



A Walk Through History

The Westerville Public Library
Local History Resource Center Newsletter
October 2008

Sharp's Settlement

Our community was originally called Sharp's Settlement, named for Garrett and Anna Goodspeed Sharp who arrived in this part of Ohio and settled 450 acres in Franklin and Delaware Counties in approximately 1810. Garrett Sharp served in the War of 1812 in the 3rd Regiment of Ohio Militia. A founding member of the Methodist Church, Garrett very generously gave land for a church building and also gave land for the Old Methodist/Lincoln Street Cemetery. He also served his community as a township trustee when the first township government was formed.

In 1839 Sharp was instrumental in the formation of the Blendon Young Men's Seminary in cooperation with the Westervelt family. When this school failed because it was competing with another Methodist school up the road, Ohio Wesleyan, the grounds and buildings lay vacant. The United Brethren Church took over the property and formed Otterbein.

Garrett and Anna Sharp were the parents of 10 children – 8 sons and 2 daughters. Many of the sons settled in the area and assisted their father in his crusade to hide runaway slaves. Garrett died in 1857 before he could see the fulfillment of his anti-slavery sentiments.

Today his descendants live across the country. They joined forces to purchase a historic marker to be placed on the property of Stephen Sharp, the son of Garrett and Anna, to celebrate the legacy of Garrett and his family.



Sharp Homes

On a clear night in 1849 the north star was sighted and construction was started the very next day on the Garrett Sharp home. The north star was used to place the floor plan for the home in a true north, south, east, west orientation. Bricks were fired on the property. The rafters were constructed from large logs with the bark still on them. The woodwork in the impressive home was black walnut. Today this building at 259 N. State Street is used as an office building. All of the barns and other out buildings that would have been part of a working farm are gone.

Several of Garrett Sharp's sons built homes which are still part of our community. Stephen Sharp, born in 1807 in New York before the family immigrated to Ohio, built the home at 8025 Africa Road. Stephen was a school teacher and farmer. As a child he was injured in a fire and lost the use of one hand. His house had specially handcrafted doorknobs to help him deal with his disabled hand. These doorknobs are still in this home which is no longer in the Sharp family, but is still used as a family home.

Joseph Sharp, born in 1805, is another Sharp son who built his home on Africa Road. His dwelling stands at 8216 Africa Road and was constructed in 1843. This home built of brick and covered in stucco has a cornerstone that reads "J. Sharp 1843" which proudly tells of its heritage. Today this family home is part of the Yarnell Farm which for many years provided produce and pumpkins for Westerville residents.

Another Sharp home was torn down in 2001. This home, built in 1857, was the home of Garry Sharp. It stood on property which is part of the St. Paul Church and School grounds. The Clinton Sharp home still stands at 328 N. State Street. Clinton was a grandson of Garrett Sharp and a Civil War veteran who enlisted at age 17 and served for three years. He was wounded at the battle of Petersburg in June 1864.

The Sharp properties still stand today to remind us of this family's contributions to our community and their dedication to a cause.

The Underground Railroad



Garrett Sharp Home, 259 N. State Street

The involvement of the Hanby family in the Underground Railroad is well-known. Less noted is the role of Garrett Sharp and his sons. According to written accounts, Garrett Sharp and his sons all helped hide runaway slaves on their properties in northern Franklin and southern Delaware Counties. We know that the Hanby family hid the runaways in the barn behind their home. There are no accounts of where the Sharps hid runaway slaves, whether in their homes or in their barns, but we do know that they registered strong opinions on the side of the anti-slavery forces. Garrett Sharp was active in an abolitionist organization so did not hide his sentiments about the slavery issue.



Sharp Family Homes Marker, 8025 Africa Road

Sharp Family Letters

Anna Clarinda Sharp, daughter of Stephen Sharp, and William Hall of Pharisburg, Ohio, conducted their courtship through mail. We have copies of family correspondence that share some of the letters written by William to Anna. Excerpts from these give us a glimpse into life in the 1870s.

August 18, 1878

*"...Anny I wish you were here today to go to the basket meeting. It is a going to be at Newhouse's Grove. Anny I haven't got my picture taken yet but I'm going to have it taken the first chance. Then I expect you will send me yours if I send you mine. I went to the Oddfellows Picnic the next day after we came home. We had a nice time. Well I will have to quit writing for this time. I will try and write more the next time. Please excuse all bad writing and spelling but remember me and answer my letter. From your ever affectionate faithful friend,
William A. Hall*

November 24, 1878

"...The picture man came over to your Unkels this morning and took his residence again. Us neighbor boys went over and was in the group when it was taken. It is a veary good picture. There is agoing to be an oyster supper over the chapel next Thursday evening. I wish you were hear to attend it."

August 17, 1879

"...I would have written before this but I have not had much chance to write. I have been bizzy to work ever since you were here. I have been giting cut timber for a stable and shed and corn crib. I am going to put it up after corn cutting... I expect you bought a lot of finery when you was at Columbus. I guess I will have to come down and see what you got for me. I have got you that present that we were talking about. Anna I will have to give up going to the state fair. I am sorry to disappoint you. My business is so I can not go very well...I suppose your new cook stove cooks well. I would like to have bin there and eat dinner with you if it was a picnic. I would as soon have a picnic for dinner as a warm meal if they have plenty of pie and cake and something to drink... I guess Albert is cooresponding with some lady down about Westerville. I expect you know her name. I guess he took her a buggy riding when he was down there..."

October 5, 1879

... I took the wring back to exchange for a nother one last Thursday. There wasn't any of the same kind that was the right size so he had to send off and git one made. That is one of the reasons I did not come down. I want to bring the ring when I come. You wrote in your letter that you were afraid you did not make my visit pleasant as you were not feeling well. I feel as though I have been well paid for every time coming down. I enjoyed my visit the best kind..."

December 14, 1879 (discussing their wedding day)

...I have been to town to see about getting my suit. I will be all ready by the time set and hope you will be. I will come down the day before New Years. I let my folks know about it the other day. It rather surprised them. They wasn't looking for it so soon. Father and mother thinks they cannot very well come down. They would like to come the best kind. They think it will be very cold weather. It is most too far for them to come this time of the year...I was talking to my folks about what day we had better come up home. They think it will be as well for us to come the next day. If that day will suit you we will come back with the rest of the folks. You can tell your folks they had all got a bid to come up the day we come..."

Activities

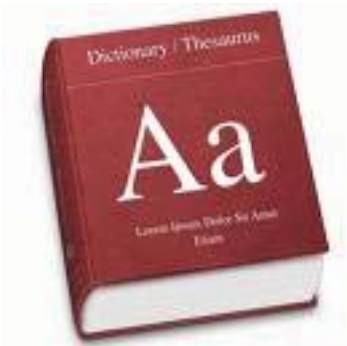
Social Studies:

Garrett Sharp and his sons hid runaway slaves on their property. Write a paragraph with information about the Underground Railroad.



Language Arts:

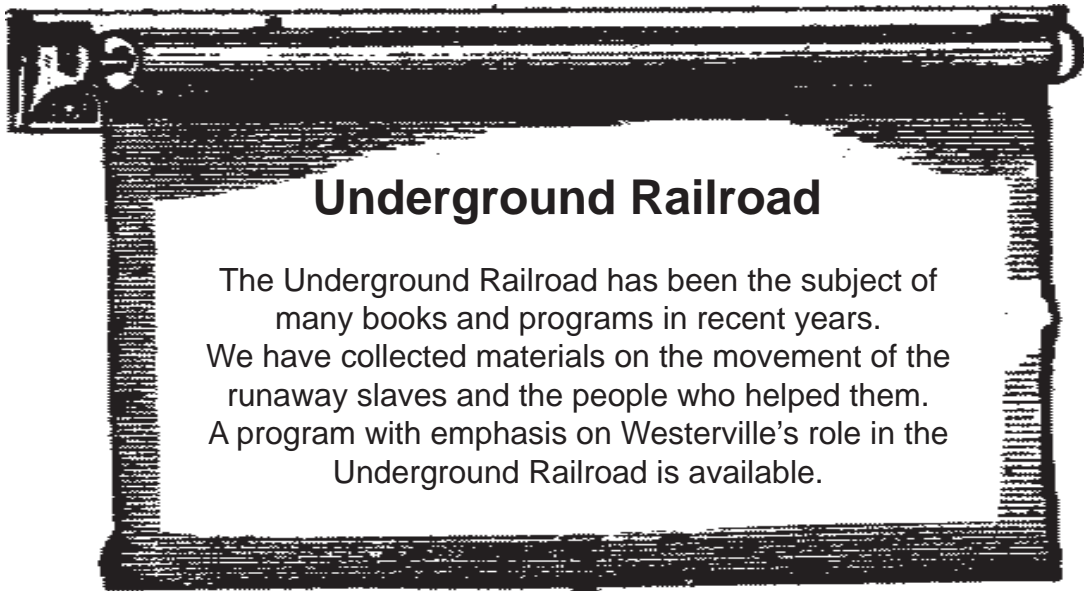
On page four you read excerpts from letters sent between Anna Sharp and William Hall. In the August 18, 1878 entry Will asks Anny to excuse all his “bad writing and spelling.” Read all the entries again and make a list of the words which are misspelled. Beside your list of misspelled words write the correct spelling of each word. Do you think Will had a dictionary to look up words?



Art:

On page two you read about the Sharp homes. Draw a picture of the Garrett Sharp home being built. Was is made entirely of logs? Was the north star involved with the construction of the house?





Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad has been the subject of many books and programs in recent years. We have collected materials on the movement of the runaway slaves and the people who helped them. A program with emphasis on Westerville's role in the Underground Railroad is available.



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.

Time capsule dedication and burial

A committee of Westerville residents, led by Chairwoman Janet Davis, have selected a number of items to place in a time capsule as a culmination of the yearlong 150th celebration. These items are currently on display in the Westerville Public Library.

They will be placed in a time capsule and dedicated at the Tree-Lighting Ceremony Friday, Dec. 5 at 7pm in front of the municipal building. This dedication will wrap up a yearlong celebration of Westerville history and heritage.