

# *The Ferry Landing*

*The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society, Inc.  
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*Tom Thomas, President  
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## **A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ... TOM THOMAS**

This fall has been extremely quiet at the Sedgwick House Museum. After a summer in which the number of visitors was rather poor, we are trying to find ways to bring people into our facility. Once school started, the Martins Ferry School District's second graders came as a follow-up to a reading story they shared about a visit to a museum. We were able to give them a real life experience as a conclusion to their classroom work.

Now we are doing some remodeling inside the museum, including new carpeting in the parlor, thanks to the Belmont County Tourism Council grant money. We will not be decorating and opening for the Christmas season as we have in the past. The reason is very simple...no one came!

We are also looking forward to the opening of the new school facility on the Ayers' property at the head of Carlisle Street. When the current school buildings are closed, some of the educational memorabilia will be housed in the Sedgwick House Museum.

Vice-president Barb Shrodes and I are also involved with the MARTINS FERRY HALL OF HONOR. This hall has been established to honor Ferrians who have in some way affected or aided the city of Martins Ferry or brought fame or notoriety to the city. Plaques will be issued for each member and hung in the city library. All expenses will be paid by the Citizens Bank. The first ceremony will be held in February of 2008 at the new high school facility. Those being inducted with the first class include: Ebenezer Martin, Betty Zane, literary giants William Dean Howells and James Wright, school superintendent Charles Shreve, Harry Northwood, founder of the city glass industry, historian Annie Tanks, Ferry Hospital founder Richard Wilson, Mayor John Laslo, Lou Groza, architect Robert Forsythe, and painter/educator Roy Riethmiller.

**HISTORIC MARTINS FERRY**  
by  
**PHYLLIS E. LUPTON KANE**

*From an article written by Phyllis Lupton Kane that appeared in the December 1953 issue of a magazine titled INSIDE OHIO.*

Martins Ferry, rich in the lore of days gone by, is located in the Tri-State area of southeastern Ohio on State Route 7, along the banks of the beautiful Ohio River in the very heart of industrial America.

Its 1,000-acre area spreads from the top of the hills, where there are streets with lovely homes, trees, and flower gardens down the hilly landscape to the riverside, making it the largest city in Belmont County, population 13,220.

In 1787, a land grant was given Captain Absalom Martin, a surveyor from New Jersey, by the federal government for meritorious services during the Revolutionary War. In 1795, Mr. Martin laid out a number of lots, and named the settlement Jefferson. Failing to secure the county seat, the town was vacated and the lots sold, being repurchased by him.

In 1835 his son, Ebenezer laid out 100 lots and named the town Martinsville. These first lots were said to have been bought by the Top Mill, an iron and nail factory. Soon the name was changed to Martins Ferry after the ferry operated by him.

Ebenezer Martin was very generous and public spirited. He gave the ground for the first public school building which was built in 1823, and for the four churches built in his lifetime, the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and the First Presbyterian. He also donated historic Walnut Grove Cemetery.

In pre-Civil War days, Martins Ferry was the first "receiving station" for runaway slaves after they had crossed the Ohio River. The first stop was at the home of Joel Wood, which still stands on North Third Street, next to the hospital. The fugitives were conducted under cover of darkness to the Jacob Van Pelt home on the hill in Ferryview, and to Haine's Mill, four miles west on Colerain Pike. The mill was then owned and operated by Joshua Cope, a kindly Quaker, who was much opposed to slavery.

The rich virgin soil of the area yielded abundantly to cultivation, and Martins Ferry became the commercial center of a wealthy agricultural community. The log cabins soon were replaced by substantial residences of frame, brick, or stone. Saw mills, planing mills, brick kilns, and stone quarries became flourishing industries.

The Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad was built through Martins Ferry in 1852, and more extensive industries, foundries, glass houses, machine shops, etc., were established. A woolen mill was established in 1854 operated by James Turner, and a blast furnace was built here in 1857 by Mendenhall Bros. and Jenkins. It was located for eight years at what is now the corner of Eighth and Carlisle Streets.

The great Laughlin Nail Mill was built in 1873, and for years was the principal industry. In 1904, it became the American Sheet & Tin Plate, and in 1936, the Laughlin Works of the Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation. With the great development of iron and steel throughout the country, and especially in the Ohio Valley, with the development of the extensive coal fields in this section, and the consequent building of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad through here in 1891, the Martins Ferry industries developed amazingly.

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Center of administration,  
The city building

The city's power and light plant



First stop for slaves crossing the Ohio  
River

## HISTORIC MARTINS FERRY

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In 1890, the town was described as the "best location in the county for a large city." Its manufacturing establishments and railroads were built on the first bottom and its dwellings on the second higher level. Its population in 1860 was a little over a thousand. In 1888, it was between 7,000 and 8,000. Iron and glass manufacturing and shipping facilities caused its growth, with the wharf doing a thriving business.

Manufacturing companies in those days included the Standard Iron Works; Sweeny, McCuney & Co. glass house; William Mann, foundry; Spence, Baggs & Co., stove works; Elson Glass Works, tableware; Buckeye Glass Works; Dithridge Fling Glass Works; Novelty Glass Works; J. Kerr & Sons; B. Exley & Co., doors; F. McCord & Bros., bricks; Martins Ferry Keg & Barrel Works; Henry Warwood, rake factory; Aetna Standard Mill, immediately south of town; and L. Spence, steam engines and threshing machines. This plant later became the Ohio Valley Agricultural Works, a monument to the industrial enterprises of Lavosier Spence, pioneer in Martins Ferry industry.

The high standards attained by the schools is due in great measure to the untiring devotion and zeal of Charles R. Shreve, who for 29 years gave himself to their advancement, and for whom the high school was named Shreve High School. The \$356,000 modern South School and the \$294,000 North School have replaced older buildings in the last two years, and at the present a \$750,000 is being built to the high school. Altogether, there are six school buildings besides the parochial school.

Martins Ferry boasts twenty churches with a new \$360,000 St. Mary's Catholic Church completed in November, 1952, and \$75,000 Greek Orthodox Church in 1947.

Bond issues were passed in November, 1952 for the erection of three fire stations, work to begin soon. Martins Ferry has always been proud of its fine volunteer fire department, and it ranks among the leaders in Ohio as a fire-fighting organization.

The Martins Ferry Hospital, located on North Third Street, was established in 1906, and has rapidly expanded, a new \$100,000 nurse's home opening two years ago.

Both the city's water works and light plants are municipally owned, the latter being on the site of the Old Ebenezer Martin home. Buses have replaced the street cars of a few years ago.

Industries in Martins Ferry today are quite diversified. Wheeling Steel's Corrugating plant, when operating to top capacity, employs 2,000. Other of the larger industries are Newport News Blast Furnace; LaBelle Box Factory; Beans Foundry; Tri-State Asphalt Corporation, which annually builds millions of dollars worth of roads and employs hundreds; Pipe Coupling Co., which last year built a modern plant on Patton's Run, north of town. Ground will be broken for the new plant of the Ohio Valley Dairy, and June for the \$750,000 Nickles Bakery, Inc., both located on properties east of South Broadway.

The city has many places of interest, Walnut Grove Cemetery being one of the most historic. Here inside the brick enclosure, are the burial places of Elizabeth Zane, heroine of Fort Henry, Wheeling, W. Va.; Ebenezer Zane, founder of Wheeling; his wife, Elizabeth McColloch Zane, relative of Sam McColloch, famed for McColloch's leap in Wheeling history, and other pioneers of the Revolutionary War period.