

The Ferry Landing

The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society, Inc.
Fall 2008

Tom Thomas, President
Volume 2008, Issue 3

A Message from the President . . . Tom Thomas

Autumn is quickly passing and soon winter will be upon us. The visitation this summer was extremely disappointing; very few people bothered to come and share in the various artifacts and memorabilia that tell the story of Martins Ferry and the Sedgwick family so well. Next summer is now a mystery... We do not know what will happen to the museum or what will be available to the residents of the community. As President Lincoln once said to the citizens of the United States, "The future is in your hands and not mine." The same is true about the Sedgwick House. To give you an example of the difficulties the Martins Ferry Area Historical Society faces, the October meeting was attended by three people. None of the three are natives of Martins Ferry. We face 2009 not knowing what lies ahead for us.

The museum is more prepared for the coming cold and snow than ever before. Special film has been put on almost all of the windows to help keep the cost of heating the building to a minimum. A new porch has been added to the front of the structure due to the deterioration of the previous one. Still, gutter and roof work and painting of the summer kitchen need to be done. Hopefully, that will be done next year.

Since the old high school building has been demolished, the capstone, CHARLES R. SHREVE HIGH SCHOOL has been placed in the museum's back yard, next to the cornerstone from old Central School. We were involved in the opening of the time capsule from the demolished building. In other exciting news, Roy Riethmiller has given the museum a recently completed oil painting of the old high school. We will be selling prints of the painting, so watch the Times Leader for information about the sale. Also, news will be coming concerning the Martins Ferry Hall of Honor Class of 2009.

CHARLES COLEMAN...AN INTERESTING CITIZEN

From an article by
TOM THOMAS



CHARLES COLEMAN
Ohio's Number One Senior Citizen

Charles Coleman was born in 1868, during the presidency of Andrew Johnson. He spent his early childhood in Powhatan Point, but moved with his family to Martins Ferry in 1882. Coleman remembered arriving by boat at the old Buckeye Wharf that was located at the foot of Hanover Street. Mr. Coleman lived in Martins Ferry until his death in 1972, when he was 104 year old. He liked to brag that he lived during the terms of twenty-one different presidents.

Mr. Coleman was very active in politics, especially the Republican Party. In 1920, he served as a national delegate to the party convention that chose Warren G. Harding as its nominee. Coleman also served the people of Martins Ferry in numerous ways. He served as mayor of the city for two terms, from 1920 – 1922 and from 1942 – 1944. He also was assistant fire chief and fire chief, later being named as a state fire marshal. For twelve years, he was appointed to the position of street commissioner for Martins Ferry.

Charles Coleman always talked about bits of Martins Ferry history. He called the cyclone of 1887 “One of the most spectacular things I have ever seen.” He also remembered the flood of 1884, the 1884 riot at the nail factory, the burning of Buckeye Glass in 1895, the smallpox epidemic of 1897, and the riot at Aetna Mill in 1909.

Even at the end of his life, Mr. Coleman was very busy writing poetry and sending numerous letters to newspapers and his many friends. At that time, he worked at the senior citizens’ center as a custodian. Above left is a picture of Charles Coleman taken in 1970 when he was named Ohio’s citizen of the year by Governor James Rhodes.

SOME OF CHARLES COLEMAN'S BITS OF LOCAL HISTORY

Martins Ferry's most outstanding philanthropists: William Mann, E. C. Boyd, Dr. R. H. Wilson

Martins Ferry's first fire chief: Samuel Heaton

Noted foot racers: Peter Reddy, William Mullen, Brock Brown, Amon (Dick) Paxson, Clarence Ebberts, and Bob Edwards

Major League baseball players: Richard Padden and Cy Morgan

Minor League baseball players: Joseph Jerger and Chilly Coates

Local stage actors: Buffalo Brown, Henry Gouding, and Harrison Chambers

Outstanding acrobat: John Coleman

One and only Congressman: William (Bill) Francis

One and only national delegate: Charles Coleman (R)

Most costly mayor: Isaac Lewis

Most erratic mayor: James (Jack) Ralston

Most conservative (horse & buggy) mayor: Charles Coleman

Most progressive mayor: John Laslo

Martins Ferry's worst catastrophes: the 1884 flood, the riot at nail factory (1884), cyclone of 1897, burning of Buckeye Glass Factory (1895), small pox epidemic of 1897, riot at Aetna Mill (1909), metal slide at blast furnace that killed five workers, second street fire that cost six lives.

Some leading businesses: Heslops, Rudners, Kellers, Briggs, Cravers, Krogers, M & K, A& P, Citizens Bank., Peoples Bank, Martins Ferry Lumber, and Scott Lumber

SHERIFF ONCE TOOK POSSESSION OF THE TOWN
From
The Times Leader, date unknown
By William R. Kelley

HOLY MACKEREL! The Belmont County sheriff confiscated the Martins Ferry city building to insure payment of a \$400 judgment in a law suit against the city. So said a news item published in the December 1, 1902 edition of the *Cincinnati Times Star*.

It was the first and probably the only time in Ohio history that a sheriff took possession of a town hall to insure payment of a debt. Under a Wheeling, West Virginia dateline, the *Times Star* had this to say:

“The City Building of Martin’s Ferry, Ohio is in the hands of the St. Clairsville authorities to insure payment of a judgment against the town for \$400 granted recently in the Belmont County courts to Mrs. Caroline Meyers. It is said to be the first time in the history of Ohio that a sheriff was compelled to levy on a municipal building for such a debt.

“Mrs. Meyers sued for \$4,000 damages, claiming that through an imperfect water system, her property had been seriously damaged. She got judgment for \$400, and the city did not seem willing or able to make settlement. Friday afternoon Sheriff S. S. Foreman came to Martin’s Ferry and took possession of the town hall.

“The building is not a pretentious one, but is sufficient to pay a good many \$400 judgments. The sheriff was prevailed upon by the mayor to withhold execution of his judgment until next Tuesday when Council meets.”

At that time, the town hall was a small brick building on the west side of Second Street, just south of Hanover. It is noted that the apostrophe was used in the spelling of the town’s name.

GET YOUR FERRY LANDING ELECTRONICALLY

In order to save paper, ink, and postage, the *Ferry Landing* will be made available online beginning next year. If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please E-mail BGShrodes @comcast.net and your name will be added to the E-mail list. When a new *Ferry Landing* is published, you will receive a link to our website where the newsletter will be placed. Please note that your E-mail address will be kept strictly private.

