

## Tootin' Our Horn: We Are Turning 50 Years Old!

by Carol (Klenk) Heck

The Madeira Historical Society was started back in 1972, marking this year, (2022), as its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. When the train depot closed in 1971, residents and Mayor Dan McDonald thought it prudent to save the artifacts and the iconic building. The Madeira Historical Society was organized in the fall of 1972 “to plan for the restoration and use of the building. In addition, The Historical Society was to do



the same for any other historic buildings that the city might obtain in the future. The first organizational meeting of this society was held September 18, 1972. Oscar Meyer, Vern Hoffman, Dr. Clifford Crull and Mrs. Harry Messerly were elected by those in attendance as the incorporators of the organization. Two donations were presented; \$500 from Madeira Manor/Catering, and \$200 from the Eastern Hills Women’s Club.” \*<sup>1</sup> The picture is from 1972 at the ceremonial presentation of the depot for use by the city of Madeira, and in turn, The Madeira Historical Society.

The Madeira Historical Society held meetings at the depot while coordinating events and restoring the wooden structure. This went on for more than ten years, and after that time, The Madeira Historical Society was told to move out. (The city wanted to rent out the building for city income.) So, the members divided up the depot artifacts, made an inventory list, and stored them in their own homes, their businesses, or in the Hosbrook House two doors away.) This setback did not stop them. The Madeira Historical Society meetings began to be held at Sellman school in the library (location of the present Madeira Middle School). Every monthly meeting included a program with light refreshments. At other times, they would meet at the Municipal Building on Miami Avenue. In fact, they conducted meetings wherever they could hold them. Some years had sparse attendance and participation, but due to the dedication of a few good members; John and Mignon Mayhall, and Emery and Wanda Gardner, the society continued. It was a great day in 1998, when Elizabeth Miller, residing at 7226 Miami Avenue, decided to bequeath her home and land to The Madeira Historical Society. Doug Oppenheimer was her helpful and friendly neighbor, and both were members of the society. (Doug had been a member since the beginning in 1972!)

Elizabeth was 91 years old in 1998 and was planning for the future of the home she loved and lived in since 1948. She was quoted by Regina Villiers as saying, “They (The Madeira

Historical Society) need a place and I don't want the house torn down and the place destroyed." The transaction took place, but she lived in the house for five more years after that before going into assisted living.

On June 19, 2004, there was a ribbon cutting ceremony and The Madeira Historical Society had a home once more. Elizabeth Miller attended and cut the ribbon.



Over the last 18 years the society has tried to furnish the museum with things from Madeira history. Artifacts have come out of storage from those earlier years and other donations have been granted to make the museum what it is today. The 100-year-old Sears & Roebuck home is staged as it would have been at the turn of the century up to the late 1940's. (We are currently planning to restore the upstairs flooring.)

There have been many active members of the society before this. Large dinner

events have been hosted on the grounds; celebrations, dedications, and historical programs, too many to count, took place here and other Madeira locations. Outreach and community participation are still a part of our calendar.

Probably the highlight of our year is when we host the Madeira Elementary first graders, third graders, and last year, for the first time, the St. Gertrude fourth graders. They tour the museum and the grounds, and for the older classes, the historic gravestones of Madeira settlers. The first graders are so surprised when we teach and explain to them about history, which we call the "Then and Now". During those tours, we not only explain about Madeira history, but life as it was decades ago with hands on activities. They really like to see the live chickens we put in the chicken coop, compliments of our current Museum Director. Furthermore; Eagle Scout projects, high school leadership opportunities, and college internships have been accomplished here.

If gardening is your passion, contact us to adopt one of our many areas like the Madeira Women's Club has done. If you just want to do some research, we have archives, photographs, and a rather good source of rare books. Our booklist can be viewed on our website under the Hoffmann Library. [www.madeirahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.madeirahistoricalsociety.org).

Did you know, our grounds can be viewed without attending an Open House? Two years ago, we updated our Grounds Guide map and identified about 40 trees and plants on the property. There are Grounds Guide maps in our information box located outside by the sidewalk and the bench dedicated to Bruce Miller, Sr. Need a park-like setting for photographs? Check out our many picturesque backdrops.

Are we looking for new members?... of course we are! We would love to increase our membership. Even if you don't want to commit, we are here for you. If you are interested in becoming aware of what the society has to offer, please contact us at 513-561-9069, (The Miller Family's old land-line phone number) or email us: [madeirahistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:madeirahistoricalsociety@gmail.com). Maybe you just want to see what the museum looks like today. The Miller House Museum will be open for tours on the first Saturday and the third Sunday of each month, April through December, from 1:00-4:00. Closed on Easter Sunday, (so, instead, we will be open on April 24<sup>th</sup>).

We are happy to announce that we have again been able to schedule programs of interest. Our next two programs for 2022 will be held at the Madeira Public Library: June 11<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-2:00 entitled "History of Heritage Village", presented by Steve Preston and September 17<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-2:00 entitled "Cincinnati Timeline", presented by Jeff Seuss. There are OPEN MHS MEETINGS before each above program and on November 5<sup>th</sup> starting at 12 noon. Everybody welcome, members and guests. Bring a friend!

Other ways to talk to a representative is to visit our booth at the Madeira Art Fair on May 1<sup>st</sup>, or the Madeira Street Dance on August 13<sup>th</sup>. The Museum will be open on Sunday, May 1, 2022 during the Art Fair, from 1:00-4:00.

We would like to hear stories of Madeira's history with those who remember, and to share those stories with Madeira's younger population.

We are proud of the 50 years that the society has continued to be active: "Preserving, protecting, and maintaining". We hope to forage-on for another 50 years!

<sup>1</sup> City of Madeira Newsletter, front page, September 27, 1972  
Photos courtesy of Madeira Historical Society and Carol (Klenk) Heck  
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