



# Delaware County Historian

VOLUME 59, ISSUE 2

WINTER 2015

## Willis, Last Governor from Delaware, Took Office a Century Ago

By Steve Shaw

Delaware County can lay claim to having two native sons that became governor of the State of Ohio. The first was Rutherford B. Hayes, who was governor from 1868 to 1872 and from 1876-1877. The second, Frank B. Willis, was elected in 1914 and took office 100 years ago, on January 14, 1915.

Frank B. Willis was born in Berlin Township in 1871. He grew up on a family farm that raised sheep for the wool industry. Finishing school in Galena, he went to Ohio Northern University in Ada, Ohio. After graduation he stayed there as a professor of government and history.

Prior to becoming governor his political career was a climb from state representative from Hardin County to the United States Congress from the 8th Congressional District.

In 1914 he was nominated for governor under the then-new direct primary law. He ran against a sitting governor from a powerful political family of the time, James M. Cox. Willis defeated Governor Cox by around 30,000 votes. Highlights of the legislative record in Ohio during Willis's term include reorganizing the state militia and the civil service commission, along with revamping the liquor licensing system. With the rapid growth of the automobile as transportation during this time, the road laws of the state were updated. Governor Willis had to use his executive authority in 1916 to send the State Militia to Youngstown in reaction to violence during a steel strike.

In 1916 President Woodrow Wil-

son ordered guard units from across the country to patrol the Texas border with Mexico due to armed incursions from Pancho Villa. Reacting to the federal mandate, Governor Willis called up the Ohio Guard. Ohio guardsmen were mobilized in the Upper Arlington area in a hastily constructed camp, soon to be known as Camp Willis. Eventually around 10,000 troops would be made available to patrol the area around El Paso, Texas. By 1917 many of the returning Guard units were held in the military due to the mobilization for World War I. Many of those troops were not released from military service for another two years, at the end of World War I.

The term of service for Ohio governors were just two years up until the 1950s, so Willis faced re-election in 1916. Governor Willis was defeated by his old opponent James M. Cox by just 3,000 votes in the 1916 election. He lost to Cox again in the 1918 gubernatorial election and turned his political aspirations back to the federal government.

Willis was elected to the United States Senate in 1920 and re-elected in 1926. He died suddenly in 1928 shortly after declaring his candidacy for the United States presidency at Gray Chapel on the Ohio Wesleyan University campus.



Frank B. Willis, ca. 1915

(Library of Congress collection)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

News and Notes	2
Volunteer Profile	3
Roller Skating	4-5
Dust and Mud	6
New Board Members	7

## News and Notes from the Nash House

### Society Collecting Information on Historic Buildings

The Society is creating records for all of the buildings in Delaware County that were built before 1920, and you can help us out. Pick a building that you think meets that criteria. It may be a house next door to you, a business that you frequent, or a building that you pass every day and wonder about. We will teach you how to research

and document the history of the building. Photograph the building and put all of the information into the Society databases. You will be satisfying your curiosity and helping Delaware County document its history all at once. For more information, send an email to [Volunteer@delawareohiohistory.org](mailto:Volunteer@delawareohiohistory.org) or call 740-369-3831.

### Upcoming Events

- March 26, 7 p.m. Crown Bottling and Soft Drink Advertising  
Delaware Township Hall  
2590 Liberty Road, Delaware
- April 18, 9:30 a.m. Volunteer Fair, 2690 Stratford Road, Delaware
- April 28, 7 p.m. Commemoration of Delaware County and the  
Civil War, with special guest Abraham Lincoln  
Gray Chapel, Ohio Wesleyan University  
61 S. Sandusky St., Delaware
- May 15-17 Arts Festival, Downtown Delaware
- June 26-27 Powell Festival
- And many more to come!  
Check our website for more information as it becomes available

### Volunteer Fair

The annual Volunteer Fair will be held on Saturday, April 18 from 9:30 to noon at the Garth Oberlander Barn, Garth's Auctions, 2690 Stratford Road. All current and prospective volunteers are invited. There will be volunteer recognition and the chance to learn about the projects that need staffing. For more information, send an email to [volunteer@delawareohiohistory.org](mailto:volunteer@delawareohiohistory.org).

## DELAWARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Established 1947

### OFFICERS

President	Brent Carson
Vice-President of Development	Jack Hilborn
Vice-President of Operations	Roger Koch
Recording Secretary	Lynn Foreman
Corresponding Secretary	Mary Ann McGreevey
Treasurer	Jan Fleischmann

### TRUSTEES

Charlton Amidon  
Ralph Au  
Karen Cowan  
Sue Heston  
Matt Kear  
Donna Meyer  
Bonnie Newland  
Benny Shoults  
Donald Staas  
Marian Vance

The Delaware County Historian is published at least biannually by the Delaware County Historical Society, Inc.  
157 E. William St.  
P.O. Box 317  
Delaware, OH 43015  
740-369-3831

[www.delawareohiohistory.org](http://www.delawareohiohistory.org)  
[info@delawareohiohistory.org](mailto:info@delawareohiohistory.org)



Newsletter Editor: Matt Kear  
Contributions of original historical research concerning Delaware County, Ohio, are welcome.  
Send your contributions to the attention of the Newsletter Editor at any of the above addresses.

## Volunteer Profile: Ann Simons

By Karen Cowan

Love of history. Need to organize. Can do attitude. Combine these three passions and you have Ann Simons, a valued volunteer at the Delaware County Historical Society. Ann has been with DCHS for 4 years, but in that short time she has made an impact as the “Chief Organizer” for the Accession and Storage Room at the Cryder Center.

Before moving to Delaware, Ohio, Ann and her husband Jim lived in Naugatuck, Connecticut, where Ann was President of the local historical society for 8 years and involved with them for over 15 years. She feels that her greatest contribution was organizing their collection. She realized the importance of documentation when it came to donations and society collections, so with her “let’s do this” attitude, she purchased a book on Nomenclature of Objects, which is the standard for labeling objects in historical and museum collections, and she set about naming artifacts and documenting their collection.

However, when Ann and her husband moved to Delaware, Ann wanted to focus on her e-Bay business and getting acquainted in her new community. She became a member only because she received a free membership in the mail. But she was determined to NOT get involved.

A DCHS newsletter asking for cataloging volunteers to work on PastPerfect, software that she had used in Connecticut, changed Ann’s mind and changed DCHS for the better.

She began as a cataloger, but every time she went into the storage room at Cryder her “organizing” mind would tell her “They need help organizing, and you are the person to do it.” So, with permission from the Board and her nomenclature book in hand, Ann began doing what she was born to do – organize.

She has spent two years designing and implementing a system for naming and numbering storage areas, documenting objects, and putting the objects in their proper storage place. “She has taken the room from chaos to structure,” said Susan Logan, who chairs the Collection Committee. “We can research an object in PastPerfect, and if it is in the storage room, we can easily locate it. In the past, finding something in the storage room was a challenge, and figuring out where to put an object so that it could be located in the future was more of a challenge. Ann



**Ann Simons**

(photo by Brad Cowan)

changed all of that.”

Ann and Jim have 4 children, 7 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. In addition to her work at DCHS Ann has recently become a director of her homeowners’ association. When she volunteered for a 3-year term her husband shouted, “Are you nuts?” So she settled for a 2-year term.

Brent Carson, Society President, said “DCHS is lucky to have Ann and will forever be a better organization because of her.”

# Roller Skating in Delaware County

By Brent Carson

In the children's room of the Delaware County Historical Society's Nash House is a pair of roller skates dating back to the early 1900s. A Nash family member's skating opportunities perhaps were limited to neighborhood sidewalks. The city of Delaware had no skating rink until the late 1940s when an outdoor skating area was opened in Blue Limestone Park.

The earliest indoor roller rink in Delaware County was in Sunbury and dated to the 1920s. It stood on the north side of Rainbow Avenue, not far from Columbus Street. It only lasted a few years. In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s there were skating rinks in surrounding counties. Those who lived in northwest Delaware County often traveled up State Route 4 to Marion County's Highway Rollerina.

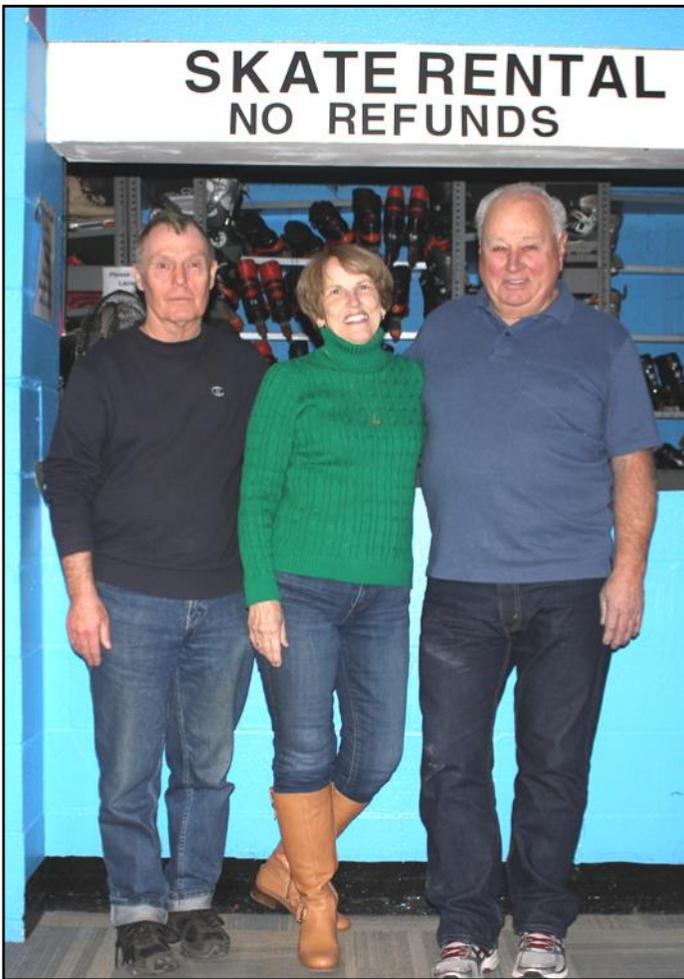
(Continued on Page 5)



**Above: Aerial View of the former Skater's Haven; Below: Inside Sunbury Skate**

(above photo from DCHS Collection; below photo by Brad Cowan)





**From left to right, Roger Owen, Bobbie Herd and Ed Herd at Sunbury Skate**

(photo by Brad Cowan)

**(Continued from Page 4)**

Society member Bill McCarty spoke of growing up in Magnetic Springs. He and his friends would ride the roller skating bus provided by the Marysville Skate Rink. Western Delaware County residents who lived in the Ostrander area also traveled to the Marysville rink.

Westerville had the Skateen Roller Rink and attracted the crowds from Sunbury, Galena, and Center Village. Columbus had several rinks including Smith's Roller Rink on North Fourth Street. It drew customers in the south part of the county including Lewis Center and Powell.

Circa 1950, Delaware County saw a new indoor rink built on the west side of U.S. Route 23, just to the south of Hyatts Road. Originally it was called Dove's Skating Rink but later called Skater's Haven. Today the building is the home of Maxx Motorcycles. I visited the building in January and saw that the original wood skating floor was still intact. Maxx owner Tom Barrett gave me the complete tour. He has owned the business for three years. Barrett said, "I grew up in Delaware

County and loved coming here to skate at Skater's Haven."

He took me to the west end of the room to show me the shaded area of the floor. There a small stand had stood where a person sat to play the vinyl records. He said, "You could pay the person 10 cents and he would play you three songs of your choice."

Skater's Haven continued in operation until 1968. A number of individuals either owned or managed the business. At one point a Mr. Black closed the rink and turned the building into a meat company. That business was short-lived and after some repair to the floor, it reopened as a roller rink.

The last three years the rink was managed by Bill and Anna Martin. Kids used to call them "Mom" and "Dad" as they had a close relationship with many of the customers. Bill Martin would drive his own pick-up truck to the south end of the city of Delaware on Sunday afternoons. There he would load a truck full of kids in the back and take them to the rink. At the end of the evening he would take them home. He said he never charged them for this service. Other kids would be dropped off at the rink by their parents. Anna Martin said that they would often stay long after closing until the parents returned and the last kid was picked up.

In 1965, the Big Walnut Skate Club opened in Sunbury. It was started by John Dove, the same person who started Skater's Haven. Big Walnut Skate Club is still in operation. For the last ten years it has been owned and operated by Sharmin McAtee and is today called Sunbury Skate. Roger Owen has been the longtime employee. He has been working at the rink for forty-six years. From 1984-2005 the rink was owned and managed by Ed and Bobbie Herd. They returned to the rink in January to reminisce. All three are longtime skaters. Ed and Bobbie met for the first time while skating at Smith's Roller Rink in Columbus. Ed spoke to the size of the Sunbury rink. "The maple-wood floor is 60' x125'. It's a little deceiving. Some of the recently built roller rinks are larger buildings, but with smaller skating surfaces. That's because they've devoted a lot more space to video games." Bobbie said, "We often had second and third generations of skaters coming here." All three spoke to the importance of the rink for Sunbury. Big Walnut class reunions often include a trip to the rink as part of their weekend events.

The longevity of the Sunbury rink speaks to its importance throughout the county. I remember the numerous evening trips with busloads of skaters from Willis Middle School in Delaware. We would often have the students vote on which roller rink to visit. Sunbury was the favorite.

## Days of Dust and Mud

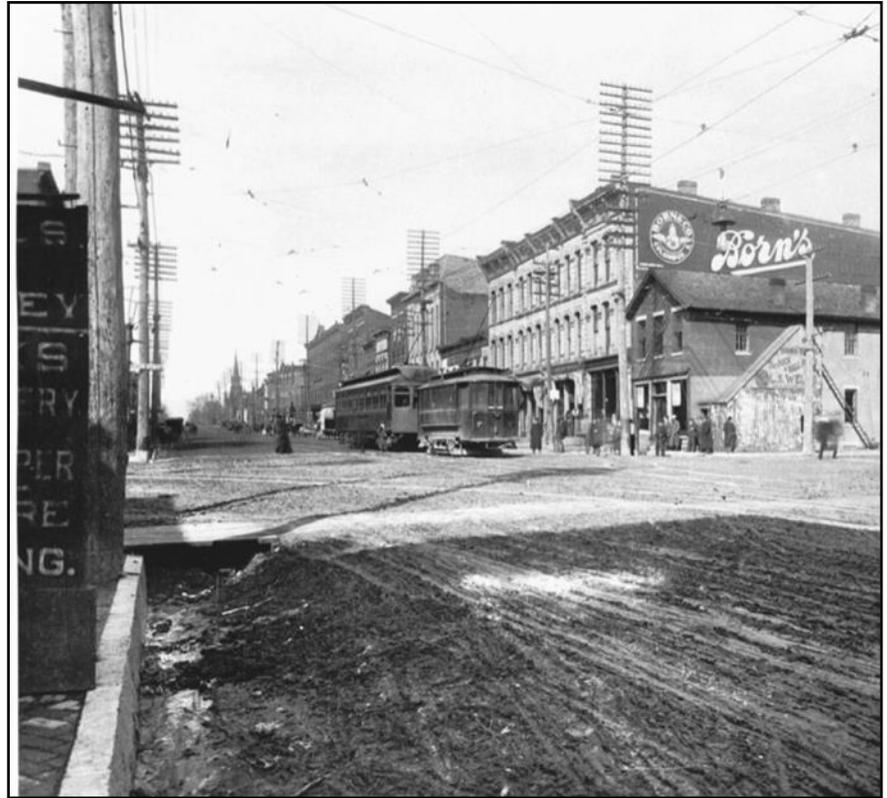
By Brent Carson

Two programs I presented recently were “The History of East Winter Street” and “Stagecoach Travel in Delaware County.” A connection I found to both was the impact of unpaved streets and roads through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the summer you dealt with the dust, the rest of the year it was the mud.

Towns like Delaware had a regular schedule of sprinkler wagons which traveled the streets to attempt to minimize the dust. An issue of the *Delaware Gazette* described the Rome Fair near Berkshire in the early 1900s. The popular fair drew large crowds, and the *Gazette* spoke of the hundreds of horse-drawn buggies descending on Rome Corners. Fairgoers could spot the area where the fair was located from miles away by the cloud of dust hovering above it. Men and women often dressed up to attend. However, dark suits and dresses would change to a dusty tan after a day’s visit.

The choking summer dust gave way to mud through much of the remaining year. In the times of stagecoach travel the routes were seemingly impassable. Men traveling in a stagecoach were expected to assist the driver in prying the stage from the mud. At times passengers had to walk a distance around treacherous mud holes so as to lighten the load for the horses. Sometimes luggage had to be removed, carried a distance and reloaded. Men were expected to carry a long wooden rail to be used for leveraging the stagecoach from the mud.

In the towns and villages the mud was unavoidable. Pedestrians attempting to cross a street were faced with a challenge. Some of the mud could be avoided with board walkways at intersections, but even those walkways were often muddy. Stores with wet and muddy floors were common.



Above: Looking north on Sandusky Street in Delaware near William Street

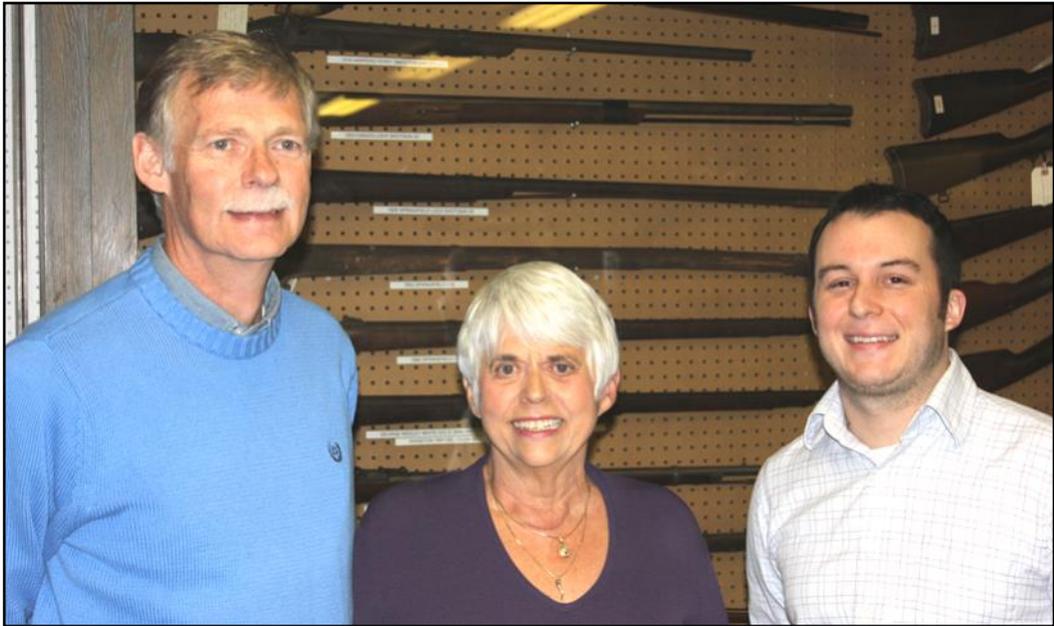
Below: East Winter Street, Delaware

(photos from DCHS Collection)



## Society Welcomes New Board Members

Although they come from different backgrounds and bring different skills, three new Delaware County Historical Society Board members – Ralph Au, Don Staas, Jr., and Karen Cowan – have a common goal. All want to help the Society continue to build a strong foundation and bring talent and modern technologies so that the Society can meet its mission: *to promote and sustain interest in the history of Delaware County, Ohio, through historical preservation and education.*



**Ralph Au, Karen Cowan, and Donald Staas**

(photo by Brad Cowan)

Ralph Au brings a background in Information Technology (IT), specifically electronic commerce. As a new board member, Ralph hopes to work on disaster recovery and cataloging because he feels that these are the “bedrocks” of the Society. To him, these areas need to be well thought out and “under control” so that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn about the history of Delaware County.

Ralph, his wife Rita, and his son have lived in Delaware County for over 20 years. In addition to his work at the Society, Ralph is very active in the community. He is a member of the Olentangy Schools Facilities Committee, where he forecasts enrollment and building needs for Olentangy Schools, and is the Treasurer for Delaware Area Career Center Levy Committee. Travel is their spare time love, with recent river cruises in Portugal and the Mediterranean

and an upcoming trip to New Zealand.

Don Staas, Jr.’s forte is advertising. As a Board member, he hopes to keep the residents of Delaware County, especially the younger generations, engaged with Delaware’s history through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Don and his wife Liz moved to Delaware in 2012 with the idea of starting their own business. Two years later, they are the proud owners of Staas Brewing in Delaware. He first came into contact with the Society because he wanted to name his beers after historic places and events in Delaware County. After a discussion with Brent Carson, Society president, he had names for his beers and a new outlet for his talents.

Don’s “spare time” activities are varied – playing piano, growing dahlias and spending

Sunday playing sports with his 30-member “Sunday Funday League.”

Karen and Brad Cowan moved from Detroit to Powell, Ohio, eight years ago to be close to their four grandchildren. Her career revolved around management and executive development at Fortune 500 companies including Chrysler Corporation. In addition, she was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Toledo, Bowling Green State University and Columbus State Community College. Currently, she is serving on the board of the Friends of the Delaware County District Library.

As a Society Board member, Karen wants to define processes that will attract new members and volunteers who have the passion and energy to make Delaware County history and the Society relevant for future generations.

Delaware County  
Historical Society

157 E. William St.  
P.O. Box 317  
Delaware, OH 43015

Phone: 740-369-3831  
Email: info@delawareohhistory.org  
www.delawareohhistory.org

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
DELAWARE OH  
MAILPRO1

Return Service Requested

*Our History,  
Our Heritage*

Find us on  
Facebook!



**DCHS MEMBERSHIP FORM**

All memberships are "per-person" amounts, including life memberships.

Circle one:  
New or Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Type**

- |                                 |         |       |                          |                |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Number                          |         |       |                          |                |
| ( ) Adult Membership            | \$20.00 | _____ | Business/Corporation     | \$ 50.00       |
| ( ) Senior Membership (60+ yrs) | \$15.00 | _____ | Life Membership (Joint)  | \$500.00 _____ |
| ( ) Student Membership          | \$5.00  | _____ | Life Membership (Single) | \$300.00 _____ |

Newsletter preference (circle): Printed E-mail Both

For Student Membership, name of your school: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to your membership noted above, please consider an additional gift to the Society:

\$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$500.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Special Gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ For/In Honor or Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to Delaware County Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 317, Delaware OH 43015