



# THE VILLAGE PIONEER



*Journal of the Sheffield Village Historical Society  
& Cultural Center*

*Autumn Comes to Sheffield Village*



This October 2009 view of the entrance to Garfield Farms on Detroit Road illustrates the abundance of sugar and silver maple leaves that grace the ground each year. Last year these trees produced 38 pick-up truckloads of leaves for the compost pile.

## Peter Bungart—Sheffield's Renowned Paleontologist

Peter A. Bungart (1876-1949) was born and raised on the family farm, situated on the banks of the Black River near the southern end of Root Road. The farm included a sizable island in the river where his father, Nicholas, grazed livestock and raised crops. Nicholas had a flat-bottomed scow with a cable arrangement that he used to ferry cows, pigs, horses, and farm implements from the river flats to the island. Although, somewhat inconvenient to farm, the island had good pastureland and rich soil for crops. Sweet corn grew particularly well there. The stone foundation of a barn that once stood on the island can still be seen. Raymond Vietzen, a noted avocational archaeologist from Lorain County, tells of Peter's observation of a pig on the island. The pig constantly fished for fat mussels along the shore, typically with only its back showing out of the water. One could hear the pig crushing the shells and gulping down the soft parts. The pig eventually went blind and Peter attributed this to its long hours under water.

The island has had several names over the years. Bungart Island is the original name, but it was called Cromwell Island when a steel mill of the same name operated nearby during World War I. More recently it has come to be known as Monkey Island. Lorain Port Authority director Rick Novak explains that there are three theories for the

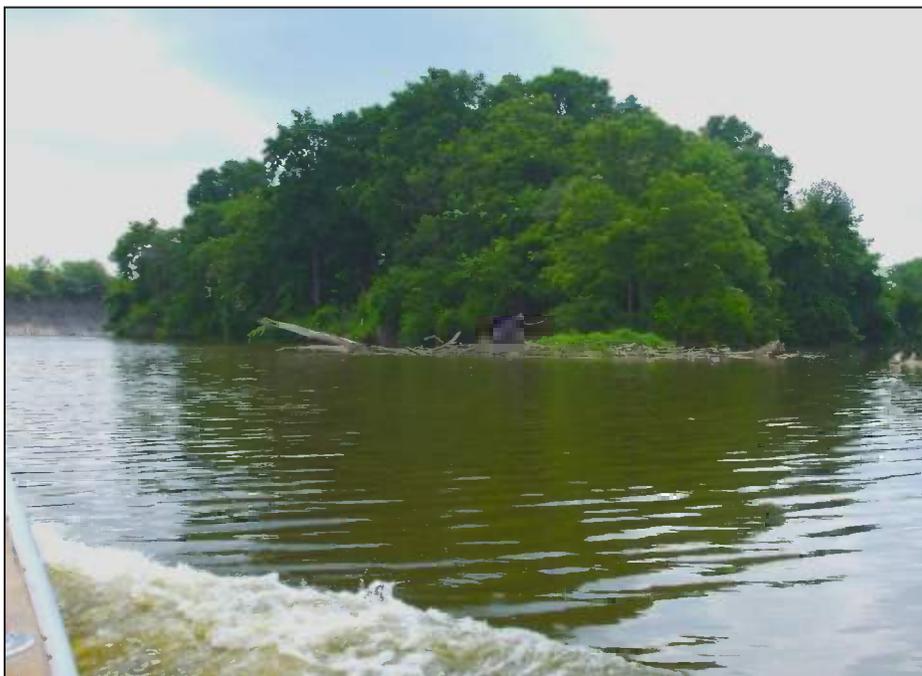
origin of the new name: (1) the abundant osage-orange trees (*Maclura pomifera*) on the island produce a fruit called "monkey balls," (2) monkeys that escaped from a wrecked circus train once inhabited the island, and (3) adolescents and spooners would come to the island to "monkey around." Perhaps it is best to keep the original Bungart Island name.

Peter Bungart was born in an eventful year—1876. The nation celebrated its Centennial in Philadelphia and Archibald Willard of Wellington, Ohio painted his famous *Spirit of 76*. It was also the year that Civil War General George Armstrong Custer and his U.S. Cavalry were annihilated by the Sioux Indians at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana.

As a boy of eight years old, Peter tagged along with his father who was helping a paleontologist excavate some fossils along



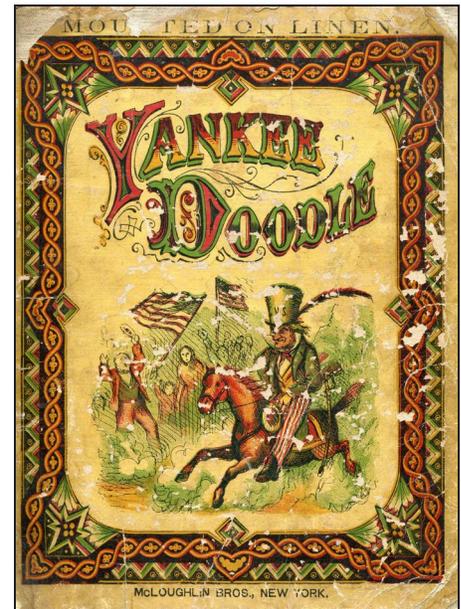
Foundation stone from Nicholas Bungart's barn on Bungart Island (courtesy of Matt Nahorn).



Bungart Island in the Black River near the Lorain-Sheffield Village border.

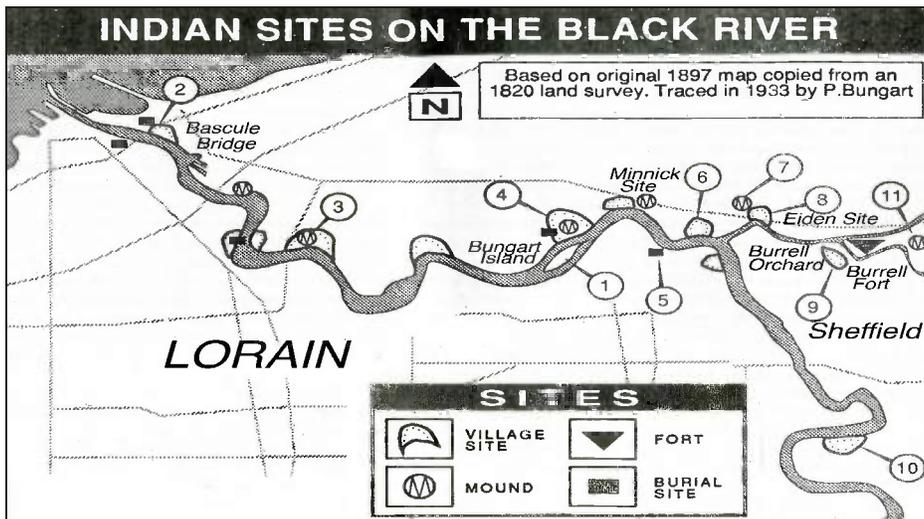
the riverbank. That man was Jay Terrell, legendary Ohio fossil collector searching for the remains of "giant placoderms" in the Devonian shale banks of the Black River on the Bungart farm. This experience so impressed Peter that he knew geology was his calling. For the next 25 years he made a hobby of collecting fossils and familiarizing himself with the rocks and structure of the Earth, as well as hunting Indian relics, which prepared him for becoming a professional paleontologist. He was destined to become one of America's foremost paleontologists and win the respect and admiration of scientists throughout the world.

In his early years, in addition to his farm duties, Peter went to work at the Lorain shipyards where he excelled as



*Yankee Doodle* book, published in 1876, the year of Peter Bungart's birth. This book was once enjoyed by the children in the Milton Garfield House on North Ridge.

a ship's carpenter. It was then that he courted and wooed a young schoolteacher, Margie Brown, who taught in the Sheffield Township District No. 1 schoolhouse near the Burrell Homestead. They wed and settled in Lorain. The devastating tornado of 1924 destroyed their home, but they were unharmed. Every hour Peter could find away from farm work and the carpentry trade, was spent in prospecting and collecting. The earlier collections were sometimes sold which made him known to the scientific community. In 1915, he was commissioned by the Canadian government



Map prepared by Peter Bungart of prehistoric Indian sites along the lower Black River.

to investigate the fossil assemblage of Alberta. Peter's big break came in 1923 when the newly organized Cleveland Museum of Natural History offered him full-time employment in paleontology.

He entered this profession with a breath of experience and perfection of technique in reassembling fossil animals never before

attained by any collector of Devonian fossils in Ohio.

During the succeeding 25 years, until his retirement in 1947, Peter Bungart amassed a collection of Devonian fossil fish, which is nowhere exceeded in either numbers nor quality of preparation. Giant armored fish and primitive sharks that swam in

the waters of the great Devonian inland sea which covered northern Ohio 350 million years ago were familiar creatures to him. Because of Peter's enthusiasm and skill in finding obscure fossils in the rock which they were embedded, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History owns the finest collection of these forms in the world. His most outstanding discoveries were made on the banks of the Black River in Lorain and Sheffield, and on the Rocky River in the Cleveland Metropolitan Park.

In his honor, and in recognition of his contributions toward the advancement of knowledge of the fossil fish fauna of Ohio, one of the rarest of these ancient armored fish, which he discovered, was named in his honor—*Bungartius perissus*. It represents not only a new species, but a new genus as well. The only two known specimens in the world are in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Peter Bungart died on July 29, 1949 in Lorain's St. Joseph Hospital and was buried at Ridgehill Cemetery in Amherst. Sheffield Village Historical Society member Jean (Bungart) Schneider of Moon Road in Avon, recalls her Uncle Peter as a rather serious and dedicated man that loved to work with his hands. Evidence of his handiwork can still be seen in the decorative fieldstone columns at Jean's childhood home at the northeast corner of Detroit and Moon Roads.



Peter Bungart with the armored head of *Dunkleosteus terrelli*, a Devonian placoderm named for Peter's mentor Jay Terrell and assembled by Peter from a myriad of fossil fragments recovered from local shale beds (courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History). A replica of this fossil fish can be seen at the Sheffield Lake City Hall, corner of Harris Road and Richelieu Avenue.



Fieldstone column built by Peter Bungart at 38960 Detroit Road in Avon.

## The Life and Times of Thomas Loftin Johnson

In Lorain County, Tom Johnson is remembered as the man who brought the steel mills to the Black River valley, built a streetcar line between Lorain and Elyria, and created the community of South Lorain out of land annexed from Sheffield Township. He did all of these things in the span of two years, between 1894 and 1896. But there was much more to this man. In the early 1900s he served as the Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio for several terms. By the middle of his tenure as mayor, Cleveland's city government was regarded as a model for the country and the world—in fact Johnson is considered Cleveland's greatest mayor by many historians. With this in mind, the life of Tom Johnson and the times in which he lived are worthy of further exploration.

Thomas Loftin Johnson was born in Blue Springs, Kentucky on July 18, 1854. Four years later the family moved to Beaver Bayou, Arkansas, where Tom's father, Albert, sought his fortune as a cotton planter. By 1861 Albert had more than 100 slaves on his plantation. When the Civil War broke out, Albert was divided about the war—he opposed slavery and even admired Abraham Lincoln, but nonetheless joined the Confederate Army rising to the rank of Colonel. Even so, for much of the conflict the Johnsons were refugees, residing Arkansas, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and at war's end in Staunton, Virginia. With the defeat of the South, Colonel Johnson lost his fortune and was bankrupt.

To help his family out, young Tom Johnson began to show his entrepreneurial flare. At age eleven he convinced the Staunton stationmaster to grant him a monopoly to sell newspapers. The first month he made a profit of \$85, which was very good for the 1860s. Within a year, the money proved to be enough for his family to move to back to Kentucky and gave Tom his first sweet taste of business success.

Tom attended school in Louisville, but at the age of 15 he left to take a clerk position with a local rolling mill. Seeing an even better opportunity, in 1869 he accepted an "office boy" position with the Louisville Street Railway Company, owned by the duPont family, and eventually became the firm's superintendent. While there, he invented numerous devices for street railways, including a see-through glass fare box, which earned him \$30,000. The dropping coins fell through a sequence of shelves before falling on a plate. The trolley driver could thus count the coins and determine if the correct amount had been inserted without pausing to collect the fare. Using the award from this patent, he left the duPont organization in 1876 and purchased his own railway line

in Indianapolis, Indiana. In the next several years he expanded his holdings in other street railway firms in St. Louis, Detroit, New York, and Cleveland.

Despite his hectic life of marketing fare boxes and managing a trolley line, 20-year-old Tom Johnson found time to court young ladies. He became particularly enamored with his 17-year-old fourth cousin, Maggie J. Johnson. Her skeptical father finally gave permission them to marry when Tom convinced him that he could provide for his daughter. On October 8, 1874 the couple were married and had three children: Tom L. Jr. [who died in infancy], Loftin born in 1880, and Elizabeth in 1882.



Tom L. Johnson (courtesy of the Black River Historical Society).

In 1883, the Tom Johnson family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where his railway line was in direct competition with a line owned by Marcus Hanna, a powerful businessman and an influential leader in the Republican Party. After a bitter rivalry, the two men settled their differences by agreeing upon a uniform fare, with transfers, for all street railways in the city.

In the late 1880s Johnson began to diversify his holdings by purchasing an iron and steel company in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Considerable effort was expended in modernizing

the mill to make rails for his street railways. In May 1889 the renovations to the new mill were complete and it was ready for occupancy when the Johnstown flood hit on the 31<sup>st</sup> and in a hour wrought havoc on the city. The old mill was in the path of the flood and was swept away. Luckily it was practically abandoned, much of the machinery and stock having been removed to the nearby new mill. However, much of the city was devastated. Tom Johnson and his partners Alfred du Pont and Arthur Moxham rushed to Johnstown to aide the relief and reconstruction efforts. The eleven loosely knit Johnstown boroughs had no central leadership to cope with all the problems facing the city. In desperation, the town's people in a mass public meeting made a wise choice and elected Art Moxham as Dictator—controlling all legislative and executive decisions for rebuilding the city. The lesson Tom Johnson took from the Johnstown flood was that no matter how horrific the destruction, in a crisis, people who normally oppose one another unite for the common good and accomplish marvelous feats of restoration. When he became mayor of Cleveland twelve years later he used this lesson learned at Johnstown to resolve seemingly impossible situations.

After his Johnstown experience, Tom Johnson began a search for a location to build a new steel rail mill. He was looking for site on Lake Erie that would provide access for lake shipping of iron

ore, coal, and limestone, and at the same time, place his rail mill closer to the growing markets in northern Ohio. The deep estuarine waters at mouth of the Black River proved idea for his plan.

In 1894 Tom Johnson's company acquired 4,000 acres of land along the Black River in Sheffield Township, about two miles downstream from Garfield Bridge, to construct a steelmaking plant. In June of that year hundreds of men began to clear the woods. In nine months, by April 1895, they transformed the area into a steel plant of immense proportions. Dr. B. W. Donaldson, the son of company's first treasurer, William A. Donaldson, describes selection of the site for the Johnson Steel Company as follows:

*What was called South Lorain is a tract of land, which is part of Sheffield Township, in Lorain County, Ohio. It is situated on the western and southern banks of the Black River, as it winds its way to its mouth in Lake Erie. It was this location on the lake, a shale foundation for heavy machinery and its proximity to a large city, Cleveland, which decided the owners of a steel mill in Johnstown, Pennsylvania to acquire this above-mentioned tract of land for a steel mill site.*

During the construction of Tom Johnson's steel mill Hannah Burrell, whose homestead was next to the site, prepared lunches for a number of the workers on the mill site through the summer and fall of 1894. Expressing their gratitude at Christmas time 12 of the workers sent the letter reproduced below to Mrs. Burrell.

As a stipulation for the construction of the steel mill, Lorain was to annex Sheffield Township Lots 77-100 (property acquired

by Johnson & Company for a steel plant) and Lots 46-50 & 53-57 (land north of the Black River and west of Root Road). The added population allowed Lorain to be incorporated as a city. The Johnson Steel Company then bought 4,400 lots in the annexed portion of Sheffield Township through its Sheffield Land and Improvement Company. This new section of the city, which came to be known as South Lorain, was laid out in orderly, rectangular city blocks, unlike the "hodge-podge growth" that characterized the northern part of the old town. To transport steelworkers from Elyria to the mill, Tom Johnson constructed the Yellow Line streetcar service via Sheffield Township. The line began operation on September 15, 1894 with a fare of 5¢, including a transfer to the Short Line along the lake in Lorain.

The Johnson Steel Company made its first "blow" of the steel from the Bessemer furnace on April 1, 1895. The mill employed 1,200 men and Arthur Moxham, Johnson's associate from Johnstown, was chosen as the first operating head of the company.

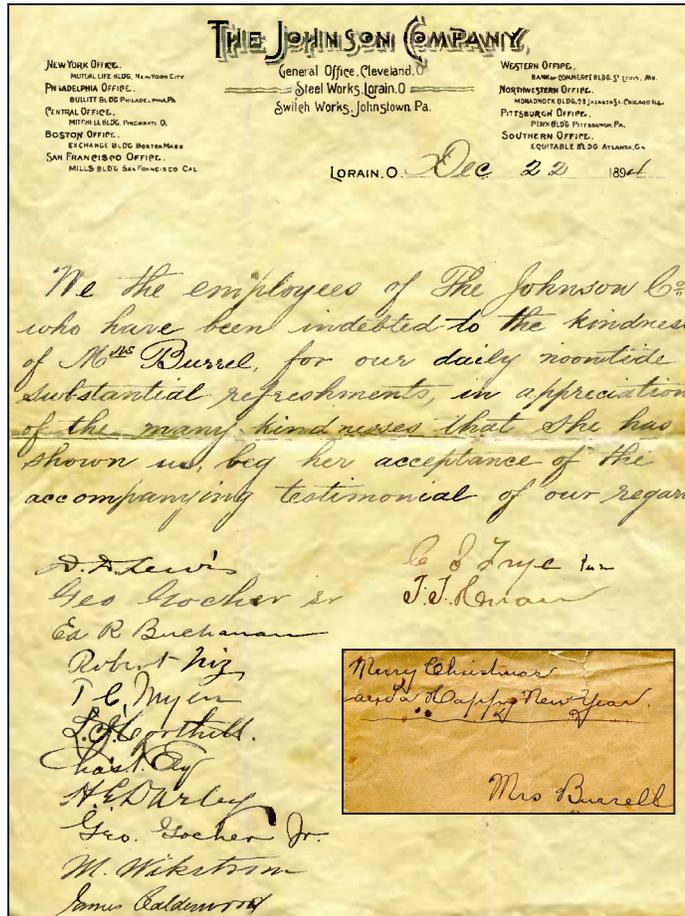
Tom L. Johnson also headed a consortium to found the Lake Terminal Railroad in September 1894. This railroad was constructed in conjunction with the Johnson Steel Plant as a switching and interchange operation connecting on the east with the Cleveland, Lorain & Wheeling [later the B&O] and the Lorain, Ashland & Southern Railroads, and on the north with the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern and Nickel Plate Railroads. Later, connections were made with the New York, Chicago & St. Louis and Lorain & West Virginia [later Wheeling & Lake Erie] Railroads via a trestle over the Black River in Sheffield. By 1897 the equipment roster included 4 switching locomotives, 9 gondolas, 14 flat cars, 2 rail cars and 13 other cars. At that time the Lake Terminal Railroad employed 7 engineers, 3 firemen, 5 conductors, and 7 trainmen.

Carrie E. Day, historian for the Day-Austin-Root August Reunion, wrote of the changes taking place in Sheffield in 1895:

*This is a time of great change in our quiet, staid, good old town of Sheffield. A city [Lorain] has come to our doors, swallowed up part of our Township and is pressing hard upon Lake Breeze P.O. and Sheffield Center. Great indeed have been the material changes of the past year; but it seems to us these changes are no greater than the social changes which have come to pass here. The great boom in old Sheffield has sounded far and wide throughout the county and we think that must be the reason so many sons and daughters have come back for a visit.*

In 1895, the Sheffield Land and Improvement Company, a subsidiary of the Johnson Steel Company, donated Oakwood Park in South Lorain to the city. Dr. B. W. Donaldson describes the development of the park as follows:

*Beautiful Oakwood Park and all the area east of Clinton Street was swampy ground covered with a thick growth of trees and bushes. The trees were mostly Pin Oaks and all of it had to be thinned out and cleared by blasting the stumps after the trees had been felled. A one time sheep and even goats were penned inside the fences to eat much of the undergrowth and young saplings. The work was done under the supervision of Mr. W. D. Plant who was superintendent of clearance and of cutting streets through the heavily wooded property.*



Letter sent by Johnson Company workers to Hannah Burrell December 22, 1894 (courtesy of Martha Miller-Leveilee).



*McMyler hoist ore unloader at the steel mill dock on the Black River (courtesy of the Black River Historical Society).*

In 1897 the Cleveland Shipbuilding Company [two years later to become part of the American Shipbuilding Company] built a 20-acre shipyard along the east bank of the Black River to construct steel ships, increasing the market for locally produced steel. The yard hired 1,200 men at a wage of \$9 a day. The first steel ship was launched in 1898, the *City of Superior*. At the time it was the largest ship ever built on fresh water, with a length of 450 feet and a cargo capacity of 7,000 tons.

In 1898, Tom Johnson sold his plant on the Black River to the Federal Steel Company and it operated as a subsidiary under the name Lorain Steel Company. Under this ownership the plant expanded rapidly to become a fully integrated steel mill with the addition of two blast furnaces and construction of a 2,490-foot dock along the Black River. McMyler hoists were installed to transfer the iron ore from lake freighters to a storage yard adjacent to the mills. Coal, coke, and limestone were brought to the plant by rail and interchanged via the Lake Terminal Railroad, with finished product shipped out on the same line.

By 1900, the population of Lorain reached over 16,000, with nearly a third of the people being foreign immigrants attracted by work in the mills. The next year the Lorain Steel Company became a subsidiary of the newly formed U.S. Steel Company. Two years later the name changed again when Lorain Steel became part of the National Tube Company, a U.S. Steel subsidiary, and was known for many years as the Lorain Works of the National Tube Division. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, millions of tons of steel were shipped through the mills' gates—first as rails and later as pipe and bar products—thus was the legacy of Tom Johnson to our community.

During the late 1880s Tom Johnson became involved in politics. In 1888, the Democratic Party selected him as a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives from the Ohio's 21<sup>st</sup> District. Johnson lost this election, but won in 1890. He was reelected in 1892, but was defeated in 1894. A few years later he was elected Mayor of Cleveland, serving in this capacity for four terms from 1901 to 1909.

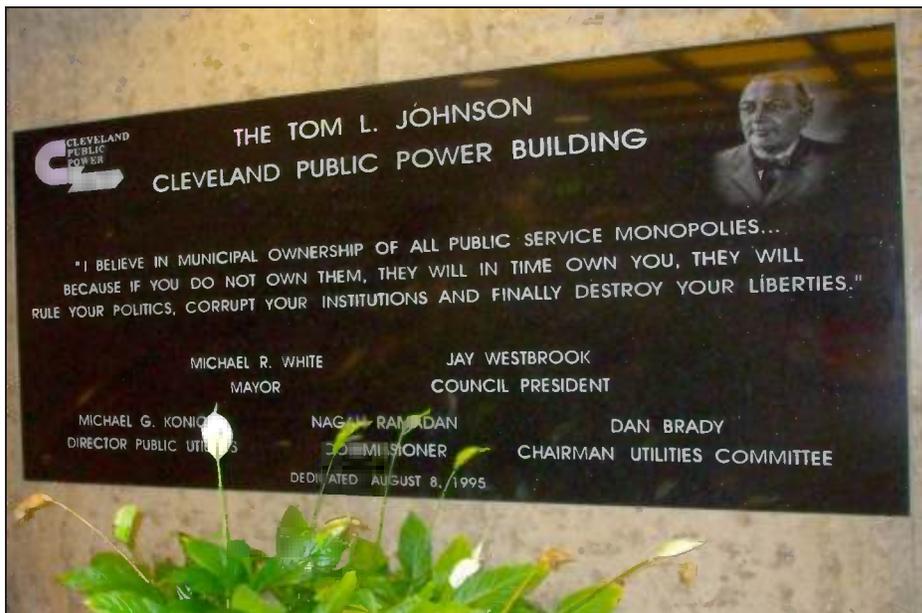
Before the wide use of automobiles and motorized busses, the electric street railway, trolleys, and interurban lines were the main mode of urban transportation. As mayor of Cleveland, Tom Johnson reduced fares on street railways to 3¢. He argued that public utilities—such as railroads, electric plants, and trash



*Tom L. Johnson Cleveland Public Power Building, Cleveland, Ohio.*

removal services should either be owned as a public monopoly or regulated and taxed by local governments. Johnson actively assisted working-class residents and strived to improve services for all Cleveland residents. Johnson's popularity with the working class made him a powerful figure in the Democratic Party and that party's unsuccessful nominee for Ohio governor in 1903. Tom Johnson continued to work for good government in Cleveland, which earned him national recognition. Lincoln Steffens, a well-known journalist at the time, called Johnson the best mayor in the United States. Two years after completing his tenure as mayor, Tom Johnson died of heart failure on April 10, 1911. Today, a statue of Tom Johnson, sculpted by Herman Matzen in 1916, stands in Public Square just across the street from the Old Stone Church. The tribute on the side of the monument apply describes Tom Johnson's passion for the betterment of the city he so loved:

*Beyond his party and beyond his class  
This man forsook the few to serve the mass.  
He found us groping leadership and blind  
He left the city with a civic mind.  
He found us striving each his selfish part  
He left the city with a civic heart.  
And ever with his eye on the goal  
The vision of a city with a soul.*



*Dedication Plaque, Tom L. Johnson Cleveland Public Power Building.*

To learn more about Tom Johnson the Editor recommends the following publications:

- My Story*, by Tom Johnson, Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio (originally published in 1911; edited by Elizabeth Hauser in 1993).
- The Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio*, by Harlan Hatcher, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, Indiana (1949).
- Thoughts on Lorain, Ohio: The Dr. B. W. Donaldson Papers*, by B. W. Donaldson, Black River Historical Society, Lorain, Ohio (1951).
- Tom Loftin Johnson: Engineer-Entrepreneur (1869-1900)*, by Michael Massouh, Ph.D. Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio (1970).
- Tom Johnson of Cleveland*, by Eugene Murdock, Wright State University Press, Detroit, Michigan (1994).
- Tom Johnson: The Life and Times of Cleveland's Greatest Mayor*, by Kevin O'Connell, Green Road Press, Cleveland, Ohio (2001).

## ***Sheffield Village Historical Society—Board of Trustees***

The Board of Trustees of the Sheffield Village Historical Society has three new faces—Matthew Bliss, Christine Huffman, and Roy Kudrin, elected at the July 8, 2010 meeting of the Board. Two members, Dennis Bryden and Ronald Forster, retired from the Board after several years of service. On behalf of the Society, President Herdendorf expressed appreciation to the retiring members for their outstanding dedication and welcomed the new members with enthusiasm. The retirement of Ron Forster created a vacancy for the position of vice president. Jack Hoag nominated Andy Minda for vice president, and Andy was unanimously elected.

Our new board members bring strength and much experience to the Board. Matt Bliss is a graduate of Lorain County Community College and a member of the Village Council. Matt also authored two fascinating books (see March 2008 and June 2009 issues of *The Village Pioneer*). Christine Huffman is Branch Office Administrator for Edward Jones Investments located at Sheffield Crossing. Christine also serves on the Sheffield Family Pride Day

planning committee. Roy Kudrin is a retired architect and long-time Village resident. Roy also serves on the Storm Water Management Board for the Village of Sheffield. Welcome Aboard!



*Matthew Bliss.*



*Christine Huffman.*



*Roy Kudrin.*

# Sheffield Village Historical Society—Summer Open House

On Saturday July 10, 2010, the Sheffield Village Historical Society held its Summer Open House at the Sheffield History Center, 4944 Detroit Road. It was a beautiful day as some 40 members and guests toured the History Center and had an opportunity to view the collections, browse the library, and look

through the document files. Most gratifying are the donations of artifacts, photographs, and documents to the Society's collection. Our new brochure, *Welcome to the North Ridge Scenic Byway*, passed out to visitors, describes the 284-page, all-color *Guide to the North Ridge Scenic Byway*. The Guide is now available for a \$20 donation from members and \$25 from non-members. Several members brought historic family photographs, which were scanned for the History Center's files and the originals returned to the members.



Sheffield History Center.



Cover of the North Ridge Scenic Byway brochure.



Carol (Day) Minda and Elva (Garfield) Behr discuss family photos.



Late 1800s view of the Lorain City Band. Elva (Garfield) Behr brought several family albums to the open house to display, including this photograph of her grandfather's band.



Anton Jungbluth family harvesting hay in 1931. Gladys (Jungbluth) Wisnieski brought this photograph to the open house to be scanned and digitally repaired.



Bill Johnson and Gladys (Jungbluth) Wisnieski share remembrances.

**Sister Mary Coreen Jungbluth's Memorial Quilt**

A highlight of the day was when Gladys (Jungbluth) Wisnieski and her daughter Beverly Essex arrived with a glorious quilt—not an old quilt, but a new one scheduled to be given as a surprise birthday gift the next day. On Sunday, July 11, Gladys' sister was celebrating her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday at a Cleveland convent. Sister Mary Coreen Jungbluth was also celebrating her 70<sup>th</sup> year Jubilee of Grace as a Sister of Notre Dame. The design of the quilt replicates the stained glass window in St. Teresa Church placed in memory of her grandparents, Anton and Katharina Jungbluth. Beverly had taken photographs of the window to use as a pattern for the quilt.



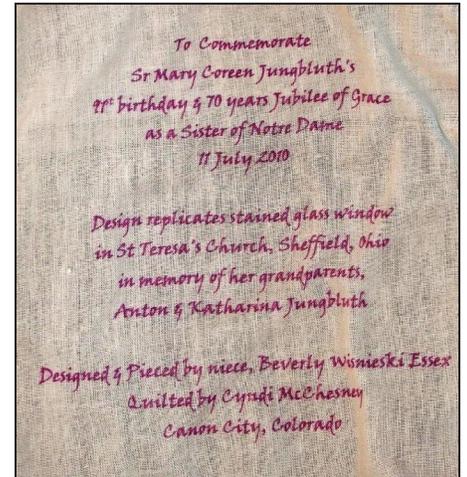
Interior of St. Teresa Church showing the Anton and Katharina Jungbluth memorial stained glass window—near right side (courtesy of Gladys Wisnieski).



Quilt designed by Beverly (Wisnieski) Essex for her Aunt, Sister Mary Coreen Jungbluth.



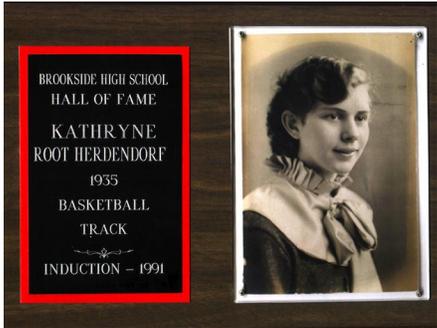
Detail of Jungbluth memorial window, which served as a pattern for the quilt. The quilt dedication is in the center.



Dedication, located on the reverse side of the quilt.

## *Brookside Athletic Hall of Fame*

The Brookside High School Athletic Hall of Fame was initiated in 1989 with seven inductees, including legendary coach Dick Sevits (see December 2007 and December 2008 issues of *The Village Pioneer*). The next induction ceremony was held in 1991 with three inductees, including the first women, Kathyne (Root) Herdendorf and Mildred Taggart—stars of the County Championship Basketball Team for four



straight years in the 1930s. Since the inception of the Hall of Fame, 15 ceremonies have been held with 44 individual athletes and four sports teams having been inducted.

The Brookside Athletic Department, Dick Kerschbaum director and Patricia Mihalak secretary, has kindly supplied the following list of honorees:

<p><b>1989</b> Ken Hicks Richard Canary Paul Leonard Edward Philpott Dick Sevits Robert Telatuik Robert VanLancker</p> <p><b>1991</b> Ernest Goodsite Kathyne Herdendorf Mildred Taggart</p> <p><b>1993</b> Lawrence Gallagher Joseph Hudak Robert Wharton</p> <p><b>1994</b> James Baum Clinton Cuny Gerald Hicks</p> <p><b>1999</b> Robert Barnhart John Belu Bill Biro</p> <p><b>2000</b> 1976-77 Boys Basketball Team</p> <p><b>2001-2002</b> Bob Johnson Gene Leonard Jack Petrucci 1945-48 Six-man Football Team</p>	<p><b>2003</b> 1972 Baseball Team Michael Kotowski</p> <p><b>2005</b> 1962 Football Team Steve Bodnar Bobby Rosso</p> <p><b>2006</b> Brent McHenry Dan Opfer Brent Schremp Larry Sansom</p> <p><b>2007</b> Bill McPhie Charles Stapleton Bill Hicks Illiana Trevino</p> <p><b>2008</b> Len Pando Brian Behrendt Kathryn Hensley</p> <p><b>2009</b> William Barr Dawn Hughes Tony Popiel Vanessa Kabat Kettle</p> <p><b>2010</b> Susan Harlan David Jarrell Charles Ligman Bob Sinclair</p>
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This year, four more Brookside athletes were inducted in the Hall of Fame held at the Sheffield Lake AMVETS Post 55 on May 7, 2010. They included Dr. Robert Sinclair (Class of 1957), Susan Harlan-Schroeder (Class of 1976), Charles Ligman (Class of 1978), and David Jarrell (Class of 1992). Of the four, only Bob Sinclair and Susan Harlan-Schroeder were able to attend the lively ceremony. Bob was the starting quarterback of Brookside's last six-man football team and also quarterbacked the school's first 11-man team. In basketball, he averaged 15 points per game his senior year. Coach Dick Sevits and teammate Steve Bodnar nominated Bob and presented him at the induction ceremony. Dr. Sinclair is professor emeritus of education at the University of Massachusetts and an energetic member of the Sheffield Village Historical Society. On Saturday May 8, he held a seminar of the educational plight of Haitian students at the Sheffield History Center on Detroit Road for Society members and guests. Bob and his wife Ann now make their home on Cape Cod.

Susan Harlan-Schroeder was a 1975 *Track and Field Magazine* Athlete of the Year and had a stellar track career Brookside. She placed second in the high jump at the State Track Meet. Her 1976 classmates also voted her Bi-centennial Homecoming Queen. Her presenters were her sister and brother, Annie and Tim Harlan. Charles Ligman was a star player in football, basketball, and baseball. Coach Gene Leonard called him one of the best all-around athletes to come through Brookside High School. David Jarrell was an impressive football player who was named *Cleveland Plain Dealer* Player of the Week. He was also 1991 Conference Champion in the shot put and runner-up in the State Weight Lifting competition.



If you have a person or team you think is worthy of being considered for next year's induction class, please request a nomination form from the Brookside High School Athletic Department, 1812 Harris Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio 44054 or call (440) 949-4242.



*Susan Harlan-Schroeder (Class of 1976) and Dr. Robert Sinclair (Class of 1957), 2010 Hall of Fame Inductees (courtesy of John Edwards).*

## Princess Os-Ko-Mon of the Greatest Show on Earth

Tucked away, seven rows from the back of St. Teresa Cemetery, are pink granite headstones that mark the graves of Henry Snyder and his wife Julia Ann. Both died in their 60s, Henry passed away in 1957 and Julia Ann died a year earlier. But that was not her real name! In reality she was Princess Os-Ko-Mon—a full-blooded Osage Indian. In her early years she was a bareback rider with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and an actress in silent films.

A little circus history—Phineas Taylor Barnum established the American traveling circus in 1875. First known as *P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome*, the moniker *The Greatest Show on Earth* was added later. James Bailey was Barnum's chief competitor. Bailey exhibited *Columbia*, the first baby elephant born in the United States since the mammoths and mastodons of the glacial period. In 1881 Barnum and Bailey combined their shows and enjoyed great success with acts such as *Jumbo*, advertised as the world's largest elephant. In 1889 they even took their show to London for a 3-month, extremely popular engagement.

P. T. Barnum died in 1891 and James Bailey purchased the circus from Barnum's widow. He ran successful tours through the eastern United States until 1897 when he decided to take the circus to Europe, a tour that lasted five years. Bailey's European tour gave the Ringling brothers an opportunity to move their circus from the Midwest through the eastern seaboard. Faced with the new competition, Bailey took his show west of the Rockies for the first time in 1905, but died the next year and the circus was sold to the Ringling Brothers a year later.

Five of seven Ringling brothers started a small circus in 1884, about the same time that Barnum &

Bailey were at the peak of their popularity. Similar to dozens of small circuses that toured the Midwest and the Northeast at the time, the Ringlings moved their circus from town to town in small animal-drawn caravans. Their circus rapidly grew and they were soon able to move their circus by train, which allowed them to have the largest traveling amusement enterprise of that time.

The Ringlings purchased the Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1907 and ran the circuses separately until 1919. By that time, Charles Edward Ringling and John Nicholas Ringling were the only remaining Ringling brothers of the five who founded the circus. The brothers decided that it was too difficult to run the two circuses independently, thus in 1919 the combined, *Ringling Bros. and*

*Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth* debuted at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

The circus was a success through the Roaring 20s, the period when Princess Os-Ko-Mon performed under the big tent. She started her career as a bareback rider when she was 18 years old and continued her work in show business for 30 years. She used her Indian name as her professional name. Princess Os-Ko-Mon was noticed while performing with the circus and offered roles in several silent films.

She appeared in movies with Mary Pickford and she was a close friend of Lillian Russell. She retired from show business in 1936 and moved to Sheffield Lake in 1940.

Princess Os-Ko-Mon was born in Attleboro, Massachusetts in 1888. Her family moved to Canada when she was young and she lived there until she was 18 and joined the circus.

Princess Os-Ko-Mon died on August 10, 1956.

The Editor thanks James Conrad for bringing Princess Os-Ko-Mon to our attention.



Poster advertising P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth performing in London in 1889 (courtesy of American Heritage).

## Greenhouse Murder Update

The June 2010 issue of *The Village Pioneer* contained an article on the tragic murder of Helen Duffield at the Hoag Greenhouse off Abbe Road in 1945. Inadvertently, the graduation photograph included with the article was not of her but her sister Sophia. The confusion resulted from the erroneous date of her graduation printed in the 1945 newspaper. Helen graduated in 1938 not 1940 as reported. Helen's brother, David Ireland of North Ridgeville, was a student at Hawthorn Jr. High School at the time and remembers the tragic event and the grief of his mother when the police had to inform her of the crime. Through Society member Carol Scharmann, the Editor was able to meet



Helen and Paul Duffield in 1943, before Paul was stationed in the Pacific (courtesy of David Ireland).

with and express the Society's apology to Mr. Ireland. David was kind enough to provide us with a photograph of Helen and her husband Paul Duffield, which we are honored to print here.

David Ireland also loaned the Society a 1955 issue of *Homicide Detective Magazine* (vol.1, no.1), which chronicled the murder in graphic detail with photographs. We were able to make a copy of the article for the Society's files. While copying the article, written 10 years after the crime, a newspaper clipping from 1976 fell out of the magazine. It relayed the attempt of the murder, Gordon Wellman, to obtain a parole in December of that year. When convicted in January 1946, Wellman had threatened the life of several of the people who had testified against him, including greenhouse owner Ellis Hoag, Judge Daniel Cook, Prosecutor William Wickens, and Detective Vernon Smith. Wickens wrote to the parole Board, "I have handled a lot of criminal cases, but I have never dealt with a more hardened, cruel, and sadistic killer than Gordon Wellman." Also writing to the Parole Board and Governor James A. Rhodes, then Lorain County Sheriff Vernon Smith wrote, "If Wellman is paroled on Christmas Eve, I don't plan living past the first of January." An aide to Governor Rhodes wrote back, "You have a valid reason for not wanting Wellman released." Parole was denied.

## Historic Buildings Recognized

### Avon Isle

On July 8, 2010, the National Park Service notified the Ohio Historic Preservation Office in Columbus that the nomination of Avon Isle Dance Pavilion had been accepted, thereby officially placing the building and grounds on the National Register of Historic Places. The two-and-a-half-year-long process to place historic Avon Isle on the National Register was a joint project of the Avon and Sheffield Village Historical Societies. The nomination was prepared by Ralph White and Eddie & Ricki Herdendorf with the assistance of Susan Tietz of the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (see June 2010 issue of *The Village Pioneer*).

Built in 1926, Avon Isle Dance Pavilion is nestled in a nearly circular meander of French Creek near the intersection of Colorado Avenue (Route 611) and Detroit Road (Route 254). For several decades it was a popular place when social dancing was all the rage. Local bands provided live music every weekend and occasionally big bands would perform at the pavilion. In recent years the building has deteriorated, but a \$170,000 energy grant announced by Avon Mayor James Smith will be used to renovate the dance hall as a multi-purpose community center.

### Ferguson House

The Ohio Historic Inventory (OHI) was initiated 45 years ago to document noteworthy historic landmarks within the State of Ohio (see June 2009 issue of *The Village Pioneer*). On June 30, 2010, the Sheffield Village Historical Society submitted a OHI nomination for the Ferguson House at 4567 East River Road to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. Jeannine (Ferguson) Barnes and Eddie Herdendorf prepared the nomination document. On July 23, the Society was notified that the nomination had been accepted and that the Ferguson House will be entered in the Ohio Historic Inventory.

This one and one-half story gable farmhouse, located at the corner of East River Road and Walnut Avenue, was the first house to be built in the first subdivision established in what would become the Village of Sheffield. The Ferguson family lived on the property in the mid-1900s and operated a small-scale comprehensive farm. The land where the subdivision was created was primarily farmland (grain and pasture) after pioneer settlement in the early 1800s. There were no structures on the property until the 1920s when The Farm Realty Company acquired a 108-acre tract of land at this locality. The Farm Realty Company initiated a real estate



*The Ferguson House as it appeared in 1949 when Guy Ferguson operated a small-scale comprehensive farm on the property (courtesy of Jeannine Barnes).*



*The Ferguson House at 4567 East River Road in 2007, now the home of the Dennis German family.*

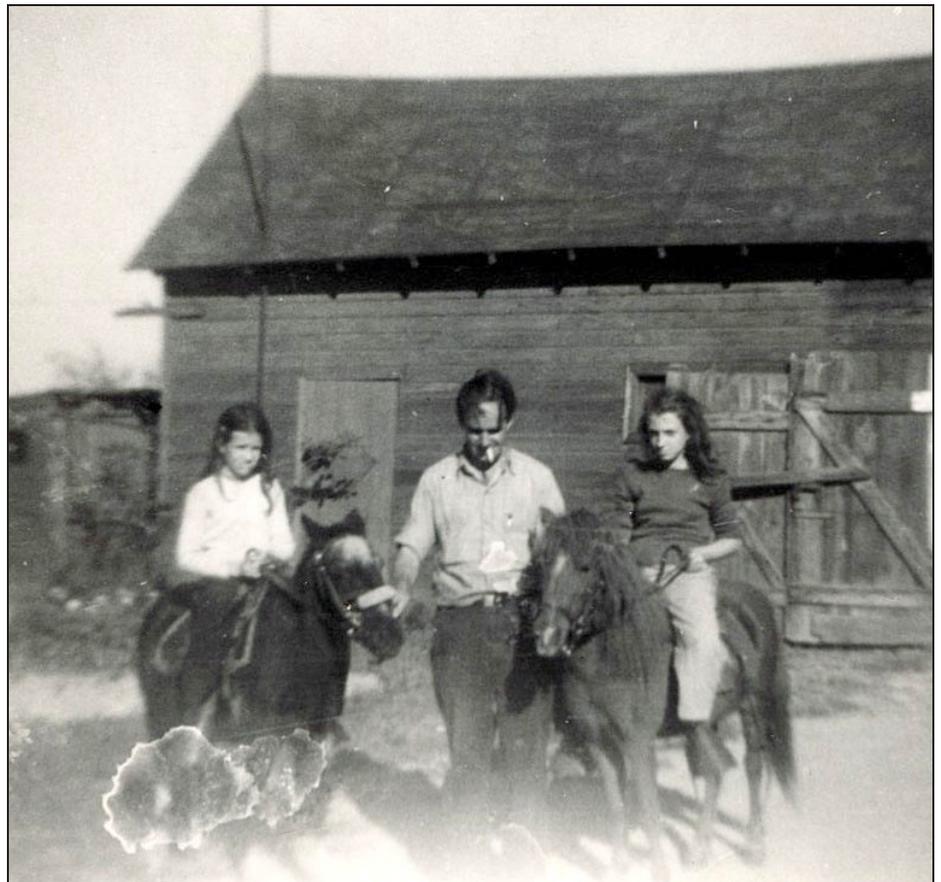
development known as Acre Farms. The tract was divided into several-acre plots and dedicated avenues were laid out. The Ferguson House was built circa 1926. The Guy Ferguson family was the first to have a comprehensive small-scale farm in the subdivision, including livestock, poultry, and vegetable crops. The Ferguson farm consisted of seven outbuildings: (1) large timber barn (~30 x 40 feet) with three stalls and a hay loft, (2) corn crib, (3) smoke house, (4) chicken coop and brooder house, (5) rabbit hutch, (6) pig sty, and (7) outhouse.

The farmhouse features a large front porch that extends almost across the entire front of the house. Two square columns at the north and south ends of the porch support the porch roof. Originally the porch had a central opening and six steps leading directly to the front door. In the late 1980s the porch was altered by moving the steps and opening to the south end of the porch. The original windows were 3 over 1 and have been replaced by 1 over 1 windows. The foundation material is rock-faced concrete block. The basement was constructed with an interior two-foot deep shelf about five feet above the floor. An interior stairway leads down to the main room of the basement, which once contained a large icebox. A fruit cellar and coal bin were once located at the west end of the basement. There is also an exterior cellar doorway on the north side of the house.

Originally the interior main floor consisted of a bedroom, living room, parlor, kitchen, dining area, and a small sleeping

room. The parlor has an arched passageway to the living room that was flanked by cupboards with leaded glass doors and twist locks. The centrally located rear door opens on to a hallway that was flanked by floor to ceiling built-in cupboards. The house had two sinks, each fitted with a hand pump from a water well or cistern. Two bedrooms were located on the upper level,

accessed by a stairway from the parlor. A half wall was located at the top of the stairs on the right-hand side as one climbed the stairs. Eave storage compartments were once located along the north and south walls and ran the entire length of the house before dormers were added in the 1970s. Currently the Dennis German family lives in this house.



*Guy Ferguson with his daughters, Jeannine (left) on her pony "Smokey" and Shirley on "Red" in 1949 (courtesy of Jeannine Barnes)*

## Sheffield Lake's Flying Saucer

Buried deep in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection of The Ohio State University is a obscure document titled, *THE FITZGERALD REPORT: A COMPLETE AND DETAILED ACCOUNT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED OBJECT IN SHEFFIELD LAKE, OHIO ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1958*. The report documents a UFO sighting by Mrs. William Fitzgerald of 934 East Drive and the subsequent investigation by the U.S. Air Force.

Mrs. Fitzgerald was awakened about 3:00 am when her bedroom became illuminated by a powerful light shining through heavy window curtains. She stood up on the bed and pulled back the curtains to peer out. Directly in front of her, not more than 10 feet away, was a disc-shaped object with a hump in the center. She estimated it to be at least 20 feet in diameter and 6 to 8 feet tall, hovering some 5 feet off the ground (see accompanying diagram). It was aluminum in color, but didn't have any seams or rivets. She couldn't see any visible means of propulsion. The object didn't glow and she couldn't tell where the light was coming from.

As Mrs. Fitzgerald watched in horror, the disc descended and slowly moved to the north across her lawn then stopped and hovered motionless over a neighbor's yard. A luminescent pinkish smoke began to bellow around it. After a short time it moved back into her yard, rising slightly and the smoke stopped. It made two quick clockwise turns and shot up and out of sight, so quickly that she couldn't see the underside of the object, her vision obscured by the overhanging eaves of her house. All of the time the disc was making a noise that reminded her of a jet engine warming up.

The incident was so terrifying to Mrs. Fitzgerald that she was unable to call out to her husband who was soundly sleeping in bed next to her. The best she could do was kick him several times,

but was unable to wake him. When the object disappeared she sank back in bed, pulled the covers over her head, and did not awake until 11:00 am. Her husband and 10-year-old son, John, got up about 7:00 am and while they were having breakfast, the boy related seeing something strange during the night when he got up to use the bathroom. His description matched what his mother had seen, but not knowing of her sighting, they decided not to alarm her with the story.



Recent photograph of the Fitzgerald House showing the windows on the south (left) side of the house where the UFO was sighted.

When Mrs. Fitzgerald finally joined them and related her experience, she was relieved to learn that her son had also seen the same thing and that she was not hallucinating. She called the local newspapers to report the sighting and soon articles appeared in the *Lorain Journal*, *Elyria Chronicle-Telegram*, and *Cleveland*

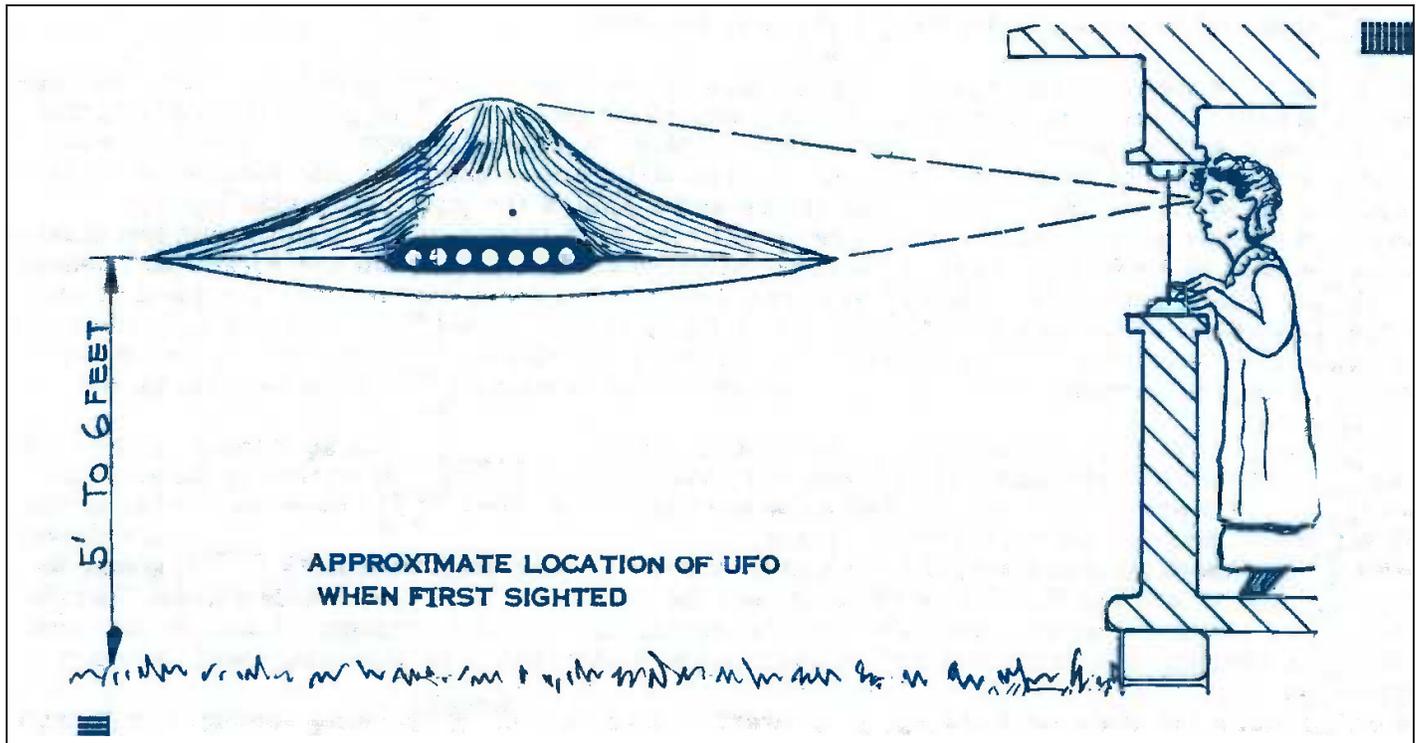


Diagram of UFO sighting at 934 East Drive, Sheffield Lake, Ohio by Mrs. William Fitzgerald on September 21, 1958 (courtesy of William E. Jones UFO Collection, Ohio State University Library).

*Plain Dealer.* She told the papers that prior to this sighting she had no interest in “flying saucers” and was skeptical about other reports. These accounts drew the attention of the Unidentified Flying Object Research Committee (UFO-RC) of Akron, a non-profit, civilian organization. UFO-RC interviewed Mrs. Fitzgerald and prepared a summary report, which was submitted to Aerial Phenomena Group, Air Technical Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio with a request for a formal Air Force investigation.

On October 4, 1958, the Air Force sent representatives to Sheffield Lake to interview Mrs. Fitzgerald. They made a survey of railroad train schedules, Lake Erie activities, and other possible factors in the sighting. The investigation revealed that two other people in the neighborhood had experiences that corroborated Mrs. Fitzgerald’s account as well as two other sightings in nearby Lorain. The official Air Force report stated that on the night of the alleged sighting, a train with a rotating headlight passed near the house at approximately the same hour as the sighting and that the Coast Guard Station in Lorain was using a spotlight to in an attempt to attract the attention of a ship. The conclusion of the Air Force report was that the combination of rain and misty weather, moving lights, and noise of a train accounted for the illusion experienced by Mrs. Fitzgerald.

Unsatisfied with the report, Congressman A. D. Baumhart, Jr. requested that the Air Force, conduct a more in-depth investigation. In response, Major General W. P. Fisher stated, “The Air Technical Intelligence Center, after evaluating the evidence in the case, concurred with the conclusion of the investigators.” The UFO-RC was even more critical of the Air Force report, stating that in their opinion the conclusion was based on “a complete disregard for the facts” and that the “Air Force investigation was criminally mishandled.” They go on to say that the investigation and analysis “was a disgrace to the U.S. Air Force, and an insult to the American public whom the Air Force supposedly represents.” In criticizing the investigation, the UFO-RC points out that the Air Force investigators didn’t bother to observe the headlights on a passing train and that the Coast Guard light was over five miles from the Fitzgerald house. Also, there was no rain on in Sheffield Lake on the night of the sighting.

Therefore, this case became one of the 98% of the cases that the Air Force classified as “known” rather than unidentified, which they classify as “unknown.” But what did Mrs. Fitzgerald really see? Skeptics might say the sighting was a hoax or simply a figment of Mrs. Fitzgerald’s imagination. However, she had nothing to gain by reporting the incident and she received nothing for her efforts but a scoffing from some of her neighbors. The fact that her son John also saw the object rules out the possibility that it was a fantasy.

During the past 60 years Sheffield Village Historical Society members have reported seeing UFOs in Sheffield. On Christmas Eve in the late 1950s, Roy Kudrin reports seeing slow-moving bands of light moving across the sky that he thought looked like St. Elmo’s Fire (a glow at the top of masts on wooden ships during thunderstorms). He got into his car and attempted to track the lights, but they suddenly disappeared. Cathi Price-Gentile also describes unexplained lights in the night sky, in the 1970s and 1980s, moving at extraordinary speeds in random polygons. *What have you seen?*

## Events Calendar

**September 11 (Saturday 11:00 am to 5:00 pm)**—Sheffield Village Family Pride Day at the French Creek Nature Center and Sheffield Village Municipal Complex on Colorado Avenue. Come and enjoy the Brookside Marching Band & memorial ceremony for veterans, Historical Society presentations, music, games, “Taste of Sheffield” foods, pie & dessert contest & auction, nature walks & butterfly garden, arts & crafts displays, exhibits by local churches & organizations, fire trucks & police cruisers, kid’s picture IDs, tram rides to the Municipal Complex, and much more. Free and open to the public. For more information call the Sheffield Village Mayor’s Office at 440-949-6324 or French Creek Nature Center at 440-949-5200.

**September 11 (Saturday 1:00 pm)**—*History of Sheffield Village*, a presentation of the Sheffield Village Historical Society at Sheffield Village Family Pride Day at the French Creek Nature Center Theater. Dr. Herdendorf, Historical Society president, will discuss the fascinating history of Sheffield’s founding and its development over the past two centuries.

**September 26 (Sunday 2:00 pm)**—Tour of the Burrell Homestead, 2792 East River Road, Sheffield Village. Arrive early to visit the grounds; tour will begin promptly at 2:00 pm and will be lead by Matt Kocsis, Metro Parks Historian.

**October 14 (Thursday 7:00 pm)**—Illustrated presentation by Eddie & Ricki Herdendorf *Lands of Fire and Ice: Adventures in Iceland and Greenland* at the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex, 4340 Colorado Avenue. The Herdendorfs will discuss their recent trip to these remote lands. Presentation is free and open to all members and guests. For more information call the Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

**October 14 (Thursday 8:00 pm)**—Fall Quarterly Meeting of the Sheffield Village Historical Society Board of Trustees at the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex, 4340 Colorado Avenue. All Historical Society members and guests are welcome to attend. For more information call the Sheffield Village Historical Society at 440-934-1514.

**December 19 (Sunday)**—Christmas at the Burrell Homestead (see November-December issue of Metro Park’s *Arrowhead*).

## Society Organization

The Sheffield Village Historical Society is a charitable nonprofit 501(c)(3) and educational organization dedicated to discovering, collecting, preserving, interpreting, and presenting Sheffield's rich heritage.

Membership is open to anyone who wishes to support the Society's mission. For more information contact Eddie Herdendorf, President (440-934-1514 [herdendorf@aol.com](mailto:herdendorf@aol.com)), Andy Minda, Vice President (440-537-0547 [anmin36@aol.com](mailto:anmin36@aol.com)), or Patsy Hoag, Secretary (440-934-4624 [patsyhoag@roadrunner.com](mailto:patsyhoag@roadrunner.com)).

Society journals can be found on the Village of Sheffield, Ohio official website: [www.sheffieldvillage.com](http://www.sheffieldvillage.com) (click on the Sheffield Village Historical Society decal , then Pioneer newsletters, then download).

Page Layout is by Ricki C. Herdendorf, EcoSphere Associates, Put-in-Bay, Ohio.

The collections of the Sheffield Village Historical Society are housed in the Sheffield History Center at 4944 Detroit Road. The Center is open to members and guests by appointment—please call (440-934-1514). The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is Oct. 14, 2010, 8:00 pm at the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex, 4340 Colorado Avenue. **All members are welcome to attend this meeting.**

Society members are encouraged to submit items for future issues. Please send your stories or ideas to the Editor.

Charles E. Herdendorf, Ph.D.  
Journal Editor, Sheffield Village Historical Society  
Garfield Farms, 4921 Detroit Road  
Sheffield Village, Ohio 44054

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Sheffield History Center, 4944 Detroit Road.

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