

Volunteers & Historical Information Needed for Mantua Village “Ghost Walk”

The Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation needs volunteers who want to have fun & have knowledge of old time Mantua!

The first “Ghost Walk” (you won’t be spooked!) history tour is planned for October 25 from 5pm to 9 PM in Mantua Village. We need help gathering facts about the Mantua Grain, Livery, RR Station Depot, New Village

Hall & the old post office (presently unoccupied) building on Prospect Street. Any other special memories of the Village are welcome too!

If you have any historical, interesting information or stories about these buildings, please contact us.

We’re also seeking outgoing, fun people willing to dress in old time garb to help

narrate the tours of the buildings, give directions, or just stand around or walk through the town looking like bona fide yester-year residents!

Contact Becky Newell
bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com or
Laura Landreth at 330-274-0855 to
volunteer or for ticket
information. Come step into the
past with us!

Mantua Village “Ghost Walk” October 25th

The Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation will sponsor the first genuine, authentic, (soon to be famous) Mantua Village “Ghost Walk”! (Don’t worry – you won’t be spooked!) You’ll hear the sounds & see sights (maybe even smells) of yesteryear when our town was a busy, bustling commercial district. Listen as costumed guides entertain with memoirs of 5 historic old buildings.

Come walk with us on October 25th between 5PM and 9PM and enjoy a night of history

and little known tales that will capture the imagination and inspire the mind to what Mantua once was!

Bring the family along for a fun filled, old fashioned treasure hunt & coloring contest drawing for ages 11 & under! Pick up an old time coloring page before the event at the Post Office, Chase or Middlefield Bank. Drop it in the designated box on tour night for a chance to win a \$50 savings bond from Middlefield Bank.

Step back in time with us,

wear old time attire! Not required, but suggested to get into the spirit of the evening. Dress the kids up too! (For safety’s sake, bring a flashlight)

The walk will start at the mini-park (by Haylett’s) and cover just 3 blocks. Tickets can be purchased at Middlefield Bank in Mantua with adults being \$5 and those under 11 free.

For more information or tickets, contact Becky Newell at 330-274-3238, 216-990-5086 or bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com

For Immediate Release

September 29, 2008

For additional information, contact:

Downtown Mantua Revitalization Committee President

Edie Benner at 330.274.2747

“Walking through Mantua’s Past” Event Planned for October 25

The Downtown Mantua Revitalization Committee will sponsor the first, authentic, soon-to-be famous “Walking through Mantua’s Past” tour on Saturday, October 25 from 5:00 to 9:00 pm. Hear sounds and see sights of yesteryear when The Village of Mantua was a busy, bustling commercial district. Listen as costumed guides entertain with memoirs of five historic buildings which have not been open to the public in over 15 years.

Proprietors of Mantua Grain, the Livery, the Railroad Depot, Village Hall, and the old post office building on Prospect Street will offer attention-grabbing details and ambience to help us step back in time. Catch a glimpse of horses, stagecoaches, and townsfolk in period dress on the streets once again. Enjoy a night of history and little-known tales that will capture the imagination and inspire the mind to see Mantua as it once was.

Bring the family along for a fun filled, old fashioned treasure hunt and coloring contest drawing for ages 11 and under. Pick up a coloring sheet *before the event* at the Mantua Post Office or Middlefield Bank. Drop it in the designated box on tour night for a chance to win a \$50 savings bond from Middlefield Bank.

There’s no need to worry about scaring the little tikes; there won’t be any ghosts, goblins or Halloween activity, just a great opportunity to become acquainted with Mantua’s Past in a wholesome family environment. For safety’s sake, bring a flashlight and wear good walking shoes (the tour spans three blocks) Not required, but suggested: Step-back in time yourself by wearing old time attire!

Pre-sale tickets may be purchased at Middlefield Bank in Mantua and are just \$5 for ages 12 through adult; children 11 and under are free.

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Come Enjoy an Evening “Walking through Mantua’s Past”

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“Walking through Mantua’s Past” October 25th.*

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Mantua turns back the clock; Tour highlights village's 19th Century history

October 26, 2008

By Diane Smith

Record-Courier staff writer

MANTUA " For a few hours Saturday, it was 1868 again. Guided by women wearing Civil War-era ball gowns and men wearing military uniforms, area residents took a look at Mantua Station, the name the village was known by in the 19th century. Horses walked down the street, on hand from local horse owners.

"Walking through Mantua's Past," a walking tour of downtown buildings, was held Saturday. The walk was sponsored by the Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation.

Residents started at a downtown storefront, which was decorated with period clothing, a pickle barrel and other historic artifacts, picked up programs, watched a video on the town's history and heard from a "ghost" of the past.

Then they walked at their own pace to check out the Mantua Livery, where horses were once stabled; the W.H. Crafts building, which was once the post office; the railroad depot, which now houses English Realty; and the Village Hall, which once housed the first brick schoolhouse and fire station.

Linda Ehlert, president of the Mantua Historical Society, was responsible for outfitting many of the ladies. About 14 ball gowns and dresses belonging to Ehlert and her family were on loan from her private collection.

Ehlert, who has done Civil War re-enacting with her husband for more than 30 years, offered to loan the dresses for the effort. "I thought it would add a lot to it," she said.

Ron Landreth, portraying Owen E. Bartell, an orchestra leader who owned a music college on College Street, talked to visitors about Mantua's history.

He said the town was named by John Leavitt, who founded Aurora. Leavitt had an interest in Napoleon and named the town after the Italian town Napoleon had conquered.

However, Amzi Atwater was the founder of Mantua, donating many parcels of land for the cemetery and school, and selling the rest of his large farm. The area came to life after the Ohio Turnpike was built in 1825 and the railroad came through Mantua in 1858.

Landreth said many buildings in Mantua had burned down over the years, but a few historic ones were still standing. Mantua Station, as it was known before the village was founded in 1898, was home to 5,000 people, 13 taverns and "several adult entertainment complexes." The village is much smaller today, he said, pointing out that 1,046 people lived in town during the most recent census.

Edie Benner, one of the owners of the recently painted Mantua Livery, said the building was constructed in 1856. People who came in off the train would rent horses from the livery, and people who owned their own horses would board them there. Owners of the horses would stay in the hotel, which stood next door, and the stable boys would stay in the livery.

Tanya Gaczkowski attended the walk with her 5-year-old son, Chance, and her mother, Cheryl Steinbrink, a Mantua resident. "This is where we grew up, so we decided to take a look at some of the buildings we've never been in," Gaczkowski said. "I thought it would be a good thing to show my son."

Mantua resident Amy Sittner, taking the tour with her husband, Fred, said her mother and grandparents grew up in Mantua. "I thought it would be nice to see where all those stories generated from," she said.

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Around Mantua

Virginia Goodell
November 6, 2008

The Downtown Mantua Revitalization Committee needs to be commended for the excellent "Walk Through Mantua's Past" which more than 400 adults and 90 children enjoyed on a beautiful, balmy late October evening.

The buildings were appropriately decorated, and knowledgeable guides in century garb told the visitors about each business building. There were on display costumes, memorabilia, equipment, and household and business artifacts used in the 19th century. The event was extremely well planned and many people were on hand to entice visitors with the richness of the past.

The first livery stable north of the railroad tracks was built and equipped by Lewton Turner in 1885 on East Prospect Street. Sometime in the early 1900s, Jacob Ritter was the owner and operator of the livery until the "horseless carriage" made livery stables obsolete.

In the early 1900s, the livery on Prospect became the first building to house fire apparatus for Mantua's volunteer fire department. In 1915, the six pieces of equipment, including a chemical engine, three hose carts, a hook and ladder wagon, and a chemical extinguisher were hand-drawn, not even horse-drawn.

More recently the building was used as a part of the Mantua Grain and Supply complex. A group of local residents purchased the livery building in 2007, hoping to save the structure and adapt it for future use.

The first post office was established in Mantua in 1860, in the original W.H. Crafts building. Unfortunately, that building burned in 1898. The building was rebuilt in 1899 and served as a post office through 1965. It also housed a hardware store and an early drug store on the first floor.

It was interesting to learn that a second floor was added as a meeting place for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and was later used as a party room, where several Homecoming dances were hosted.

The current owners use the building for storage, office and workshop. The second floor has been a residential loft apartment, but is currently vacant.

As I was growing up on the Black farm across from today's Portage County Airport in Shalersville, all the adults referred to the village as Mantua Station, of course, because of the railroad. In fact, railroad workers were the first people to settle in what became downtown.

A building boom began as Mantua Station became a large shipping point for area farmers, for their potatoes, cheese, onions, some cattle and sheep. Mantua stood as one of the leading points in the Western Reserve for cheese, with three large cheese factories in the township. Large quantities of hides, wood and maple syrup were also shipped out.

The railroad was so important for transportation that area farmers, including husband Frank's family, built Canada Road through the woods that reminded them of Canada for a closer trek from farm to the railroad station.

As Mantua grew, the railroad served as transportation for workers commuting to jobs in Cleveland. In 1965, the westbound tracks were pulled up; the eastbound tracks were removed in the early 1980s, bringing an end to the railroad era.

The Mantua Grain Office was built in 1884 by C.H. Thompson. He ran a coal, feed, flour, grocery and provision store in Mantua in the late 1800s, adding the slate-covered elevator in 1898.

The Mantua Grain and Supply Co. was organized in 1909 and purchased the business of O.J. Baumgardner, which included the elevator building and the warehouse on First Street.

The owner with the greatest longevity was R.G. Mayhew and family, Wally and Dorthea Mayhew Pierce, from 1912 to 1993. Mantua Grain was the hub of activity, buying and shipping grain, grinding and selling feed, supplying several varieties of coal, and providing all kinds of products needed by the many farmers in the area. What a difference 40 or 50 years have made.

The first brick schoolhouse was built on the corner of High and Main streets in 1867. The second floor was added for a hall, but was later remodeled to accommodate more school rooms as the population grew. When Opportunity School (now the offices of T.L. Express and University Hospital) was built in 1929, the original Mantua School became the Mantua Fire Station.

The building served the Mantua-Shalersville Fire Department until 2003, when a new state of the art facility was built just south of the village.

Recognizing the historic value of the building, the village of Mantua purchased it and converted it to administrative offices and the Mantua Police Department.

Many thanks to the Downtown Mantua Revitalization Committee and its many helpers for this wonderful event. Leaders planning the Walk Through History were Don and Olga VanAuken, Frank and Kathy Jaczo, Eric Hummel, Jeff Benner, Charles English, Ron and Laura Landreth, Linda Ehlert, Mayor Donna Hawkins and Village Council, the Mantua Historical Society and the Mantua Police Department. Kudos to you all!

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Great turnout

November 11, 2008

Wow! The village of Mantua hasn't had so many people milling about the streets in years. This town of less than 1,100 residents was bustling with nearly 500 people Saturday, Oct. 25, during "Walking Through Mantua's Past" sponsored by the Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation. We planned to sell 200 tickets, but more than 450 adults and kids showed up to enjoy stories of the past, "reenactments," horses, architecture and old-time clothing.

Over 50 people from the community came together to pull this off, freely giving of their time, finances and talents; far too many to thank each and every one individually. This letter is to publicly thank all who had a part in this great evening. And thanks to our visitors for your support, too.

Becky Newell

Secretary

Downtown Mantua

Revitalization Corporation

When a Community Comes Together

We doubted ourselves. We weren't sure it would work out. It took someone relatively new to the community to urge us on....

The first "Walking through Mantua's Past" was a smashing success, thanks to the inspiration and tireless effort of Village residents Laura and Ron Landreth. We hoped to sell 100 tickets, but nearly 500 people showed up to learn about Mantua's history and get a glimpse inside some of our most historic buildings!

Over 50 volunteers devoted time, talent, and materials to entertain our town's guests at this event, sponsored by Downtown Mantua Revitalization. While it's impossible to thank everyone who was involved, the event could not have taken place without building "proprietors" and their teams: Frank and Kathy Jaczo, Wanda Fortney, the entire VanAuken & Robine families, Charles English, Donna Hawkins, Edie Benner, and Eric Hummel.

James Mocny made his storefront available for the sign-in area. Linda and Nick Ehlert, the Mantua Historical Society, and several revitalization committee members donated historic attire and artifacts to enhance the atmosphere. Donna & Roger Hawkins, Jim & Sheila Rogers, and Marty & Diane Hura covered the cost of the wonderful Barbershop Quartet. The Bixlers, Algers and others really took us back in time by bringing their horses to the Village. Others added to the event by walking the streets in period costumes and Heather Mercer took hundreds of pictures to create a photographic memoir of the event.

Check-out the photos in the issue of Mantua Matters and watch for news on how to get your very own copy of the "Walking through Mantua's Past" DVD when it is complete.

To everyone who helped with (too many to name individually) or attended "Walking through Mantua's Past" – THANK YOU! Mantua is a great town full of great people; be proud!

Here's a great gift idea - The "Mantua Past & Present" DVD

Over 100 photos of the Village of Mantua from the early 1900s through 2007, set to the music of well known guitarists Steve Vanderink of Hiram and Brian Henke of Cleveland. DVDs are available at the Mantua Branch of Middlefield Bank for \$20.00. For home delivery, send a check for \$22.00 to cover the cost of mailing to DMRC at PO Box 111, Mantua 44255. Please be sure to include the mailing address and write "for DVD" on your check. *COMING SOON!* DVD of the extremely successful "Walking through Mantua's Past"