



**Brown Township, Franklin County**  
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**PRESERVING MORE THAN RURAL  
CHARACTER**  
*Submitted by Pam Sayre*

Many of us who have moved "out in the country" have experienced a dream come true, our little piece of America without a house fifty feet away. Instead of people, some of us are surrounded by trees, corn and soybeans with birds, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, deer, owls, fish and skunks as our closest neighbors or visitors. We would grab our pitchforks and shotguns in order to preserve and protect what we have, yet how did we get it?

Farmers have to sell in order for us to buy. Today, farmers can make more money selling the land rather than farming the land, especially when they are so close in proximity to urban areas. Land values increase, as we all know from studying our tax bill. New values have just been released from the auditor's office. Brown Township residential rates have increased an average of over 13%. Agricultural assessments have increased only 6.79%. Buying farmland for agricultural purposes is just not economically feasible. Selling farmland for development is much more lucrative, yet most farmers just want to farm. They eat, sleep, and breathe farming. It is a way of life, the only one they know. Thus begins the dilemma, urban development pressures vs. preserving farmland and a way of life for future generations.

What are the alternatives? Elizabeth Township, in Miami County outside of Dayton, has created a "rural historic district" for over 20,000 acres. The township is on the National Register of Historic Places. New residents and farmers alike came together for a common understanding. Although the district does not totally prevent a property owner from selling for development purposes, it does create an understanding of what is there and why it is important to gently guide development.

Recently, Franklin County Development Director, Phil Laurien, successfully marketed the Farm-Village concept as an alternative to traditional subdivision tracts. The Farm-Village concept permanently protects farmland by requiring two acres of farmland protection for every lot in the village. Lot size is a minimum of 15,000-sq. ft. creating a clustering effect, enabling the farmland protection to occur. For example, in a 60-acre parcel of land, 40-acres would be protected while 20-acres would be developed in cluster housing with a common well field and septic systems. Quoting the new Franklin County Zoning Resolution, adopted by the commissioners in July, "the development rights to the preserved open space are permanently and irreversibly transferred to the farm village lots, in return for which the open space is protected by permanent deed restrictions, plat restrictions, and open space easements".

Yet, even with these new tools, development pressure from neighboring cities is imminent. In fact, according to the Columbus Dispatch, "Ohio faces more urban pressure on farmland than any other Midwestern state". However, counties on the edge of cities produce 56% of the total agricultural production. How can we mitigate the loss? Do we want to?

The developers will argue development is good for the economy. It creates jobs and spurs other related

development. True. On the other hand, according to the Dispatch, the Columbus Development Dept. has determined "the City needs \$1.43 for each tax dollar generated by a house". So, by the time roads are built, water and sewer services supplied, fire and emergency services provided, as well as police protection, it costs more to have the house there, than the revenue generated by the house.

Then there is the school problem. It costs over \$6,000 to educate one child in the Hilliard City School system for one school year. The average homeowner pays approximately \$1,850 a year in taxes on a \$100,000 home. That amount includes taxes for fire, police, library, Metro Parks, mental health, as well as schools. A community near Sacramento, CA has developer impact fees for schools, fire, water/sewer, and roads, which total \$24,000 on a single family dwelling regardless of the value of the home. \$10,000 would be for water and sewer alone. The additional breakdown would be:

*\$7,845 for schools, \$5,000 for fire, and \$3,266 for roads. Commercial and industrial uses would also pay on a square footage basis. Of course, the fees are passed on to the consumer. The developer is not losing anything, except to increase to the cost of the house or building that is easily passed on to the buyer.*

Back on the subject of farm preservation, the Governor has recently enacted a Farmland Preservation Task Force to "study the feasibility of farmland preservation while balancing the need for continuing development in the State". This task force will have three objectives:

- Examine the historical trends, causes and consequences of the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.
- Identify voluntary methods and incentives for preserving and maintaining land for agricultural production.
- Provide recommendations for enhancing the continued vitality of agricultural activity and protecting private property rights, thereby retaining land in agricultural use.

It is important to note that between 1974 and 1992 in Ohio, more than 1.4 million acres of farmland were depleted from production. That translates into nine acres an hour.

What can we do? C. William Swank, retired executive director for the Ohio Farm Bureau, said it best in the Columbus Dispatch article of September 8th, "The challenge is to find a way for cities to grow without threatening farmland, but you almost have to change a mind-set to make the thing work. And, to do that, you have to have people talk about it and talk about it and talk about it". Hopefully, we can come up with a solution that works for the community and its inhabitants, both human and non-human.

## **ELEMENTS OF BROWN TOWNSHIP HISTORY**

### ***By Raymond K. Bradley, a community historian***

*Note: This article was submitted several months ago as a possible article for publication. Currently, Raymond is undergoing radiation treatment for throat cancer and unable to contribute to his column as he would like. We sincerely hope the treatments are successful.*

There was a picture loaned to me (due to quality, we are unable to reproduce here) by Ada Adell (Purdum) Mahaney, 1017 Bainsbridge Place, Cols., OH 43228.

Ada's mother was Gladys Herbert Purdum, wife of George Purdum, long time residents of Brown Township and also parents of Evan Arthur Purdum, a long time insurance agent here in the township. Gladys and her brothers and sisters were all born in this house. The house stood just southeast by a few dozen yards from the large 2 story brick house on the easterly side of Walker Road and known to most of us as the home of Stanley and Dora Barrett and later of their sons William Keith (Bill) and Fred Barrett. Earlier, just prior to Gladys' birth, it was owned by Thomas Herbert. Gladys' father and mother

were David Herbert and Carrie Adelle (Harlow) Herbert. Gladys' brothers and sisters were: Fern, who married Oscar Leffel, Ethel, who married Edward James, Clarence who married 3 times to Lena, Clara and Mary, and Chester who married Marie. While still a young girl, Gladys' father David was killed in an unfortunate gun accident. The family moved in with friends on Roberts Rd. in a house nearly opposite the Irving and Leona Anderson house. By a lot of hard work and scrimping, the family managed to purchase and move to a house at 89 South Richardson in the Hilltop area of Columbus. Chester went onto operate a well-known grocery store that was located at Burgess and W. Broad St. on Hilltop and was a leading businessman of the area.

As a youngster going to school, Gladys attended Wales School, which was then a white frame one-room building, at the rear of the school lot. Prior to that, there had been a log school on this site dating from the very early days. The Williams Brothers history of 1880 tells us about the Welsh Congregational Church. In that account is the following statement, "As early as the year 1845, services were held in a little log schoolhouse standing near the present church edifice". Also quoting, "the pioneer schoolhouse in the eastern portion of the township was built in the fall of 1840 and stood near the Welsh Church". In 1906 the white-frame school building gave way to a gray-white concrete brick one-room school that was located at the front of the lot and diagonally situated near the NE corner of the intersection of Walker and Roberts Roads. In 1931 the concrete brick school was demolished to make way for the new Brown Township Elementary Schools, which opened that fall. That school, in turn, gave way to the present Brown Elementary School of which we are all so proud. It is the fifth school to occupy this site and we hope it will serve many years into the future.

## **THE ESSENCE OF BROWN TOWNSHIP**

### **Ode to a former mother-in-law**

***By Kathleen Bradley***

She is a daughter of the Virginia Hills - a quiet, steadfast earth mother given to drinking the water she cooks vegetables in and tossing her dishwater out the door to slake the tulips' thirst. She never has forgotten the lessons of the Great Depression, never taken resources of any kind for granted. She had a compost pile before they became trendy. She carries her drinking water in from the outside spigot (unsoftened), dries and reuses paper towels and rinses, dries and reuses every kind of plastic bag and wrapper.

She hangs her laundry outdoors to dry, washes her dishes by hand, writes lists on the backsides of fliers and brochures so as not to waste paper, and grows weeds in her garden on purpose (I once found a book titled "How to Enjoy Your Weeds" on a shelf in her spare bedroom).

She is a woman small in physical stature but enormous in her effect on those who know her. She sews her dresses from the same worn pattern, bathes in the shallowest water and never saw a bird that didn't fascinate her. Although a childhood bout with scarlet fever left her slightly hard of hearing, she delights in sitting with her hands on the cat in her lap, "feeling" it purr.

I remember my shock the first and only time I saw her wearing pants. The apparition who arrived to take me berry picking in the woods wore a scarf, a large-brimmed straw hat, a long-sleeved work shirt buttoned at the wrists and men's dungarees cinched at the waist and rolled up at the ankles. Because the weather already was sultry when I awoke at 5 am, I had donned shorts, sandals and a sleeveless shirt. Her sweltering outfit, though, deterred mosquitoes that enveloped us as we trudged toward the berry patch.

### **Invaluable Lessons**

That was only one of the many life lessons she taught me during the 20 years I was married to her son.

She showed me how to can vegetables, fruits and fruit juices and to make jams and jellies. She introduced me to herbs, wildflowers and exotic fruits, such as papaws and mulberries. I learned the joys of making bread and gleaned countless gardening tips from her.

Tundra-born, I never had reveled in the delicate beauty of pink and white dogwoods, nor inhaled the luscious fragrance of mock orange trees. I'd never heard of butterfly bushes, redbird trees or passion flowers. I never had picked wild elderberries, currants or crabapples before she introduced me to them and showed me how to preserve their essence. Walks in the woods with her were scouting missions that revealed tiny trilliums, jack-in-the-pulpits and myriad other wildflowers. I never would have noticed their shy beauty without her. She advised me to plant marigolds next to green beans to keep the bean beetles away, to sprinkle dried animal blood along the perimeter of the garden to keep rabbits out and to lure slugs away from my produce into pint tins of stale beer.

Like her, I learned to anticipate the post-Christmas arrival of the Burpee catalog and to scour the pages for new and old-standby varieties of seeds. The annual plotting of the garden layout would occupy long, dreary winter hours.

But of all her gifts to me, the most precious and life-altering were those we never spoke of-- those I absorbed just by being in her presence: her willing participation in any church/charitable activity, the nobility she brought to services performed for husband and family, and, most of all, her complete acceptance of all human foibles and refusal to judge others.

### **Going Home Again**

I journeyed back to Columbus, OH late last summer. I had kept in touch with her by phone, mail and cards, but hadn't seen her in 12 years. Pulling into her driveway, I had a sensation of coming home again. When she embraced me and asked, "How are you doing, Lambchop?" I knew that, truly, nothing between us had changed.

Although the garden had been harvested, I could still walk the grounds and admire the huge waves of goldenrod outside the kitchen window, savor the aroma of freshly picked mint and sit down to breakfast, when, for once, someone asked me whether I wanted oatmeal or cold cereal, banana or peaches.

Leaving her was more difficult this time. She is a nurturer and a teacher whose wide realm is home, garden, family and our own good earth. She is a well of human kindness, the likes of which I've never encountered before or since meeting her.

Kathleen Bradley is a newsroom executive secretary who hopes to pass along at least some of Opal Hill Bradley's lessons to her own children and grandchildren.

## **UPDATES**

**RESIDENT SURVEY** to be distributed in mid-October. If you do not receive a survey, please call the clerk's office at 876-5496 to pick one up. If you do not have a nail on your mail post, you will not receive a survey. The Postmaster prohibits anything without a stamp on it, in or on a mailbox. Thanks.

**H.B. 36 ANNEXATION REFORM** is still pending in the Senate Rules Committee and the Governor has a hold on the bill. He is concerned the bill will negatively impact economic development. The legislature is expected to address H.B. 36 after the November elections. Please be aware Mary Jo Kilroy is opposing Gene Watts. Kilroy is a Columbus School Board member. Sen. Watts lives in Galloway.