

GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2014

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October 2014 Meeting – Monday, October 6

In keeping with the month of October and Halloween, GJHS invited Steve Wisner to tell us about his just released book, The Haunted Houses of Louisville.

We will meet at 7:00 P.M. in the meeting room of the Jeffersontown Library at 10635 Watterson Trail. The Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society meetings are now held on the first Monday of the even numbered months of the year. Everyone is encouraged to attend to help guide and grow the Society.

December Meeting

At the October meeting we will discuss plans for meeting and whether to meet for lunch or supper, and the time and date to do it.

Historical Marker for the Conrad-Seaton House, Kentucky Historical Highway Marker #2432

The dedication of the historical marker was held on Thursday, September 18. This marker is unique in Kentucky because it designates in a historical district, not just a house or a group of houses, an archaeological site, but a historical house and an archeological site, all in one place. As an activity connected to the Gaslight Festival three or four years back, Anne Bader dug a hole in the side yard on the property. Over the years during the festival they have unearthed thousands of sherds of pottery from Valentine Conrad's pottery operation as well as other historical items.

Among those in attendance at the event were Jeffersontown Mayor Bill Dieruf and City Planner, Matt Meunier, Conrad-Seaton House owner, Phil Stone, Anne Bader and all of her crew at Corn Island Archeology, Becky Riddle, Historical Marker Coordinator, and other staff of the Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort, members of the Falls of the Ohio Archaeological Society, Sallie Cheatham Smith, GJHS member, who was given special recognition as a Conrad Valentine descendant, and John Ulmer representing the Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society.

The dedication address was given by Anne Bader and Rachel Kennedy, Corn Island Archeology Architectural Historian. From the research done for the National Register application Rachel gave a short history of Conrad Valentine in Jeffersontown and the history of the house. Conrad Valentine's name first appears on the tax records in 1803. On May 22, 1803, Conrad purchased Lots 59-60, the gas station at Billtown Road and Watterson Trail (Main Street), at auction from Fredrick Bartlett. He later purchased, maybe in early 1804, Lots 57-58 from Henry Coleman. During this time a small cabin was built, whether it was log or brick is not clear. From the archaeological evidence uncovered from the digs it is thought the pottery was on Lots 56 and 57. Census records from the time indicate Conrad used enslaved workers to make additions to the cabin in the 1803-1810 timeframe. Additions were a two-story, two-room addition and a northeast side entrance.

In February of 1816 the Kentucky General Assembly passed an act that found land titles in Jeffersontown were defective. In August of 1816 Conrad Valentine repurchased Lots 56-60 for \$4 per lot. This is the first time Lot 56 is noted as being owned by him. Lot 56 is the archaeological dig site on the corner of Watterson Trail and Water Street.

On February 14, 1828, William Conrad purchased Lots 56-60 from his parents.

On March 15, 1837, John L. Hite purchased Lots 56-60 and five other lots for \$4500. He was the son of Joseph and Sarah Hite, who owned the plantation, Mansfield, which later was Henry Watterson's home. John Hite lost the Lots two years later in foreclosure.

May 23, 1839, James C. Pendleton buys lots 56-60 for \$900 at auction. His sister married John Hite's brother.

On July 24, 1844, John S. Seaton bought Lots 56-60 for an unrecorded price and lived and practiced medicine for the years there with his second wife, Mary Hikes

On December 13, 1854, Dr. Samuel B. Mills purchased Lots 56-60 for \$4,000. He lived there with his wife, Susan Herr and practiced medicine there for ten years.

Around 1840-1850 a two-story central hall, three-room, two-bathroom brick addition was added.

December 20, 1864, Dr. Samuel N. Marshall of Spencer County purchased Lots 56-60 and two other acres of land for \$4500. He practiced medicine from the house and may have built an office in the Water Street side yard. The Marshalls lived in the house until their deaths. He died in 1898 and his descendants owned the house until 1964. Granddaughter Harriet Marshall lived there from 1916 to 1964.

On October 27, 1964 William and Ann Menefee purchased Lots 56-60 and divided them into Tract 1, Lot 56 and part of 57, and Tract 2, part of Lot 57 and Lots 58-60. Tract 2 is the gas station. In 1966 the Menefees restored the house.

On November 17, 1967, Frank and Mary Kay App purchased Tract 1 and Mary Kay operated an art Gallery in the house.

In 1978 the two-story vinyl-clad extension was added.

On September 1, 1989, Philip and Joan Stone purchased the property for \$90,000. They completed renovation and divided it into commercial units.

Phil Stone had the honor of unveiling the bronze marker. Following the ceremonies everyone was invited inside for refreshments.

The Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society wants to thank Phil and Joan Stone for maintaining the Conrad-Seaton House, Anne Bader for taking on the expense and time to allow the staff of Corn Island Archaeology to research and perform the archaeological work on the property's history, and Mayor Dieruf and the City for providing financial support to purchase the historical marker. It takes people and dedication to preserve and protect our past. A big Thank You to all involved.

A copy of all the paperwork to obtain the historical marker will be available for viewing in the Jeffersontown Historical Museum at a later date.

Jeffersontown Film

The short film on the history of Jeffersontown commissioned by the Jeffersontown City Council is in the final review stages.

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church 225 Year Celebration.

Christ Lutheran continues their 225-year celebration during October with an organ recital by music director Ann Wade on Sunday, October 5 at 3:30 p.m. in the church. On October 26 a Kentucky State Historical Marker will be dedicated at 12:30 P.M. following the 11:00 a.m. Church service.

There was an article about Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Sunday, September 21 edition of *The Courier-Journal's* Neighborhood section written by Martha Elson.

Jeffersontown Christian Church Celebrates 175 Years

In the Saturday, September 27 edition of *The Courier-Journal*, in the Neighborhoods was an article written by Bailey Loosemore on Jeffersontown Christian Church's 175th year celebration on the weekend of October 18-19. There will be live music and family activities on Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

In Memoriam

Sallie Smith's husband, Roy, passed away on August 26 after a long battle with cancer. He was 79. Sallie and Roy were married for 55 years. Roy was a veteran and a retired firefighter having served with the Jeffersontown, Mt. Washington and General Electric's Appliance Park fire units. Roy was transported to his resting place in Fairmount Cemetery in Fern Creek aboard a 1946 fire truck, escorted by other fire units. At the cemetery service, Karen Brumley of the Louisville Scottish Society played the pipes and Roy was given a military burial. Our prayers and sympathy go with Sallie.

August Meeting

In August we had the privilege of visiting the private museum of Brooks and Marilyn Bower in their Soldier's Retreat home. The Bowers are very gracious people, so since the museum in the basement is small the Bower's allowed us to visit in two groups, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. To get to the museum you go through part of the home. We were greeted with southern hospitality by two transplanted Californians.

Each of us received a color pamphlet entitled "Discovering Soldier's Retreat: A Historic Journey" from which the information in this article is taken. The Bowers have done a tremendous job preserving and presenting the history of the Anderson family at Soldier's Retreat. I will repeat what I wrote earlier, it takes people and dedication to preserve and protect our past. The significance of their love and pride in preserving and presenting its history, I think, can be summed up in the first two paragraphs Brooks Bower wrote in the Foreword of the pamphlet:

"When Marilyn and I purchased Soldier's Retreat in 1997, I knew little about the history of the house and even less about the people who had made it their home. I can't remember exactly when I learned of the boxes upon boxes of artifacts stockpiled in the barn, but I do remember looking through them for the first time. They were dirty, rusted, definitely old...yet oddly fascinating.

"To say I have been humbled to learn the provenance of these little remnants and what they signify – the crucial role Colonel Richard Anderson played in the triumph of our nation and his tremendous influence on Kentucky's early development – well, that would be an understatement. It is not often you hold in your palm the broken pieces of a smoking pipe owned by a man who won battles for George Washington."

Soldier's Retreat was built by Revolutionary War Colonel Richard Clough Anderson in 1793 and he and his family lived there until Richard's death in 1826.



During the Revolutionary War Anderson had served under George Washington at the Battle of Trenton, was aide-de-camp of the Marquis de Lafayette at Yorktown and had surrendered at Charleston along with Croghan.

Richard Anderson and his friend, William Croghan, both became notable surveyors following the war. Richard for the Virginia Continental Line with responsibility for land grants in central Ohio and western Kentucky. This gave him the lead for finding the best land tracts. In 1787 Richard married Elizabeth Clark, George Rogers Clark's sister. William Croghan married another of Clark's sisters, Lucy.

In 1789, Anderson bought the first 500 acres of the 952 acres that would become Soldier's Retreat. Three months into the construction of Soldier's Retreat Anderson joined the rescue party after Chenoweth Station had been attacked by Indians. Anderson brought the survivors, one of them being Peggy Chenoweth who had been partially scalped, back to his temporary cabin to recover. This cabin is thought to be near to the present intersection of Hurstbourne Parkway and Shelbyville Road. Also in the rescue party was William Clark, later to be the co-commander of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of Discovery and George Rogers Clark's brother.

Soldier's Retreat was completed in 1793, a year after the Croghan's completed construction of their Locust Grove mansion on Blankenbaker Lane. Both houses were built based on the same set of Georgian-style plans. Locust Grove was built using brick, Soldier's Retreat with limestone. One of the items the Bower's found in the barn after they purchased the house was a piece of old plaster with '1793' etched in it.

Elizabeth Clark Anderson died in 1795 during the birth of their fourth child. In September 1797, Richard Anderson married Sarah Marshall, cousin to John Marshall who was appointed Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. They had twelve children together, one of them being Robert Clough Anderson, Commandant of Fort Sumter when the Civil War began.

Soldier's Retreat was visited by many notable figures of the day – George Rogers Clark, Henry Clay, the Marquis de Lafayette, Aaron Burr, U.S. Presidents James Monroe and Andrew Jackson, and Miami Indian Chief, Little Turtle, once a feared enemy.

It is known that Anderson owned about thirty slaves at one time, but Charles, born in 1814, said his mother deeply regretted having to depend on slaves. There were large gardens and orchards of apple, pear, and peach, also a large vineyard. One of Anderson's hobbies was wine making.

The New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812, damaged the house and it was repaired. In 1840 the house was struck by lightning and was burned beyond repair. Over the next one hundred years the property fell into disrepair and changed hands and was parceled out. Finally in 1916 Alvin and Sallie Hert bought and reassembled most of all the original 952 acres and named the resulting "Hurstbourne Farms."

In 1948 Leroy Highbaugh, Jr. bought the again overgrown and rundown property and resumed the dairy operations under the name of Highbaugh Farms. In the 1960s they started developing the property with residential and office tracts, and the 200-acre Hurstbourne Country Club.

In 1972 the Highbaughs commissioned Dr. Joseph Callaway and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to excavate Soldier's Retreat. Much they and Geryl Gilbert found in 1980 was stored away in the old barn the Herts built in 1920. By 1985 the Highbaughs lovingly had rebuilt the home using the plans for Locust Grove and Kentucky building stone and materials.

In 1997 Brooks and Marilyn purchased the four acres of what remained of the 952 acres. They "opened up" the house somewhat by joining some rooms widening the doorways, always in keeping with the original floor plans. They consulted landscape architects to redevelop the grounds and driveways.

The museum was professionally done by Solid Light Design Services. There is an audio-visual program that tells of the people and their lives at the time and the visitors who came to see the Andersons. The cases are filled with early and later artifacts – old Valentine Conrad pottery, glassware, tableware, pieces of old clay pipes, buttons, Chinese export pottery sherds, late 18th century wrought iron hinge pins and other hardware, old flint glass, the bottom of a pressed glass tumbler or jar from the 1880s with an image and name of Grover Cleveland, a 20th Century rusted kid's cap pistol, a genealogy chart of the Anderson family, a history of Anderson's time during the Revolutionary War, Civil War buttons and Union belt buckles, old children's porcelain marbles, and an original document signed by Richard Anderson that Brooks Bower purchased within the last year.

The pamphlet closes with the following which we believe summarizes the way the Bowers' feel about preserving history: "The Bowers believe in honoring the legacy of this true Kentucky homestead and living relic of our collective history. That's why they have graciously invested in a one-of-a-kind immersive exhibit that tells the home's unique story and celebrates the precious remnants left behind. It is their hope that Soldier's Retreat will continue to amaze and educate the community for generations to come and serve as a daily reminder that history really is 'just around the corner.'"

Brooks has told Beth Wilder he plans on donating some the extra artifacts he has to the Jeffersontown Historical Museum.

Contact Us

Our e-mail address is **jtownhistsociety@aol.com**. The telephone contact is your newsletter editor, John Ulmer, 502-491-6463