

Browsing in Time

By Barbara Day

Hitch up old Dobbin. Let's go back to Main Street in a Western Reserve village of 1874.

Puddles of water are standing on the streets after last night's storm, but the sun is reaching over a cloud now. It's going to be a fresh, clear day. Two horses with buggies are tethered to the rail by E. Whitlock and Co., dealers in carriages and shelf hardware, and two young boys are riding double on a grey mare past the Town Hall. That is Mr. McFarland hollering at them to be careful in the mud streets. Mr. McFarland runs the billiard hall and sells ale, beer and cigars on the corner of Main and Front Streets.

Look around. You'll see the hardware store is selling grain and corn cradles, cradle fingers, forks and hand rakes. Wilkerson's has hoop skirts on sale. Barrows have linen horse covers, lap dusters, buggy mats and whips at reduced rates this week.

Mr. A. J. Cole is crossing the street toward his fine furniture store. He sells beautiful caskets, too. Did you see his ad in the paper last week? It went something like this:

"A. J. Cole has the largest, the newest, the cheapest, most elegant, most durable stock of furniture in town. He also invites special attention to his large assortment of Cincinnati Coffins and Caskets, which are acknowledged by all who have seen them, to be unequalled in beauty of design, workmanship and finish."

Druggists and Apothecaries, F. A. Gunn and Co., is beside Irving House, the hotel. The druggists in Ohio are advertising Waukesha Water from a mineral rock spring. They claim it cures dropsy, gravel, constipation, diabetes, dyspepsia, jaundice and Bright's disease. I ought to take some home to Aunt Polly.

The small building on the corner of Washington and Main Streets is Dr. R. W. Walters' office. He served in the great uprising and studied medicine in Philadelphia before setting up practice in his hometown. Henry Church's blacksmith shop is located on the corner of Pearl and Franklin Streets. Henry is also an artist who does landscapes and portraits in oil.

You can see from here that this is a busy, thriving community keeping in stride with our growing country. Mrs. Cooper runs the Fashionable Millinery Shop, Bullard and March manufacture patent butter moulds and butter prints, D. Goddard makes all kinds of barrels, several shops make and sell boots and shoes, and Mr. D. O. Davis runs the Paper Co. and Sack Factory. A village with a population of about 800 people creates many occupations. The millers, coopers, masons, tanners, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, wagon makers, furniture makers, doctors, lawyers and preachers are very busy here.

Let's sit on one of the benches in the park and rest awhile and enjoy

the beautiful day. I'll read some of the local and national news to you. There are many events of interest in this year of 1874.

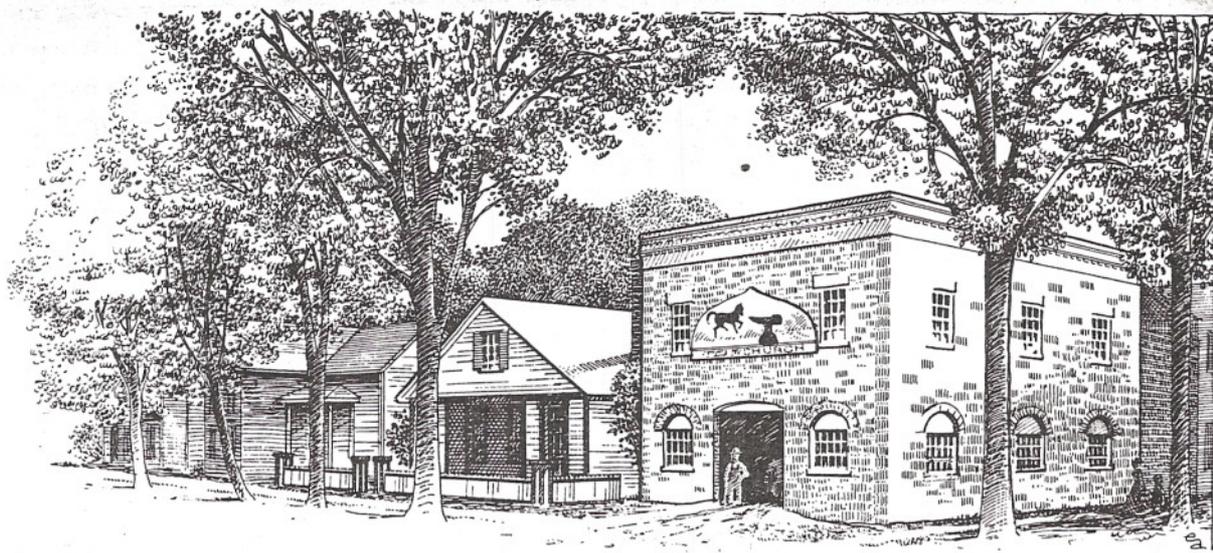
Here are a couple of articles about man's everlasting lust for gold:

"The gold fever is getting as wild as it used to be in the early days of California and of the Australian gold mines. The Black Hills country is the point of interest. The gold hunters are bound to go there, in spite of Indians and Government warnings and threatenings. A meeting has but lately been held in staid old Boston of those interested in forming an expedition to the Black Hills mines. It is proposed to fit out 500 men, with a military organization and protection, and to start about the middle of April."

In the news summary, it states:

"Information has been telegraphed General Ord of several parties of Mexicans leaving different points for the Black Hills. In reply to a telegram from one of the miners, who recently came out of the Hills, asking whether he could be permitted to return with reinforcements and provisions, Gen. Ord says: 'Troops from Ft. Laramie and hostile Indians have gone for your miners. For their sakes, I hope the troops will reach them first, as the military orders are simply to bring in the party, confine the leaders, burn the wagons and destroy the outfit.'"

Next week's edition of the newspaper will inform us of the



outcome, I hope. Our country is growing. Listen to this:

“Colorado, just admitted as a State, numbers 100,000 inhabitants. Of churches, the Episcopalians have fifteen, the Methodists have three conferences, the Presbyterians have about twenty churches, and the Congregationalists eight.”

The next article is about crime in Cleveland:

“Mrs. Mary Fuchs and John Gregory were arrested in Cleveland last week, on the charge of being connected with the robbery of \$4,000 worth of silks and kid gloves from James F. White of Louisville, Kentucky, in December last. Some of the goods were found on their premises and they will undoubtedly be convicted.”

Here’s another:

“An itinerant minstrel was arrested and fined two dollars for a small theft in Missouri. While court adjourned, the minstrel gave a program and the fine was dropped.”

Let’s turn to the local scene here in 1874 to learn more about our citizens of the Western Reserve.

“Some seventy-five or eighty of our town’s people assembled last Saturday, in the grove at the residence of C. T. Blakeslee, with baskets full of good things. Five tables were loaded with all that the heart could wish, and beautifully decorated flowers. After the repast, music, croquet, and fun generally filled the day, till

‘Evening let her curtain down and pinned it with a star.’”

“The Post Office will be open on July 4th, from 10 to 11 am., 2 to 3 and 6 to 7 pm. ‘Tis a legal holiday.”

“The citizens of Chester, Geauga Co. have concluded to remember the Sabbath Day by keeping their milk at home on the Sabbath. This will give the factory hands a chance to attend church this coming season.”

“The people of Medina are discussing the lamp question.”

“A bill has passed the House, changing the name of Maumee City to South Toledo.”

“It is rumored that the wife of Mr. F. Livingston, a well known Akronian, has deserted her bed and board.”

“The Grand River Institute at Austinburg commenced its spring term on Tuesday of last week, with an attendance of one hundred and eighty students.”

“The building belonging to Dr. Smith on Main Street has received a new coat of paint.”

“Scarlet Fever is still making havoc among the children of Munson, Burton and Mesopotamia.”

“The Unitarians claim to have in this country 359 church organizations and 396 ministers. The number of communicants is not definitely stated.”

From the Court of Common Pleas: “Edward Hollands is hereby notified that Jennie Hollands, his wife, has filed in said Court her petition the substance of which is that the defendant, her husband, has been for more than three years last past, wilfully absent from her, and she prays for a divorce from the defendant. That said petition is pending in said court. Jennie Hollands”

“The cheese factory now being erected near the south line of Chester by your townsman, Mr. Foote, will soon be in running order. Although this is the fourth factory

About the Author:
The author lived on a 200-year-old farm in New York State, in corn-fields in Iowa and Nebraska, near oil fields in Oklahoma, and in the shadows of the Rockies in Ft. Collins, Colorado. She now lives in Chagrin Falls and enjoys painting, weaving and walking her dog. Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Her first serious writing was in fifth grade when she wrote her own excuse for a school absence.

operating in the area, Mr. Law from Mansfield has been over and bought all the milk on the state road west of Chester X Roads, at what price we have not learned."

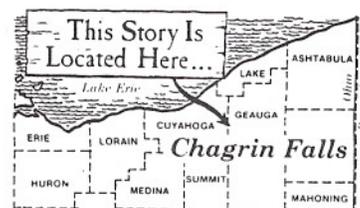
"Henry Trowbridge is putting up an extensive addition to his barn. R. Taylor is getting his material on the ground for a horse barn. They say it is to be the best in town."

"Mr. J. Harvey has laid a new sidewalk in front of his lot. May others go and do likewise."

"The sale of A. Evans, of Russell, was well attended and the articles all brought good prices. Cows went from \$40 to \$60 per head."

"L. L. Bliss of Bainbridge has gone to be a son of Vulcan. At

present he is straightening horse-shoe nails for Henry Church, but hopes to set up a shop (blacksmith) of his own when his three years of apprenticeship are up."



"Mr. Ramain S. McClintock of Bainbridge while felling a tree Monday, cut his knee with an ax in a serious manner. (Dr. Walters was called and dressed the wound.)

"There is a house for rent on High Street, for \$6.50 per month. A nice house for a small family."

A few miscellaneous items include:

"Granges have been organized in Wisconsin at the rate of sixteen a week. Indiana has an average of sixteen in each county."

"The Japanese Minister at Washington is rejoicing over the birth of a daughter, the first Japanese child of Japanese parents in this country."

A lengthy column concerns the Henry Ward Beecher-Tilton scandal, but perhaps we can read that another time.

The village is quite lively with shoppers now. Looks like Egglestons are repairing the wooden boards of their walk and Mr. Didham is putting up a new sign for his Harness Shop.

Things are always changing in these villages of the Western Reserve. No one has time for the bread of idleness, as you can see.

I must hurry back to 1981 now, but if you have more time to browse in 1874, Mrs. Fletcher said you are cordially invited to attend the oyster supper at the Methodist Church this evening.

All quotations are from the 1874 and 1875 Chagrin Falls Exponent, a weekly paper published every Thursday.

Past History, or Is It?

History has an uncanny way of pointing a finger at likenesses and differences in the past and present. Old newspapers present an enlightening view of our ancestors' activities, thoughts, humor, pathos and current events. Reading records published more than one hundred years ago instills a definite sense of relationship between the "then" and "now." The following selections from a nineteenth century *Chagrin Falls Exponent* share some examples of humanity's ongoing problems:

"We have on several occasions heard complaints made of rowdiness and disturbance on our public streets, especially on Saturday evenings. There are a few individuals about, who make it a rule to get 'three sheets in the wind' and afterwards make a general disturbance breaking window panes and destroying others property. The proper place for such rowdies is the lock-up, which would undoubtedly put a stop

to such proceedings. Where is our Marshall?"

"The following from a communicant to the *Geauga Republican* contains more truth than poetry... 'I would advise teachers to try to perform their duty without regard to age, sex or position in life, and somebody ought to suggest the idea to some parents that it is their duty to teach their children something at home; not leave manners, morals, education, all to the teachers to inculcate. By so doing, such persons might acquire a vague idea of how easy and pleasant that enviable situation is, or discover their mistake, for such it must be.' "

That provocative statement made in 1874 could be juxtaposed with today's problems of morals, manners and education. History provides us with the fact that our problems have been around for a long time.



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