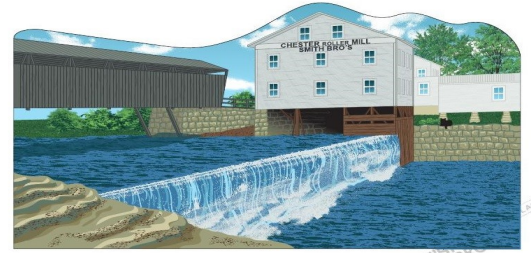


Recollections from:

ALONG SHADE CRICK



Fall Newsletter 2024

Chester, Ohio

Volume 46

Chester Shade Historical Association

740-985-9822

chestercourthouse@yahoo.com

Friday & Saturday, 10:00 am — 4:00pm

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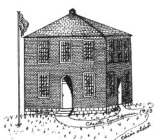


Photo courtesy Ohio County Public Library, Wheeling WV

From the Bench – September 2024

Since the last newsletter, Meigs County as been in a serious drought condition. As of August 27, 2024, Athens and Meigs County are the worst counties on the Drought Monitor map in the state of Ohio (scale included).

Meigs County is rated at D4 as of August 29, 2024. Here are some Meigs County numbers to think about:

D0 – ABNORMALLY DRY

D1 – MODERATE

D2 – SEVERE

D3 – EXTREME

D4 – EXCEPTIONAL DROUGHT

From the Bench - September 2024, Continued

Over 14,000 acres of hay in drought

Over 5,000 acres of corn in drought

Over 4,700 acres of soybeans in drought

Over 5,700 head of cattle in drought

To put all this in perspective, I will quote a historical fact. In 1908, the Ohio River was the lowest ever recorded. In October 1908, the government ordered all 252 navigational lights be extinguished on the Ohio River because there was no place between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati where the river exceeded 16 inches in depth. I include a picture of the Bridgeport Bridge in 1908, looking from Wheeling Island back to Bridgeport, Ohio.

From all the CSHA Trustees, our thoughts and prayers go out to the Meigs County farmers who will need all the help they can get to survive another year.

Respectfully Submitted,

James M Smith

President CSHA



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Can you identify the locations of these two pictures?

The Industrious Johnny Roecher

Submitted by Dan Will



Johnny in full baseball uniform

Growing up my father would often speak of a man who lived and had a business in Chester in the early 1900's:

Clarence E. Roecher, who most called 'Johnny.'

CSHA recently received some photos and other documents from a local estate that included references and photos of this man.

I delved into finding out more about him, his life, and his businesses.

Dan Will

CSHA Vice President

**'Johnny' Roecher was born
in Chester in 1884**

to Franklin and Magdalena (Rasps) Roecher. The Roechers, of German descent, came to Meigs County from Allegheny, Pennsylvania, locating first in Chester. Later they moved to Pomeroy where they lived until 1899, when they returned to Chester and lived there the remainder of their lives; they are buried in the Chester Cemetery. Franklin was a harness-maker by trade and had a successful business for several years.

Johnny Roecher received a public school education, presumably in Pomeroy and/or Chester, and then engaged in the painting and papering business for nine years. During these years he married Zelda Bailey, daughter of John W. Bailey and Joanna Harper Bailey, born in Chester Township in 1886. Zelda lived a short life, passing when she was only 28 years old and buried in the Mt. Hermon Cemetery.

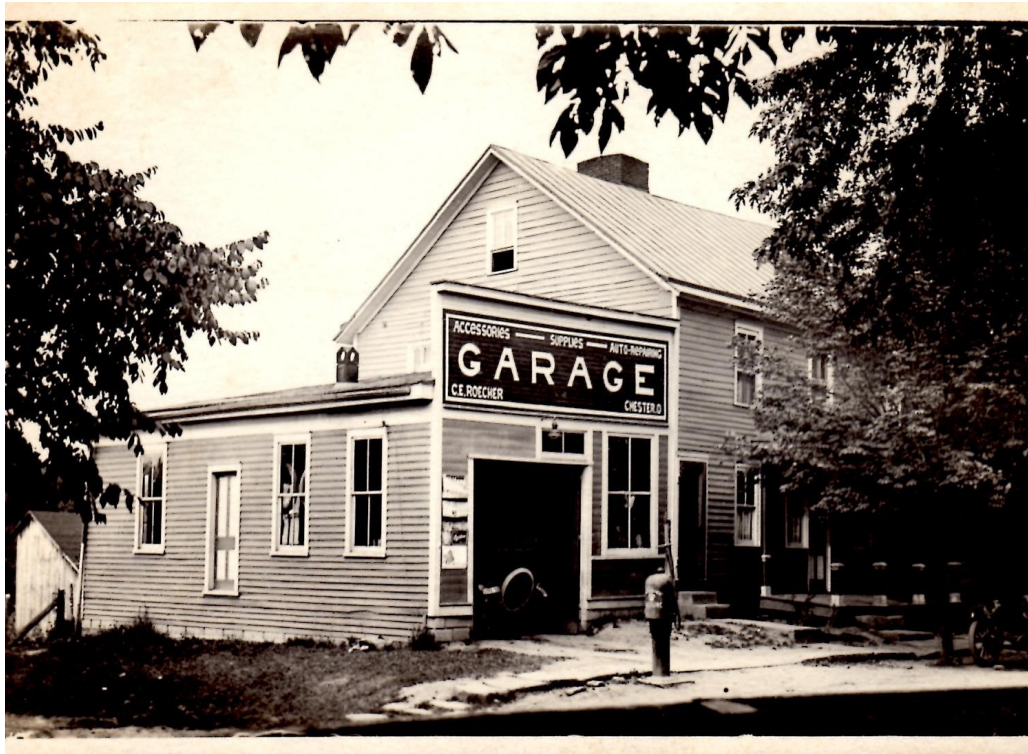
During his younger years, Johnny was a member of an organized baseball team of young adults. There were just nine members on this team, plus their manager; a group picture of the 1908-1910

The Industrious Johnny Roecher, cont...

roster hangs in the Chester Academy, top floor (you can spot our subject in the far left of the photo when you stop by).

In 1916, Johnny turned his attention to a successful venture in the garage business, performing automobile repairs and selling gasoline, oil and accessories. It is interesting that this business was located in the same building that was later occupied by Frank Gaul, who operated his grocery store there starting around 1923-1924 (*see that story in the Spring 2024 Newsletter, Volume #44*).

In 1924, some nine years after the passing of his first wife, Johnny married Lona Mae (Diehl) Will. Lona was born and reared in Salisbury Township. The couple were active in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Johnny was a member of the local masonic lodge and the Knights of Pythias. Politically, he was a staunch Republican and exhibited much interest in the progress and welfare of his community; he was held in high regard by all who knew him.



Left: Roecher's garage (later Frank Gaul's Grocery).

Below: Roecher's second garage, later owned by Ridenour, then Newell, now a property of Baum Lumber.

Sometime around 1923-1924, Johnny apparently moved his business to a different building located a little further east in Chester - a garage that is still standing today.

Buel Ridenour, another (later) well-known Chester businessman, began working for Johnny in 1926 at this location, ultimately buying the property from Roecher in 1936.



The Industrious Johnny Roecher, cont...

Ridenour operated it for a decade before selling it to Hobart Newell and his brother in 1946. The garage was recently acquired from the Newell family by Baum Lumber.

As an aside, following the sale of the garage, Buel started the hardware business in 1946 at yet another building back west in Chester, at the intersection of Sumner Road and SR 248. The store handled hardware, farm supplies, lawn and garden equipment, chain saws, stoves, and furniture. Buel retired and sold the business to his son John Ridenour in 1974, who then operated the store until his passing in 2002. The building still stands but is closed for business. The Ridenour family business operations over the years is a story for another time!

Another interesting tidbit that my father used to tell was that Johnny had an automobile dealership that he operated out of the brick building (built 1921) that is the Shade River Lodge Masonic Hall, and the showroom was in the bottom floor (of course) where the beauty salon and Post Office are now. BUT, this is not corroborated and demands further investigation.



Ridenour Supply current day building.

Clarence E. “Johnny” Roecher passed away in 1947 at age 63. Lona, his second wife, passed in 1964 at age 81. They are buried side-by-side in the Chester Cemetery near his parents.

Little more is known of this interesting Chester business man at this point, but I will continue to research as resources are found. It is most interesting too, to discover how the various businesses and families in Chester were intertwined and related down through the generations starting in the 1820’s through to the present.



Possible site of Roecher’s automobile dealership, pictured sometime after 1940. Currently home of the Shade River Masonic Lodge.

The *Return Jonathan Meigs Chapter* of the *National Society Daughters of the American Revolution* (DAR) members **Gina Tillis** and **Patty Cook** now lead CSHA's Genealogy.

A series of summer Genealogy Events displayed CSHA's extensive library, answered questions about getting started, and promoted general interest.

Genealogy Days #1	May 4	COMPLETE!	9am – 1pm	1st Floor Academy
Genealogy Days #2	July 20	COMPLETE!	9am – 1pm	1st Floor Academy
Genealogy Fair	September 14	COMPLETE!	9am – 1pm	1st, 2nd, 3rd Floor Academy

Gina Tillis - grtillis@gmail

Patty Cook - Jpnte1988@gmail.com



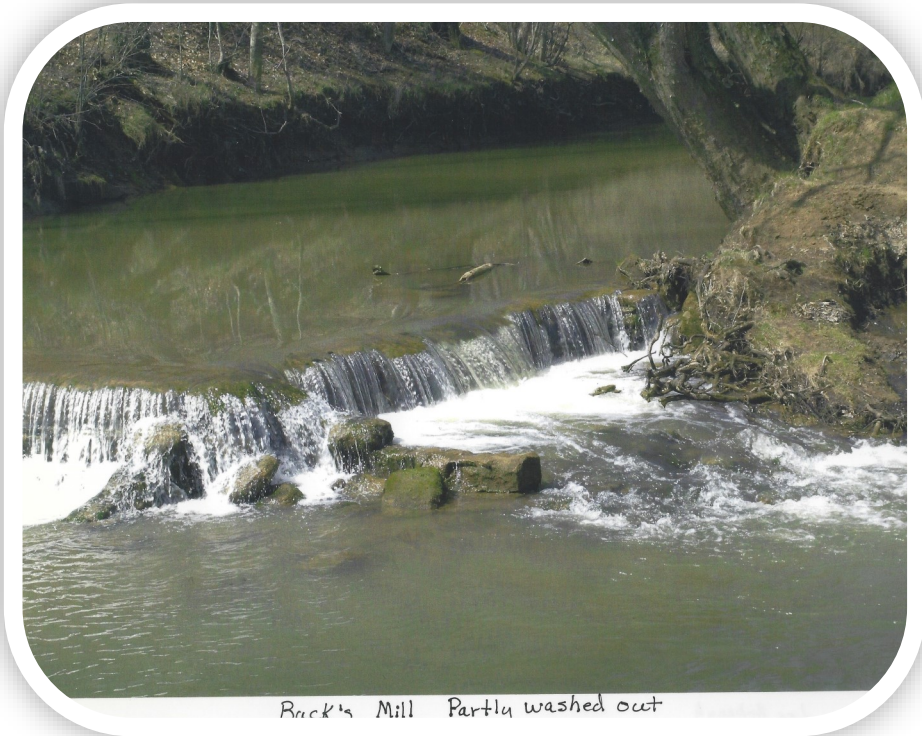
The September 14 Fair included two workshops, “*Family History Research 101*” presented by Gina Tillis, and “*Solving Family Mysteries with DNA*,” presented by Tahnee Andrews.

Patti Cook supervised research and displayed material in conjunction with *America 250*.

A Curious Tale from Buck's Mill

Submitted by Jim Smith

- ◇ These two related accounts cover an event in 1893 and a retelling many decades later. The 1893 newspaper article I happened across just by chance shortly after reading Smith's story.
- ◇ The Buck's Mill photo comes from the CSHA archives. Buck's Mill looks like this since the late 1940's.
- ◇ I still consider it a mystery, whether intentional or accident. The newspaper reads it as an accident, but Smith's telling makes it more unknown.



Buck's Mill Partly washed out

THE MEIGS COUNTY REPUBLICAN JANUARY 25, 1893

HE SHOT HIS PLAYMATE STANDING IN THE WINDOW

POMEROY, O, JANUARY 17 - MONDAY AFTERNOON CHARLES, THE 14-YEAR-OLD SON OF MARCELLUS SALSER, WAS ACCIDENTALLY KILLED BY A GUN IN THE HANDS OF ARTHUR, THE 16-YEAR-OLD SON OF JOHN BUCK, WHO OWNS A MILL ON MIDDLE BRANCH OF SHADE RIVER IN ORANGE TOWNSHIP.

BUCK HAD BEEN AT THE HOUSE A SHORT DISTANCE FROM HIS FATHER'S MILL, TO REMOVE A BULLET FROM THE GUN, AND WHEN RETURNING HAD THE GUN POINTED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WINDOW OF THE MILL AT WHICH STOOD YOUNG SALSER AND TWO OTHER BOYS. IN SOME UNKNOWN MANNER THE GUN WAS DISCHARGED, THE BALL STICKING SALSER IN THE HEAD, FROM THE EFFECTS OF WHICH HE DIED TWO HOURS AFTERWARDS.

This article is being written from the memories and facts that were given to me by my grandfather Asbury Smith, and by a friend and neighbor, Oris (Pete) Gaul.

Buck's Mill was located about 1 1/4 miles above Sumner on the Middle Shade Creek. The Buck family, who owned the mill, lived across the road from the mill. Buck's Mill was not only a flour and feed mill; it also served as a sawmill. This allowed the mill to provide very important services to the community year round and the mill always seemed to be a hive of activity. As a young child I was always amazed when the mill would set up as a sawmill. Instead of having a circular saw to cut the lumber it had a crescent shaped blade that would go up and down.

The mill was not without its woes, since the mill was powered by water. The dam that existed on Middle Shade Creek washed away and was rebuilt in 1940 by the W. P. A. There were many threats to the dam and I can remember Richard and Guy Spencer working very hard to save the dam and the mill. The Buck family also suffered misfortune.

One afternoon in the late forties, I went to visit my Grandmother. When I arrived she was sitting on the front porch talking to a man that I had never seen. After they concluded their visit on the front porch and he left, Grandmother asked me if I knew whom she was talking too. My response was no. Then she went on to tell me of how the stranger was one of the Buck boys. The tale of woe was that when this man was 18 years old he killed a man that was walking down the road by the mill. No one knows why he shot and killed the man, as he took off and was not heard of since, other than that one day when he visited my Grandmother.

Submitted by Fred E. Smith

The *Academy Dining Hall* is open for reservations !

Consider our space for bridal showers, parties, group meetings, etc.

~\$40/event, max occupancy 35 persons~

Contact the Front Desk @ 740 985 9822 or reach out to any Trustee



Chester Township Tidbits

The Chester Village Commons historical marker notes: "The courthouse is one of only three extant Federal-style courthouse structures in Ohio."

What about the other two?

- 1) The Old Perry County Courthouse was constructed in what year?
a) 1810 b) 1829 c) 1848 d) 1888
- 2) The Highland County Courthouse was constructed in what year?
a) 1811 b) 1824 c) 1834 d) 1888
- 3) Which of them is the oldest courthouse in continuous use in Ohio?

Answers:

- location by running a redlight in Hillsboro.
- 3) The Highland County Courthouse holds this distinction. Consider a day-trip to this historic location by running a redlight in Hillsboro.
- 2) 1834
- 1) 1829



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Keep up with the CSHA Event calendar!

- posted to our website
- or viewable at :

<https://calendar.yahoo.com/chestercourthouse/undefined?od=309>

- an (.ics) is also available, to subscribe with your favorite calendar app



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facebook.com/ChesterShadeHistoricalAssociation



Chester Shade Historical Association

Membership Form

CSHA invites you to begin, or renew, your membership.

We also would love to speak with you about volunteer time and/or donations.

Membership dues and volunteer efforts are cornerstones of the organization,

and enable our mandate of

“Preserving the Past, Paving the Future.”

Thank you.

\$15 Individual - Annual

\$150 Individual - Lifetime

Cash or check (payable to CSHA)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail: _____

I would like to begin/renew CSHA membership, Annual Lifetime

I would like to discuss volunteering

I have a family history or other items to donate

Chester Shade Historical Association
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Your Dues Count

The money that you pay for dues goes to promote our organization. It helps us pay our utility bills and upkeep expenses, making it possible to keep the buildings open to the public, as well as historical programs for youth and adults. Please check out our membership page and sign up today. Memberships begin in January and end on December 31 of each year.