

# *The Ferry Landing*

*The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society, Inc.  
Summer 2008*

*Tom Thomas, President  
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## **A Message from the President . . . Tom Thomas**

Once again, school is out and the summer vacation begins. Once again, the Sedgwick House Museum will be open for visitors. Jeannie Splenda and Candy Wilson have volunteered to be guides for us and the Martins Ferry Rotary Club has provided monetary support to allow us to operate this summer. The museum will be open for tours every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon until 4:00 p.m.

One of our best programs continues to be the involvement of the students of the Martins Ferry City School District in the history and heritage of the community. I visited the fourth grade classrooms in the character of Ebenezer Martin, the founder of the city. We talk about Martins Ferry being the oldest legal settlement in the state and how the small village grew into Belmont County's only city. This is followed – up with a visit to the Sedgwick House Museum, where the students get to experience life as it was one hundred years ago and various memorabilia and artifacts from our city's history.

A great deal of remodeling has been done on the interior of the museum building. We will soon have hot water for the first time since the museum opened in the 1970's! But there is much more to be done. The summer kitchen building is in need of scraping and painting. The front porch needs to be completely replaced. Also, the gutters and downspouts will require major work very soon. Of course, we do not have the funding to do all of these projects, so the future is rather unsure. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact us as soon as possible.

We continue to try to keep the Sedgwick House Museum in the news as much as possible. The TIMES LEADER is very kind about printing stories concerning the museum. Every April, we place items in the display window of the Belmont County Tourism Council at the Ohio Valley Mall. Please, spread the word about us. We need more members to join our association and need visitors to come and see the museum.

**ELMER A. "CHIC" WALTON  
WW I HERO**



Elmer A. "Chic" Walton, son of John and Ina Campbell Walton, was born in Martins Ferry April 7, 1897, and died in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania September 29, 1960.

As a young man, he operated a novelty store at 13 North Fifth Street. He also exhibited considerable artistic talent as a cartoonist. He was among the first Martins Ferrians to enlist in World War I. His brother, Grover L. Sommers, and childhood friend, Ruel Blair, also enlisted.

While stationed at Newport News with the Fourth Infantry, he met and married Jesse Ray Kidd of Charlotte, North Carolina. The wedding announcement states that "The bride is a girl of exceptional ability as well as being pretty and attractive.

After an "exciting trip", Corporal Walton arrived in France. Later, a newspaper reported that his wife had received a letter from him stating that he had been wounded by shrapnel, and that he was at an American base hospital in France. The newspaper reported, "Typically American, the patient makes light of his wound, assuring his wife that he will be back with his regiment in a few days. Mr. Walton says, 'We had quite a fight with the "Boche" but we drove them back, fighting every bit of the way. We were drenched to the skin in rain and were two days without food or sleep, but we can stand it because it is for our country and for our loved ones at home.'"

He was sent back to the front, and during the last battle for the Argonne Forest, he was wounded for a second time while carrying a message across an open field. He was also gassed.

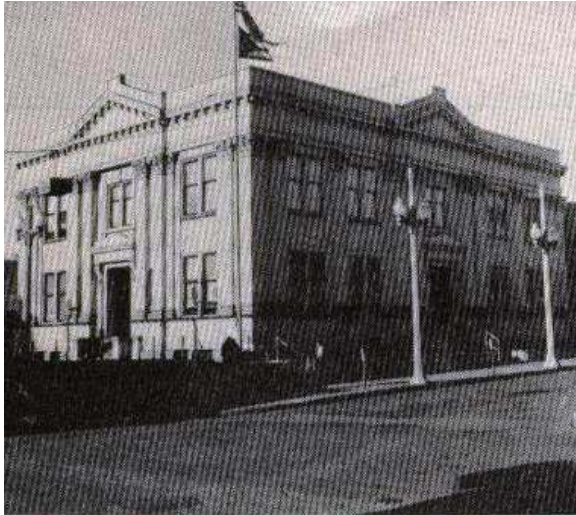
For his service, the United States Government awarded Corporal Walton the Distinguished Service Cross and the Purple Heart, and from the French Government he received one of France's highest medals, the Croix de Guerre.

He later published a book of cartoons depicting his experiences in World War I. His most famous work is a painting titled "The Last Call".

Sadly, his childhood friend, Ruel Blair was killed in action in France.

## A WOMAN CHANGES MARTINS FERRY

By  
Tom Thomas



*Center of administration,  
the city building*

In the late 1800s, Martins Ferry was beginning to grow into a city. The population was increasing, especially because of many immigrants arriving in the Ohio Valley. The size of the municipality was also becoming larger as various “additions” were added by the actions of the city government. This was good in many ways, but it also created many problems. There were many conditions within the city that needed to be remedied or improved. In 1891, Mrs. L. W. Drennan, wife of the local newspaper’s publisher, spoke to the Martins Ferry Women’s Club. She outlined a program which would make the city more attractive.

First, she urged the building of a complete sewer system so that the waste water would be dealt with properly, instead of dribbling across the sidewalks and lying in puddles in the streets. She also suggested that the streets themselves be improved. Some of them looked like country lanes, bordered with weeds, trees, and shrubs. Also, the streets were strewn with litter, which were cleaned when the citizens got tired of looking at the mess. Mrs. Drennan stated that the city’s sidewalks left something to be desired. She began circulating a petition that called for wooden sidewalks to be provided for Hanover Street and other main streets. The lesser streets, like Broadway, should have borders of cinder paths. The city government responded positively to her urgings.

Mrs. Drennan echoed the complaints of many citizens about the nuisance caused by many low-hanging tree branches. She said the owners of the property in question, if identified, should be held responsible for trimming their trees. If not, the city should do the work. She gave an example of a sycamore tree at the corner of Sixth and Walnut Streets. You could not walk or ride beneath the tree without having your hat knocked off

Finally, she recommended that a new city building be built at a better location. At that time, the city building was located on Second and Hanover Streets. Another drawback was that it was located only a few feet from the railroad tracks in that part of town. It was deteriorating rapidly and the cost of upkeep was proving to be prohibitive. It took a while for city officials to act on this suggestion, but thirty-six years later, a new city all was constructed. Built of white bricks, it opened its doors in a more spacious and attractive part of town. It was built at the corner of Fifth and Walnut streets, just a half block from that offending sycamore tree, which probably had been cut down by that time.