

TRUE TALES about OHIO

BY HARRY L. HALE
EDITOR'S NOTE—This is one of a series of articles to appear in the Bluffton News dealing with early Ohio history. Others will appear in forthcoming issues.

Ohio's First Fourth of July

Then it rained—suddenly, abundantly and at the worst possible time. From daybreak till noon the skies were sunny, the weather warm and the day ideal.

Then, just at high noon, when a bugle was calling all celebrants to the long plank tables, groaning under their weight of all the delicacies of the forest, stream and newly-made garden, the rains descended. It was a downpour.

So, like most of the Independence Days that followed it through the years up to now, the first Fourth of July celebration in Ohio got its ducking.

It was July 4, 1788, first observance of Independence Day in the Northwest Territory and twelfth in the nation. The first settlers at Marietta were "keeping the law"—the statute enacted just a few days after their arrival April 7 that year, making observance of Independence Day, "Settlement Day" and a few other holidays mandatory.

On the boats that had come down the Muskingum during the past three months had been the wives of many of the original 48 men and all the new families the small and infrequent craft could carry.

The Fourth of July dinner that weighted the long and wide festal board in the clearing that day was an appetizing one—the pioneer housewives had seen to that. There was venison, barbecued; buffalo steaks; bear meat; wild turkey; fish—and a little pork, the rarest and choicest luxury of all.

Now about the fish. One was a six-foot pike weighing more than 100 pounds—the largest ever caught by white men, it was said. That pike had been speared in the Muskingum River by Gilbert Devoll and his son, Gilbert Jr.

Because of the feared falling of caterpillars the great table had been set in the cleared space instead of under the leafy buckeyes and sycamores and so had no shelter at all.

The rain lasted only a half-hour. When it was over and the sun again smiled, the viands were put back on the table and the pioneers had their Fourth of July dinner, a bit the worse for its wetting but appetizing just the same.

The celebration had begun with the firing of the Federal salute at daybreak by the cannons at Ft. Harmar. Music for the day was furnished by the bugles, bass and kettle drums of the garrison. It amounted to but little—all they could play were bugle calls and the long roll.

At one o'clock, after the great fish-bones were picked clean, the address of the day began. It was delivered by James M. Varnum, one of the newly-elected judges of the Territory.

After dinner, too, a number of toasts were drunk. Some of them

were to George Washington, Arthur St. Clair, the Northwestern Territory—and can you imagine this one today?—to Congress.

Then came the toast of the army and navy—"To our wives and sweethearts: May our sweethearts be our wives and our wives ever be our sweethearts." One, to "the amiable partners of our delicate pleasures" also appeared to have been pointed the direction of the wives.

Several Indians were present and enjoyed the festivities—all excepting the firing of the cannon. "To an Indian," one officer from the fort, who was at the celebration pointed out: "the roar of a cannon is as disagreeable as a rope to a thief or broad daylight to one of your made-up beauties." From this the writer gathers that the rain that day washed off no lipstick.

Did the celebrants have a good time? The narrator continued: "Pleased with the entertainment, we kept it up until after twelve o'clock at night then went home and slept till daylight."

Fireworks? The account ended: "A great illumination at Fort Harmar closed the ceremonies of the day."

That, dear readers, is an authentic account of the first Fourth of July public celebration ever held in what now is Ohio—more than 159 years ago.

It is like lifting the veil of cobwebs from before an obscure past to tell you this, but all good newspaper accounts of such an occasion must have their "among those present" highlights. Here it is:

Young Daniel Mayo, Harvard graduate who came from Boston, and Bathsheba Rouse, daughter of John Rouse, from New Bedford, Mass., were there. Both were schoolteachers—the first in the settlement and first in Ohio. He taught the larger pupils at Farmer's Castle, opposite Marietta, and she, the kids at Belpre, next year. They were paid out of the \$150 appropriated for support of the schools in the three settlements.

Rev. William Breck, who preached the first sermon in Ohio twenty-five days after the celebration; Mary Lake, a Revolutionary War nurse, who organized the first Sunday school in the state; Isaac and Re-

becca Williams, a squatter family from across the Ohio River; Elijah Backus, who lived on the island he sold to Blennerhassett 10 years later; incidentally, Herman and Margaret Blennerhassett called the island Eden until Aaron Burr tried to crash it in 1805.

Nathaniel and Lucretia Saltonstall, from New London, Conn. He was a soldier of the Revolution; Charles and Lydia McKawen; Stanton Prentice and John Green, soldiers of the Revolution; Joseph Barker, Thomas Corey, Andrew McClure, Thomas Lord, William Gridley ("Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes, Major Gridley"), Ichabod Nye, their families; and the Parsons, Danas, Battelles, Tylers, Trues, Lunts, Bridges, Moodys, Russells, Deavens's, Oakes's, Whights, Cloughs, Shipmans, Dorranes's, Maxons and Wells's, who had come on later boats.

"John Miller," the whites' name for one of the Indians there, later risked death at the hands of his tribe for warning the settlers about an imminent Indian attack.

The above and the original 48 who came on the "Ohio Mayflower," and their families, were those who celebrated Ohio's first Fourth of July. And it had to rain!

Richland Center

Rev. and Mrs. E. T. Dailey of Ada spent Sunday afternoon at the Dwight Dailey home. Miss Theresa Slusser was an evening caller.

Mr. and Mrs. Warren Moser and son Donivan were Sunday dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. Dana Moser. Miss Mary Gehres of Chicago and Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Yoakum and family spent Sunday evening with Mr. and Mrs. Otto Amstutz.

Misses Linda and Louise Core spent a few days last week with their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gratz.

Mrs. Glen Cool and Miss Mable Cool of Beaverdam spent Saturday afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Matter and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Chidester and family spent Sunday evening with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Jump and family of Ada.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilford Gratz and

daughter Sharon were Thursday evening supper guests of Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Schaublin.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Moser and John Burke of Berne, Ind., and Miss Judith Bixel of Ft. Wayne spent the week end at the Amos Gerber home. Other Saturday evening supper guests were Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gerber and family and Mrs. Frank Burkholder. Sunday all were dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. Cal Garmatter and family. Mrs. Wm. Amstutz and son was also a guest.

Miss Patsy and Ray Schaublin are spending this week with their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Schaublin.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Gratz, Mr. and Mrs. George Gratz and son Gene of Allen, Mich., Mr. and Mrs. Max Miller and Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gratz were Sunday evening supper guests of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Coon.

Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Keeney and daughters Fannie, Marion and Martha of Brownsville, Pa., are visiting a few days with their daughter, Mrs. George Myers and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Gratz called Sunday evening on Mr. and Mrs. Hershel Moser and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Hilty and daughter of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Hilty and daughter Minerva left Saturday for a western sight-seeing trip and also to visit their son Gordon and family at Denver, Colo., and Mr. Hilty's brother Adam Hilty and family at Colfax, Wash.

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gratz were Sunday dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Core and family.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Boegli and Mrs. Dessie Althaus of Gilboa called Sunday evening on Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gratz.

Mr. and Mrs. Levi Badertscher and daughter Janet of New Washington, called on Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Schaublin, Sunday forenoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Matter and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Rolly Moser and sons and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Matter spent Friday evening with

Mr. and Mrs. Wilford Gratz and daughter Sharon.

LaFayette

Mrs. Ida May Henkle was a week end guest of Mr. Willis Klingler of Kenton.

Miss Ruth Scoles of Lima was a week end guest of Miss Lillian Desenberg.

Mrs. Glenn Bullock of Findlay was a Sunday guest of Mrs. Louise Cloore.

Paul Hyde of Fairport Harbor, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Binkley and daughter Carolyn of Chicago were recent guests of Mrs. Bertha Desenberg and Miss Lillian Desenberg.

Mrs. Adah Hall entertained the CBC club at her home, Thursday evening.

Mrs. Ida May Henkle spent Monday and Tuesday with her brother, Marion Lones of Findlay.

Poultrymen are becoming more and more suspicious of visitors as Newcastle disease spreads across the country. Fowl paralysis, fowl typhoid and other infectious diseases can be transported by people or vehicles traveling from farm to farm.

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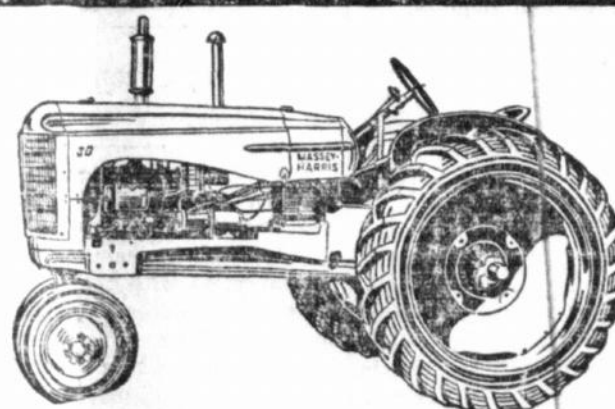
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LEGAL NOTICE
Thomas B. Carney, who resides at 617 Thirty-fifth Street, Cairo, in the State of Illinois, will take notice that on May 29, 1947, the Plaintiff, Martha M. Carney filed her petition against him in the Court of Common Pleas, Allen County, Ohio, the same being case number 37625. The prayer of said Petition is for divorce, alimony and other equitable relief and said Defendant is required to answer said Petition on or before the 17th day of July, 1947.
Martha M. Carney
By Howard Everett, Her Attorney

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