

# Moreland Community Historical Society

Spring 2014

## Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1



Gail Miller, President  
Matt Gress, Vice President  
Karen Clark, Sec./Treasurer



### *Moreland Community Heritage Day War Memorabilia Display*

*By: Laurie Sidle*

It was the kind of news no family wants to hear, but Marian (Wirt) Starn remembers how her mother faced it with courage that inspires her to this day.

On a fall day in 1943, when work came to a halt on the family's Moreland Road farm, Starn learned that her brother First Sgt. Robert Wirt had died in World War II at the age of 27.

A framed photograph of him in his soldier's uniform captures his youthful look and keeps his memory alive for 92-year-old Starn. "I look at that picture every day," she said. She also treasures her brother's framed Purple Heart awarded to him "for military merit and wounds received in action resulting in his death on Oct. 27, 1943."

The photo and Purple Heart along with Wirt's commendation from President Franklin Roosevelt will be part of a World War II display at the Moreland Community Heritage Day Oct. 11. This year's event will focus on World War II and the Korean War and once again be hosted by Gail and Gwen Miller at their Wooster farm, 8594 James Road.

The society is gathering memorabilia related to

both wars from Moreland residents to add to the display.

Starn, who now lives in Orrville, was one of seven siblings in her family. Another brother Paul also served in World War II. A brother Jim helped their widowed mother operate the farm until he also served in the military.

"I saw that woman face a lot of difficult things and she never complained," Starn said. After word came that her son had died in the war, "she went right on ahead running the farm."

Dolly (James) Mann, whose family grew up west of Moreland during war time, is also one of seven children, all of whom are still living. Her brother Francis James served in World War II. "My mom wrote to him every day," she said. Her brother, Forrest James, served in the Korean War.

The Korean War, Mann said, "wasn't a declared war, but it was a war nonetheless."

Mann's twin brothers Richard and Robert James were members of the National Guard during the Vietnam War.

During World War II, Mann recalled using war ration stamps to buy such

items as shoes, gas, tires, sugar, and butter. Her family's farm provided food, but "we didn't go anywhere we didn't have to go because gas was rationed."

The government introduced rationing because certain things were in short supply during the war, and rationing was the only way to make sure people got their fair share.

She said her dad never missed an evening radio broadcast. "The radio was all we had," Mann said. "Every night we listened for the latest news about the war."

Starn recalled that her brother Jim was allowed to leave school early to help with farm work. He later served in the U.S. Army Infantry Division and was chaplain of the Holmesville American Legion.

For Robert Wirt, who gave the ultimate sacrifice, Roosevelt wrote in his commendation, "He stands in the unbroken line of patriots who have dared to die that freedom might live and grow, and increase its blessings. Freedom lives, and through it, he lives - in a way that humbles the understandings of most men."

"Confidence... thrives on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection and on unselfish performance. Without them it cannot live."

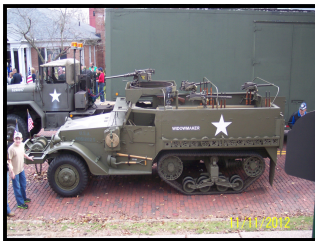
-Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Please help** us prepare for Heritage Day on October 11, 2014. We are looking for photos and memorabilia of Franklin Township WWII and Korean War Veterans to display at the event. Please contact us if you have anything you would like to share!



## Mark Your Calendars for the 2014 Moreland Community Heritage Day

By: Laurie Sidle



World War II and the Korean War are themes for The Moreland Community Historical Society's 4th annual Heritage Day Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Gail and Gwen Miller Farm, 8594 James Road, Wooster.

The event will feature a ceremony honoring veterans from both wars and a display of war memorabilia from Moreland residents.

"We felt a sense of urgency in choosing this theme," Historical Society Board Member Matt Gress said. The men and women who fought in World War

II are mostly in their 90s.

On-site at Heritage Day the Marlboro Volunteers Inc. will bring U.S. military history to life with its mobile museum. The non-profit military and educational organization is comprised of volunteers who honor the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The museum features vehicles, weapons, and uniforms. Some of the vehicles the volunteers plan to bring include a tank, an Army Jeep, and armored car.

Also at Heritage Day will be the 'B' Com-

pany, 5th Ranger Battalion Living History Association. The group portrays a squad of U.S. Army Rangers during its time in Western Europe in 1944 and 1945.

Heritage Day also will feature Big Band Era music and a chicken barbecue. Admission and parking will be free and purchase of food by donation. Shuttle service will be provided.

Donations from the event will benefit the Moreland Community Historical Society.

**Moreland  
Community Heritage  
Day is Saturday,  
October 11, 2014,  
from 10am-6pm.**



## The Old Franklin Township School House

By: Marianne Bricker

When Franklin Township farmer and Moreland Historical Society member Matt Gress bought the Carl Franks farm last year, it came with an "as is" provision. This applied to the many run down out buildings and large bank barn which Matt found on the property. The usual sheds, shops, coops and "lean to's" were covered with overgrowth, but Matt,

his wife Diane, and friends set to work cutting down trees, clearing fields, and uncovering the small buildings.

One larger wooden structure with a collapsed roof just didn't seem like a farm building at all. Its walls were covered with plaster and rock lath. The rotted and weathered beams were meant to support something other than grain storage or equipment.

Matt discovered, after talking with neighbors and friends, that the structure was what remained of the old Moreland schoolhouse which once stood beside the Moreland Grange building from the other side of West Moreland road.

As a Moreland Historical Society member, Matt felt this was quite a find, and

(article cont. on following page)



Photo of the original Franklin Township School House mid 1950's, originally part of the Frank's farm and now currently owned by MCHS Vice President, Matt Gress.



(cont. from previous page)

wondered if there was a way to salvage any part of the school house. His neighbor and brother-in-law David Bricker (also a member of the Historical Society) took that thought a bit farther.

David, a recently retired teacher from Triway Jr. High School, has an interest in old wood which he turns into beautiful, polished

wooden pens and mechanical pencils. Matt and David had a hard time finding salvageable pieces of wood, but the men were able to pull out pieces of a white oak beam. The finished pens show a beautiful grain and carry a wonderful sentiment from the past to the present.

If anyone is interested in owning a piece of Moreland history, David has agreed to donate a pen and pencil set from the old Moreland Schoolhouse for the

Silent Auction at this year's Moreland Community Heritage Day this fall.



Photo of a wooden pen turned by Franklin Township local, David Bricker.

### Meeting Schedule

The Moreland Historical Society will hold a board meeting the first Thursday of each month and a general membership meeting the first Thursday of every quarter. Meetings are held at the Moreland United Methodist Church.

Members are invited to attend board meetings!

**General Membership Meetings:**

**July 10, 2014** (moved to the following Thursday due to the holiday) @ **8:00 pm**

**October 2, 2014 @ 7:00 pm**

## *Township House Renovation*

By: Laurie Sidle

The Moreland Community Historical Society has found a place to call home with the purchase of the Franklin Township House. Now it wants to make it look like home – in the early 1900s.

Historical Society Board Member Matt Gress said the board is looking to “renovate in reverse” or take it back to its original condition.

Built in 1893 as a township house, the building is significant to the community, board member David Mann said. Until recently, it was home to the Franklin Township Trustees. They have since constructed a new building on Moreland Road.

At one time the Justice of the Peace held court in the building, and marks on the floor still map out where a railing existed in front of the judge's

bench and a pot belly stove sat. A roll top desk with ink well pens and wax seals will stay as part of the society's museum display.

Over the years, the many historical features have been removed or covered with more modern materials, stripping the building of much of its authenticity and character.

The renovation plan includes new flooring, drywall and paint. Dated vinyl windows will be swapped with new, wood energy-star windows and the old tin roof in critical state of disrepair will be replaced with new standing seam metal roofing.

“You peel away the layers and you can find it,” Gress said of the historical value of the building.

The estimated cost of renovating the township house is \$55,000, and the

historical society is seeking grant funding and private donations to help with the cost. It will host its 4<sup>th</sup> annual Heritage Day Oct. 11 as a fundraiser.

Renovation is expected to be completed by November of this year, at which time the society plans to fill it with displays.

“It's always been our goal to have a place to display artifacts,” Mann said. The historical society will hold open houses to introduce the public to its new home. It also will consider hosting school tours and one-time events featuring local entertainers, musicians and artists.

The society also intends to allow the building to be used for community meetings and gatherings.



Old roll top desk to be restored.

**“It's always been our goal to have a place to display artifacts,”**



Old railing from when the Justice of the Peace held court within the house.

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#### **MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Single Annual Membership.....\$20.00

Family Annual Membership.....\$30.00

Individual Life Membership.....\$250.00

Organizational Annual Membership.....\$50.00

*Applications are available  
on our website:*

Please make checks payable to Moreland Community Historical Society

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Visit us on the web!

[www.MorelandCommunityHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.MorelandCommunityHistoricalSociety.org)

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## **PLEASE HELP!**

The Moreland Community Historical Society is looking for photos and memorabilia of Franklin Township WWII and Korean War Veterans to display at the 2014 Moreland Community Heritage Day.

If you have any items that you would like to share with us, please contact:

**Gail Miller at (330) 464-3653**

**or**

**Dave Mann at (330) 466-0651**

