

# Museum Muses

Highland County Historical Society, 151 E Main St, Hillsboro, OH 45133 937-393-3392  
<http://www.highlandco.org/HCHS.html>

## Greetings from your President

By Jean Wallis

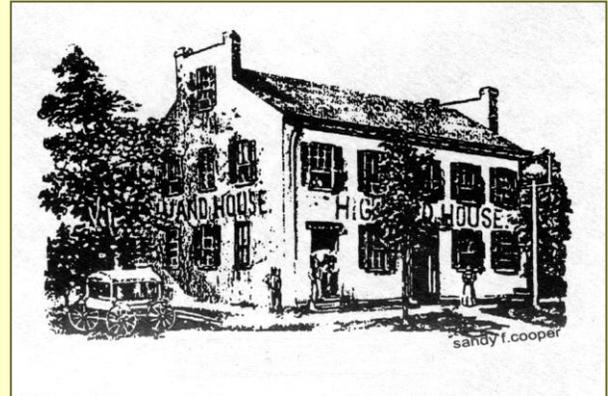
We hope you all had a lovely holiday season. Things were busy at the Highland House during the season. We look forward to the events that are planned for the year 2008, starting with a "Spring Brunch" to be held on Sunday, March 9, starting at 11:30 A.M. This year we will be doing something different. The ladies from Highland House will be doing the cooking. Reservations are required and must be in by Wednesday, March 5. The price will be a freewill donation. See another part of the newsletter for the reservation form. You can mail the form to Highland House Museum, deposit it in the mail drop, or call 393-3392. We will have music during the brunch provided by some of our talented musicians playing the Nellie Collins piano.

Our monthly meetings will begin Thursday, April 24 at 7 P.M., with a guest speaker.

On May 4, starting at noon and lasting until 5 P.M., a spring tour of Hillsboro homes and historical landmarks will be on tap. More on this in the coming weeks. Watch for information in the Hillsboro Times-Gazette. You can also access the newspaper online at [www.timesgazette.com](http://www.timesgazette.com).

We will be having a Grand Opening of Highland House Museum Library this year. On Thursday, June 26, there will be a picnic at Serpent Mound State Park. More details will be released closer to the event.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new members to the HCHS Board: Pauline Cameron and Margaret Van Frank. As Frieda



Redkey leaves the board, we can't thank her enough for her valuable service as a member of the Board of Trustees and Vice-President of HCHS. Frieda will be continuing as Membership Chair. We welcome Bob Dunlap as our incoming Vice-President.

Perhaps you've been thinking about getting more involved in HCHS or Highland House, but just haven't taken that step of calling to offer your services. We need volunteers of all kinds! Whatever skill you have (and everyone can do something), please consider making 2008 the year you decide to get more involved! You'll meet lots of people you may not know that well and put your skills and hidden talents to use for Highland House Museum and Highland County Historical Society. But be careful.....you just may enjoy yourself along the way!

*Our Sympathies to the Families of:*

*Helen Carr*

*Inez Harsha*

*Clyde Maines*

*Dorothy Odland*

# Nellie Collins and Her Piano

By Jean Wallis

One of the newest acquisitions of Highland County Historical Society is a square rosewood grand piano purchased from Mary Brown Turner, through the generosity of many persons interested in preserving a piece of Highland County history.

The piano had for many years been used in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, now known as A Place For Grace, located at the corner of N. East and E. North Streets. The piano belonged to Minnie Hudson, having been given to her by members of the Collins family for whom she worked.

The piano was originally purchased by Charles H. Collins in Cincinnati in 1974 for \$835.00 from the D. H. Baldwin Company for his daughter, Mary Ellen, affectionately known as Nellie by family members. The piano was manufactured by Decker Bros., of New York City. After acquisition of the church building, Mrs. Turner arranged for restoration of the instrument by Gary Beeker of Cincinnati.

Nellie was born at Bethel, Clermont County, Ohio, the daughter of Charles H. and Mary Ellen Tice Collins on July 12, 1864. The attending physician was Dr. William Ellsberry. Nellie was baptized at the Hillsborough Methodist Church on August 28, 1964.

Nellie attended the Highland Institute for young ladies and graduated from the Hillsborough Female Academy. She spent time traveling with her father, including a trip to Europe in 1883, accompanied by her great-uncle Frank and Aunt Margaret Trimble Armstrong and their daughter, Mary Ann.

On Christmas Day of 1889, Nellie was married to Fred Fitch, son of Colonel and Mrs. Fred Fitch of



Pueblo, Colorado. The wedding was held at the Collins home at 134 E. South Street with the Rev. James Murray, pastor of the Methodist Church in Hillsborough performing the ceremony.

Nellie was dressed in a corded white silk dress, point lace veil (the family history of which added value to its intrinsic richness), diamonds (the groom's gift to his bride), and white tea roses (also a gift from the groom) tied with graceful loops of white ribbon.

Miss Florence Fitch, sister of the groom was maid of honor. She wore a dress of cream cashmere with cardinal silk trimmings. The groom and his best man, Mr. John Collins, wore the conventional full-dress black suits.

Money, a handsome house, completely furnished in Pueblo, a new life for the young couple set in a western atmosphere, love and admiration by her new family: all the things for a happy life together. But this was not to be the case. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the marriage had ended in divorce court and Nellie had returned to Hillsboro and taken back her maiden name.

Nellie Collins died June 7, 1929 and rests in the Collins lot at Hillsboro Cemetery.

*"The Decker Piano originally cost \$835, but in 2007 was estimated to be worth \$30,000."*

# Notes from the DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Margaret Van Frank

Where to start to tell you what has and will be happening at the Museum? First of all, we thanked the clubs by mail, for decorating the rooms of Highland House for the holidays, but now we want to publicly thank them. Without a doubt, each year their talents surpass the previous year's efforts. Our gratitude goes out to Women's Club, Mothers' Club, Town Club, Esoteric, The Quilt Club and New Petersburg Civic Club. We were assisted by Susan Seipelt (N. High St) in decorating the foyer and stairway. Last, but certainly not least, Sharon Huffman shared her talents with us by decorating two trees on the second floor. (She really should conduct a seminar on making stars.) We welcome new participants, so let us know if you are interested. If you were not able to visit Highland House during the holidays, you missed some extraordinary displays.

All events in 2007 were well attended. Now on to 2008. One of our most recent gifts is a Victorian, china faced doll beautifully clothed. It is a gift to the Museum and the Society from Willa Stanforth. We are displaying it on the large sideboard in the Music Room where the square grand piano regally dominates.

The board members invite you to the "Spring Brunch" (check elsewhere in this newsletter for details). They will be providing great home-cooked items for you to enjoy.

There have been other changes in the rooms of Highland House. Please attend the brunch to enjoy good food and a good time browsing. Hope to see you soon!

**Don't miss the  
TOUR OF HILLSBORO'S HISTORIC  
HOMES & BUILDINGS  
MAY 4**



## **SPRING BRUNCH RESERVATION SUNDAY, MARCH 9**

Start time: 11:30 A.M.

Cost: DONATION

**Yes! I plan to be at the SPRING BRUNCH!**

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ places for me.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Reservations are REQUIRED and must be made by Wednesday, March 5. Mail or drop at Highland House OR phone 393-3392. (For more information on the brunch, see President's article on page 1.)

If you find you cannot keep your reservation, as a courtesy, please notify us. Thank you!

## **“OUR TOWN”**

Requests have been received for back issues of the little houses of Hillsboro. If anyone has one (or a complete set) for sale or wishes to buy one, contact ANNE RHUDE for more information: 393-1255.

## **RECENT ACQUISITIONS**

From Beverly Palmer:

2008-01-1: Box of newspapers 1918-1920  
Bell Opera Ad

From Willa Stanforth:

2008-02-1: French fashion doll  
2008-02-2: Set of semi-porcelain dishes  
2008-02-3: 2 Grace Barton 1804 samplers

From Jean Wallis:

2008-03-1: Cut glass dish w/silver base  
2008-03-2: Pink & gold decorated chiree tray  
2008-03-3: 3 WWII Posters  
2008-03-4: Map of 1 room schools in Ohio  
2008-03-5: Folder of misc & pictures

## **HCHS TRUSTEES**

**Avery Applegate**  
**Pauline Cameron**  
**Bob Dunlap, Vice-President**  
**Maxine Kratzer**  
**Shawn Priest**  
**Mike Rector, Finance**  
**Anne Rhude**  
**Marshall Schafer**  
**Margaret Van Frank, Director**  
**Jean Wallis, President**  
**Betty Wilkin**

## **ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL**

**Karen Reno (KMR Accounting), Treasurer**  
**Jeanne Wilkerson, Secretary**  
**Jan Houston, Assistant Director**  
**John Glaze, Newsletter**

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## **MEMBERSHIP INFO**

Frieda Redkey  
Thanks to all members who have renewed your 2008 membership. We hope to hear from those who have not renewed as soon as possible. We count on your financial support as well as your participation to continue the work of HCHS. As of January 1, Lifetime Memberships have been discontinued.

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Highland County Historical Society

151 E Main St  
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