

The Preservationist

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Akron Community:

On behalf of the Newstead Historical Society's Officers and Board of Trustees, I am writing this letter to share important information. Our local Victorian treasure, the Rich-Twinn Octagon House, has been damaged.

On June 11th, some water damage was noticed in the ceiling of the Lady's third floor bedroom along with plaster pieces on the floor. Emergency service was called and felt the problem would be rectified by installing a condensation pump to prevent further leakage. On the evening of July 28th, another more damaging leak was discovered in the bedroom. This time there was major water flow through the ceiling onto the floor. The water leaked through and damaged a large portion of the ceiling in the Drawing Room below. In addition, some of the furnishings were damaged and carpet saturated.

The Board has struggled with air conditioning problems for years at the Octagon House. I am sure most of you know a capital campaign took place a few years back and numerous repairs were made to the two museums. One of the major purchases was a new AC unit which was installed in September 2019. The Board thought the AC problems were solved. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case.

The new unit malfunctioned with the safety trap not turning off the unit when needed and the overflowing of water resulted.

This brief sequence of events should give you an idea of what took place and hopefully, understand the magnitude of damage.

NHS is fortunate to have insurance which will collaborate with the contractor's insurance to cover expenses. The cost of clean-up, reconstruction work, replacement of objects, and cleaning of the whole house will be immense. A variety of trucks will be seen outside the house for months to come. It will take a great deal of time to regain the beautiful Victorian splendor that she once had.

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Most NHS members and community members have strong emotional feelings toward our Victorian Lady. With time and love she will return to her glory once again.

The Board felt it was important that the community understand what has happened. Future updates will be given during the “healing” process. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Patricia Pearce
President

The above letter was published in the August 6th edition of the *Akron Bugle*. I felt it necessary to publish it in this newsletter for our many out of town members.

Presently the initial damage has been cleared away and bids are being generated for future work to restore the Octagon House. It is a waiting game to receive bids from contractors and to find artisans who will work on the vintage house. I anticipate a whole year before the Octagon House opens again. You will be kept inform as the process takes form.

We need to stay focused and know that the house will be once again a Victorian splendor. I appreciate the concern the membership has shown during this tragedy.

Patricia Pearce



MUSEUM DIRECTORS

Maintaining two museums is a huge job and our two directors, Rich-Twinn Octagon House’s Laurel Jones, and Knight-Sutton Museum’s Marybeth Whiting, have done a great job for numerous years. The hours of research, planning, and other multitude of jobs are too numerous to count. Our two directors have toiled for the society and now have decided to step back from their positions.

Their family obligations must take precedence. The Society’s Board gives a heartfelt thanks to Laurel and Marybeth. We wish them well and thank them for their outstanding service to the society in general and the museums in particular.

Well done, Ladies.

ANNUAL QUILT RAFFLE

The beautiful Amish quilt, “Brick Works”, is presently on display in the window of the Fred E. Thomas Insurance Agency. As you know the annual raffle held on the Fourth of July needed to be delayed this year due to the pandemic. The plan is to raffle the quilt on October 1st at the NHS Board meeting since the Harvest Dinner has been cancelled. Tickets are still available at the Newstead Public Library, Candy Apple Café and from Board members. The winner will be notified, and their name will be published in the *Akron Bugle*.

The Pick-a-Pie raffle has been a big hit. The winner will also be drawn at the October Board meeting.

The quilt – pie raffle generated many donations for which we are extremely grateful. If your name has been omitted from our list, we apologize.



Bill & Michele	Asmus
Faith	Bassanello
Dawn	Borchert
Greg & Sue	Brown
Roger & Sue	Brown
Kim	Burg
Barb	Capan
Mark & Sharon	Catalano
Al	Cheavacci
Richard & Joyce	Christiana
Tom & Linda	Cowan
Dave	Cummings
Harold & Carolyn	Finger
Joan	Frank
	Fred Thomas Agency
Ken & Ellen	Frey
Elaine	Frey
Dave	Hofmeier
Jeff & Laurel	Jones
Betsy	Klawer
Dick & Annette	Komroy
Donna	Kumpf
John & Janis	Lauridson
Jim & Roberta	Lobur
Pat & Sue	McCann
Pat	Pearce
Dennis & Collette	Remington
Walt & Diane	Rosonowski
Kevin & Edna	Scherf
Mary	Sellers
Don & Mary Jane	Shonn
Florence	Staples
Janice	Sutton
Fred & Freda	Weinreber
Mike & Marybeth	Whiting

Octagon House Legends Fact and Fiction

By Pat Rodriques

Through the years there has been much conjecture about when the Octagon House was built. For many years the Historical Society itself believed it to have been built in 1849. In the over 17 articles I have read that have been printed about the house guesses included anywhere from 1839-1850. Many of these articles also ventured guesses about which wife it was built for - 2nd or 4th.

We know for a fact that the land wasn't purchased until May of 1850, when Mr. Rich purchased it from Jonathan Russell for \$281.00.

Legend also has it that the building of the Octagon house was inspired by Orson Fowler's Octagon home in Fishkill. Mr. Fowler was a phrenologist - a person who studies the formation of the head believing that that indicates mental faculties and character traits. He was also the author of "A Home for All" - a book tying architectural design to health and wellness. He proposed in his designs for Octagon homes - hot air and hot water furnaces, speaking tubes, dumbwaiters, plenty of windows, plenty of light and air circulation and even indoor water closets, which he advocated placing under the stairs. His own Octagon house had 60 rooms and sat on 130 acres. It started what is often referred to as the "Octagon Fad" of building.

According to one newspaper article, Mr. and Mrs. Rich were on a honeymoon trip through the Hudson River Valley when they saw Mr. Fowler's home and Mr. Rich came home and "immediately" started building an Octagon house for Mrs. Rich.

An article in the Batavia Daily News dated Sept. 25, 1937 says Akron's Octagon house was built in 1855 and took two years to complete. That would place it at 1857. It should be noted that in Orson Fowler's book he states that his own house was not completed until 1853.

At that time Mr. Rich was married to his second wife Diadama. They were married in 1839 (She died in 1857). Therefore, it could not have been a honeymoon trip. The trip would have had to have taken place after 1853, and the home appears to have been built for his second wife, not his 4th.

Mr. Rich was married four times. His first marriage was to Betsey Bartram in 1833. They had two children, Charles M. born in 1835, and Elizabeth, born in 1838. The first Mrs. Rich died in 1838 and is buried in Conn. in her family's plot. Her gravestone reads, "wife of Charles B. Rich of Richville, N.Y."

A year later he married Diadama DeLong. She was 19 and he was 31. They had three children-Frank born in 1842, James born in 1845 (who died at three months of age) and Callie in 1857. She died in 1858. The latter two children are buried in Maple Lawn Cemetery next to their mother in the Rich family plot.



Charles B. Rich & family on porch of Octagon House circa 1860.
Family members unidentified on original photo when given to James Stapleton of Newstead Historical Society.

Mr. Rich's third wife was Hannah Elizabeth Delano. She was 37 and he was 53. They were married in 1861 and she died the following year at age 38. She was the daughter of Jonathan Delano, a War of 1812 veteran and Akron cement industrialist. She is buried in the Beeman Cemetery.

In 1865 he married Caroline Smith Dolbeer, who had four children from a previous marriage, ranging in age from 16 to 24 at the time of her union with Mr. Rich. She died in 1887. Mr. Rich predeceased her in 1870, having an epileptic seizure while driving his horse drawn buggy and suffering a fatal fall.

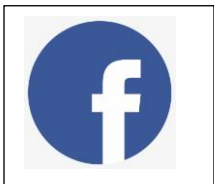
There is one photo of the Rich family posed on the porch of the Octagon house. It has two men and three women in it. According to the 1860 census house members of the time were Charles B, his son Charles M, his daughter Elizabeth and his son Frank from his second marriage, a domestic named Clare and his sister-in-law from his first marriage Mary Bartram and her son John.

So, who is in the picture? Was it really taken in 1860 or could it have been earlier when the house being completed? The figures are unidentified and shadowy. More mysteries.



Historian's Office

By Don Holmes



Are you wondering what the Town/Village Historian does? We do many things. Right now, one of our projects under the guidance of Deputy Historian Bev Summe is a Facebook site called "Snippets of History from your Town Historians". The site is filled with pictures and stories about pieces of local history. We hope that when we post items on the site, they will stimulate questions and discussion among our viewers. Many folks have memories of these places and happenings that we know nothing about. You can contribute to writing the history of Newstead. If you are on Facebook check us out.

You can find us in the Historian's Office (behind the Cultural Center). We maintain extensive files on a myriad of community organizations and activities. We also have a file cabinet full of information on families (past and present) in the community. If you're doing research on your family history, we may be able to help. We're here Saturday from 9 - 12 and most Thursdays from 9 - at least 12. Come in through the Cultural Center entrance.

Century Home #113 Albright—Parzych-Short House

Submitted by Pat Rodrigues

The Newstead Historical Society is pleased to announce the designation of its 113th Century home, the Albright--Parzych-Short house at 19 Marshall Avenue. Town records indicate the home was built in 1900. It first appears on a map of Akron in 1909 as being owned by Joseph C. Albright.

It is believed to have been built by Lewis Belger, an Akron native who began building homes in Akron in 1886 and died in 1922 just as he was completing the last of the 156 homes he built, according to his obituary. He started his career as a cabinet maker and joiner. He was the developer of "Belger Heights" on East Avenue, so named because of the number of homes he built there - all a similar style -featuring hip roofs and dormers.

As you walk down Marshall Avenue this sunny yellow home welcomes you. Walking up the slate steps the first thing you notice is the ionic columns supporting the porch roof. They were originally on a house on Hoag Avenue directly behind Ms. Parzych-Short's home.

Once inside you notice all the oak woodwork surrounding every door frame, window and the banister, which is capped off by oak leaves carved into the newel posts. The dining room has oak pocket doors and a bay window which overlooks a birch tree with a bench under it, inviting you to sit and stay awhile.

Twenty-five years ago, a family room was added off the kitchen. Martha (Parzych-Short) has since acquired a fireplace mantel from an old farmhouse on Stage Road that she hopes to get installed soon. The family room exits to the backyard and patio which has a pressed concrete floor in the shape of a grist wheel.

Even the attic has a hardwood floor and has great views of the surrounding village. The basement has an old-fashioned fruit cellar, reminiscent of the period in which the home was built.

The street on which the home was built was named after Marshall Hommedieu, Mayor of Akron from 1879-1880. He lived at the corner of John (#80) and Marshall Avenue. He bought the tract of land that Marshall Avenue sits on and sold the lots on it for residential purposes. He was the first to introduce streetlights to Akron, which were lit with kerosene. He also had a drug and grocery store on Main Street in 1877.

Martha herself and her children also have deep roots in Akron as they are part of five generations of her family who have lived and grown up in Akron. Martha grew up with her parents at the end of Main Street, on the edge of the escarpment, her grandmother grew up on John Street and her great grandmother on Cedar Street.

In fact, as a small child she believed her family owned Akron Falls Park. Her father told her they did, and she believed him because they spent a lot of time there. In addition to that she saw her uncle there all the time, making it even more true in her eyes. But of course, he worked for the county parks department and the family did not own the park.

Alas, we can't give her the park, but we can award her a Century home plaque designating her home as Century Home #113 - the Albright--Parzych - Short home.



Membership

As of July 31, 2020

By Linda Capan

We are saddened to report the recent passing of lifetime member *Lois Kreher* on July 31, 2020. We extend our sincerest condolences to her family and friends.

WELCOME to the following new **ANNUAL** members:

- Ryan Meek
- Kim Stein

WELCOME to the following **NEW LIFE** member:

- Kimberley A. Burg

THANK YOU FOR MEMORIAL DONATIONS given for:

- Larry Hanley from Patricia Pearce
- Daughter Janet from Phil & Arlene Richardson
- Kelsey & Dorothy Webster from Robert Webster
- Paul Zola from Michael & Marybeth Whiting



Memorials and donations to the Society are always appreciated and can be mailed to:
Newstead Historical Society
PO Box 222
Akron, NY 14001

Looking ahead to the holidays (or anytime) – a NHS Membership would make a great gift for that “hard to buy for” person or history buff on your list! Individual annual memberships are only \$15, couples \$20, and family \$25. Lifetime single memberships are \$150 and couple memberships \$250.



If interested, please mail payment to above address with name and address of gift recipient and name and address of person giving the gift. A gift membership will be mailed to you in plenty of time for your holiday gift giving.

If you have any questions, please email Linda Capan at: lcapan@hotmail.com with a subject line NHS.

PROGRAMS

At the August Board meeting, members decided to cancel the September, October and November programs. It was a difficult decision, but the safety and well-being of our members are paramount. President Pearce has been in contact with the 2020 presenters and many are willing to present in 2021. The Board prides itself in bringing educational and informative programs to the community. We are grateful these presenters will be with us next year.

2020 NHS Executive Board

President	Patricia Pearce 542-4191
Vice President	Adam Burg 570-0633
Treasurer	Annette Komroy 542-4714
Recording Secretary	Kimberley Burg 907-2720
Membership Secretary	Linda Capan 542-5300

Trustees

<u>Trustees: 2018-2020</u>	<u>Trustees: 2019-2021</u>	<u>Trustees: 2020-2022</u>
John Jendrowski	Pat Rodrigues	David Wakeman
Carole Borchert	Jannette Potera	Mary Sellers Hanley
Dusty Blasko	David Hofmeier	Marlene Gehl

Directors and Committees

Rich-Twinn Octagon House Director	
Knight-Sutton Museum Director	
Collections Manager	Jannette Potera
Publicity	Michele Asmus
Website	Colleen Salmon/Patty Buckley
Sales	
Century Homes & Landmarks	Pat Rodrigues
Newsletter	Donald Holmes/Julie Brady
Town and Village Historian	Donald Holmes

If you would like to receive notifications and information by e-mail, please send a note to Linda Capan with NHS in the subject line to lcapan@hotmail.com. Rest assured - You will *not* receive numerous messages; this is meant to be a convenience for those who would like it.

Please donate your bottles & cans to NHS by dropping them off at:

BOTTLE & CAN
RETRIEVAL CENTER
52 Cedar St.
Akron, NY



Tell them you want to donate to NHS!

Newstead Historical Society
P.O. Box 222
Akron, New York 14001
Office Phone: 716-542-7022
Visit us on the Web:
www.newsteadhistoricalsociety.org

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The Newstead Historical Society deeply appreciates the support of the County of Erie, the Town of Newstead, our members and the community at large.



