie and I started to college this morning. Think I shall like it very much.

Maud Dwyer died during her senior year at Otterbein College.

Telephone service



Telephone service for Westerville residents began around 1901. Local residents were not thrilled about telephone crews digging holes in their yards for the telephone poles and wires to make service happen. One resident on Park Street took matters into her own hands and placed a board across the newly dug hole in her front yard. She stood on the board – taking turns with a neighbor to guard against the pole being placed. Other Park Street residents encouraged the protest by bringing soup to the woman and her substitute as they stood in the hole. It began to rain and the woman and her neighbors were chased indoors. The telephone pole was placed in the hole and telephone service spread through the town.



Westerville, Ohio, Aug. 2, 1941 No. 2

Placing a telephone call involved using telephone operators. In the early days if a person wanted to call Columbus, he would dial the Westerville operator who would dial the person being called. When the Columbus operator had them on the line, she would dial the Westerville operator who would dial the original caller. It was not a quick operation like it is today.

In the days before 9-1-1, cell phones, and a professional fire department, the telephone operators were an important part of emergency services in Westerville. If the one Westerville policeman was needed an operator would switch on a light on the outside of their building. The officer's job was to walk through the Uptown area. When he saw the signal he knew he should go to the operators to find out where he was needed. When the operators received a call reporting a fire they would call all the neighbors around the home on fire so the neighbors could run to the home to fight the fire and to aid the family.

Westerville Fair

A year after its founding in 1871, the Westerville Agricultural Society bought land on Walnut Street east of where Whittier School stands today. They began to hold the Westerville Fair on these grounds.

For many years the fair was a much-anticipated event in the Westerville community. The 1892 *Public Opinion* stated, “Friday morning the people began to pour in from all directions. They came on horseback, footback, in buggies, wagons, carts, etc., any way to get to the fair. The officials say there were at least 2,500 people on the grounds Friday and 1,200 to 1,500 on Saturday.” The population of Westerville was only slightly over 1,300 people!

Horse races, bicycle races, band concerts and balloon ascensions were just a few of the attractions of the Westerville Fair. The fair had exhibits of fruits and vegetables grown in Westerville. Livestock and horses were all on display. Ladies exhibited quilts and other handmade objects. Tents had displays of the latest in farm equipment. One year people attending oohed and aahed over a printing press and demonstrations of it printing copies of the local newspaper.

In 1893 the fair committee came up with the idea of holding a wedding at the fairgrounds. They advertised for a young couple who would be willing to hold their wedding ceremony before a crowd of strangers at the grandstand on the racetrack. Local businesses, excited by this event and eager to have advertising, gave the newlyweds everything from an entire set of bedroom furniture to two free haircuts to entice them to have a very public ceremony. One young couple agreed to hold their ceremony at the fair and were married in front of a crowd estimated at 3,500 – at that time the largest ever for a single day at the Westerville Fair.

The fairgrounds were moved during the 1930s to a field near Longfellow School and later to the Alum Creek Park after it was completed. Through the 1930s the fair became less popular until in 1939 it was not held because of a lack of interest and poor attendance. Later events were called the Westerville Fair but did not have the same type of events as the earlier fairs because Westerville grew and the community was less agricultural.



Activities



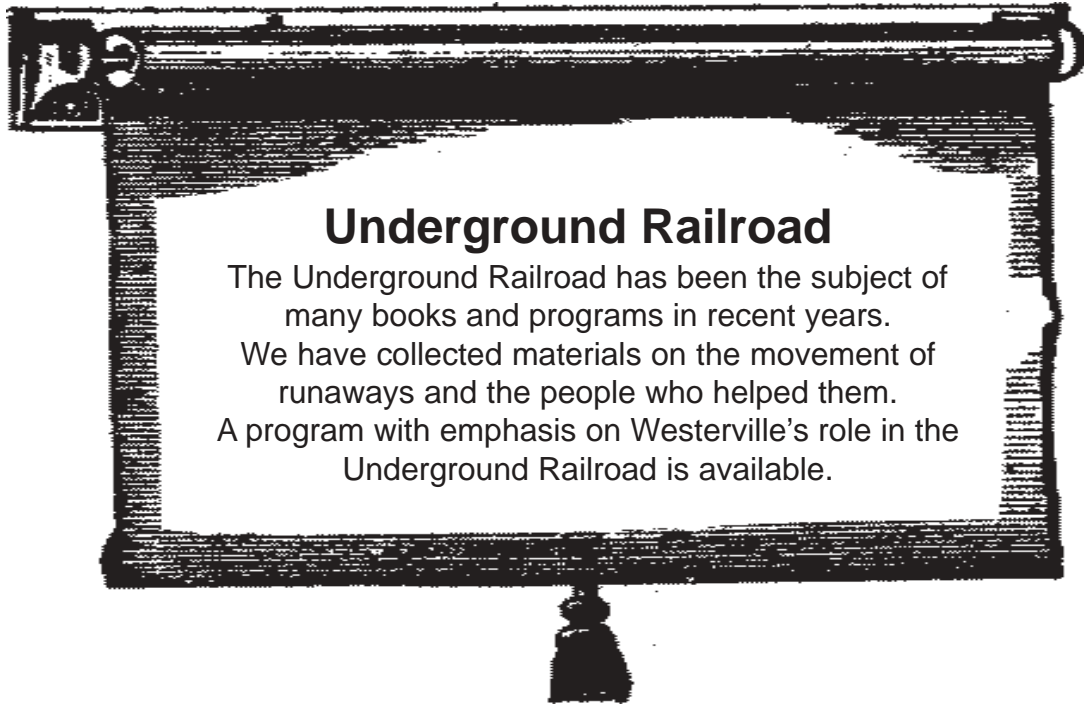
Language Arts:

On page two you read some of Maud's diary entries. Write a diary entry for yourself. You might write about something you did at school or at home. Remember to put the date you are writing the diary entry on your paper.



Art:

On page three and four you saw pictures and read about items we have in the Local History Center. Look around your house and draw a picture of one of your favorite items. Pick something important to you.



Schedule a local history program for your classroom

We will share the early history of Westerville with stories of the first settlers and Native Americans in the area. Your students will hear about the milestones of transportation in our community and see old photographs from our collection.



Any of the above programs can be scheduled by contacting Beth Weinhardt, coordinator of local history, at the Westerville Public Library at 882-7277 ext. 160 or by e-mail at bweinhar@westervillelibrary.org.