

The Ferry Landing

The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society, Inc.
Winter 2009

Tom Thomas, President
Volume 2009, Issue 1

A Message from the President . . . Tom Thomas

This winter has been a rather quiet one for the Martins Ferry Area Historical Society and the Sedgwick House Museum. We had some roof and gutter work done on the museum and had to correct an electrical problem concerning our security lighting. We are trying to do some organizing and arranging of the multitude of memorabilia and historic items we have on hand, but it is difficult to accomplish much with so few people to do the work. One positive thing has been the response to the Riethmiller prints of the old high school we are selling to provide funds to help operate the museum. The prints are still available and can be obtained by contacting the Martins Ferry Chamber of Commerce.

When spring arrives and we begin to plan for our summer opening, two problems will be facing us. First, we need people to serve on the Board of Directors for the MFAHS. Currently, no one is helping with that group. Our meetings are actually not in accord with our by-laws, but there is nothing else to do, since not having the meetings would be useless. Secondly, we need someone to serve as a guide when the museum opens for visitors. The museum is usually open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays for several hours. If we find no one to assist us, then the museum WILL NOT OPEN THIS SUMMER!

The Martins Ferry Hall of Honor will be inducting the Class of 2009 on Sunday, March 22 at 2:00 p.m. in the cafetorium of the new high school. If you can attend, I think you will enjoy the ceremony and the focus upon the six people being added to the Hall.

A new book has been published by a native of Martins Ferry. Liberty Kovacs (nee Kardules) has written "Liberty's Quest." She is a celebrated psychologist as well as an author. Her first husband was James Wright, the award-winning poet. They were the parents of Franz, who also works in the field of literature. Both James and Franz have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for literature, making Liberty the only person in history to have a husband and son win that honor.

**WEIRD WEATHER:
THE ICE BARRAGE OF 1933**
From the Evening Times

Martins Ferry, judging from its appearance on the morning of June 6, 1933 might well have been a war zone. Thousands of windows were shattered by hail stones of prodigious size. Scores of autos were ruined. Many Ferry homes had their roofs shattered and torn by the pounding of balls of ice, which resembled rocks in size. Business signs were demolished, and awnings were ripped and tattered.

Homes were flooded when roofs gave way under the pounding of the ice, and to add to the confusion and uncertainty which prevailed, the street lighting system was out of commission. Ferry firemen and their trucks raced here and there answering alarms in the aftermath of the storm.

It was a weird night which many Ferrians of the time never forgot. The pelting lasted only about twelve minutes, but the damage was estimated at \$100,000. In some heavily shaded sections of the city, shrubbery and leaves were piled a foot deep. Dead birds were everywhere.

An eerie and dangerous aftermath of the storm came in the form of a thick mist which arose from the ice. Hundreds of autos filled the streets after the storm subsided. With street lights out of commission, and cars rushing here and there, the mist made driving conditions dangerous.

Ferry's "white way" system in the business district was a wreck. The large white globes sheltering the bulbs were broken, almost 100 percent.

A near panic occurred at the Fenray Theater when the noise made by the hail drowned out the talkie. Several persons made for the exits.

A Hickory Street man secured a wartime army steel helmet and used it to good advantage when ice came through the roof in his house.

Despite all of the destruction, art glass windows in Martins Ferry's churches were spared. It was a miracle often recalled by Ferrians with a religious bent.

Wholesale shipments of glass were rushed to Martins Ferry from all metropolitan cities, but it required several weeks to replace all of the windows shattered by the storm.

Crews of roofers imported from the tri-state district worked for weeks on repair jobs. From the hillside, Martins Ferry presented startling patches of green and red, due to the color of the roofing material used.

EARLY SETTLEMENT OF MARTINS FERRY

From the *Evening Times*

As early as 1779, little bands of settlers came over the Alleghenies and erected temporary shelters on the west banks of the Ohio River. They named their little villages Norristown, Hoglin, and Mercer's Town. These were the first settlements upon the land which later became Martins Ferry.

The Indians objected to the government at Washington about this intrusion upon their hunting grounds. In 1785, Colonel Harmer sent Ensign Armstrong with a detachment of troops from Fort McIntosh to route the illegal settlements.

In 1787, a land grant was given Captain Absalom Martin for services in the Revolutionary War. Captain Martin had been employed by the U.S. Government as a surveyor in this district. He came to this section in 1788 and staked his claim where Martins Ferry is now located. In 1795, Captain Martin laid out a plot of lots and named the village Jefferson. But failing to have the town named as the county seat, Captain Martin repurchased the lots, and vacated the town. He died in 1801.

Absalom Martin's son, Ebenezer Martin was born in 1791 in a log cabin in the vicinity of present day Martins Ferry. He attended college in New Brighton, New Jersey and Washington, Pennsylvania. Later, he took charge of his father's holdings, laying out a town in 1835. The population of the town was not to exceed 100. He named that town Martinsville. The name was changed to Martin's Ferry in 1845 when it was discovered that another town in Ohio had the same name.

The ferry across the Ohio River, for which this city is named, was started between 1785 and 1790. It was first owned by Ebenezer Zane and his brother Jonathan. It came into Ebenezer Martin's possession through his mother's interest in Col. Zane's estate. She was Catherine Zane, a daughter of Ebenezer Zane.

Ebenezer Martin owned and operated this ferry for many years from a point near the foot of Jefferson Street to a point neat the old Top Mill in North Wheeling. The roads leading to this ferry were the chief thoroughfares for the travel of emigrants and adventurers to the new country of central Ohio and the return of cattle and hogs in droves to the eastern markets of Baltimore and Philadelphia. A ferry house and tavern was erected for the comfort of these travelers.

John Pringle, of Brownsville, Pennsylvania built the first steam ferry in 1841. It was named the "Isaac Martin" for Ebenezer Martin's newborn son.

EARLY SETTLERS

Among the early settlers scattered along the Ohio River near the Martins Ferry area were: Thomas Tilton, John Nixon, Henry Cassill, John Nowles, John Tilton, John Fitzpatrick, Daniel Menser, Zephania Dunn, John McDonald, Henry Froggs, Wiland Hoagland, Michael Rawlings, William Shiff, Thomas Dawson, Thomas McDonald, Solomon DeLong, Charles Ward, Frederick Lamb, John Rigdon, George Weleams, Jesse Edgerton, Nathaniel Parremore, Jesse Parremore, Jacob Clark, James Clark, Adam House, Thomas Johnson, Hanament Davis, William Wallace, Joseph Redburn, Jonathan Mapins, William Mann, Daniel Kerr, William Kerr, Joseph Ross, James Watson, Abertious Bailey, Charles Chambers, Robert Hill, Archibald Harben, William Bailey, Jones Amspoker, Nickolas Decker, John Platt, Benjamin Reed, Joseph Goddard, Henry Conrad, William Carpenter, John Goddard, George Reno, John Buchanan, and Daniel Mathews.

WHERE WAS THAT?

Using the computer program, Google Earth, the approximate location of:

Absalom Martin's Cabin:	40°05'41.82"N	80°43'15.31"W
The Ferry Landing	40°05'25.24"N	80°43'35.25"W

MFAHS MEETINGS

The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Sedgwick House Museum. The public is always welcome to attend. Please contact Tom at 633-559, or Barb at 633-3430 for the time of the meeting.

GET YOUR FERRY LANDING ELECTRONICALLY

In order to save paper, ink, and postage, the *Ferry Landing* is made available online. If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically, please E-mail BGSShrodes @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.

IT'A TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Annual dues for the year 2009 are now being accepted. The Martins Ferry Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Martins Ferry local history. Membership dues help support the upkeep of the Sedgwick House Museum as well as this newsletter and other historical projects.

Dues are \$10.00 for individuals, and \$15.00 for families or groups.