

Fort Recovery State Museum Newsletter September, 2018



Closing the Speaker Series with Ken Sowards! *Fort Loramie*, the Topic! Sunday, September 9, 3:00, Fort Recovery Museum Community Room

In 1769 Pierre Loramie, a French-Canadian fur trader (a Jesuit missionary?) built a trading post just north of the present-day village of Fort Loramie. Loramie traded in furs with the Wyandotte and Shawnee Indian tribes. During the 1782 campaign of General George Rogers Clark, Col. Benjamin Logan led an attack on the trading post, and Fort Loramie was burned to the ground.

After the Treaty of Greeneville, General Wayne ordered a fort built at the site of Loramie's store to protect the settlers in west Ohio. What an interesting history Fort Loramie enjoys, and no one knows more about it than history enthusiast and expert, Ken Sowards. Thanks to patrons and the Fort Recovery Community Foundation, all speaker presentations are free!

Saturday! September 8, 10:00 - 2:00. *Open Doors Fort Recovery* Come Explore! Celebrate! Appreciate!

The Ohio History Connection created Ohio Open Doors in 2016 to promote and inspire pride in Ohio's heritage and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act which has proven instrumental in preserving historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites. Many of the landmarks featured in Ohio Open Doors events are in the National Register of Historic Places, which this Preservation Act created.



We (Museum and Historical Society) are excited to be working with the FR Retail Merchant Asso. to create a community-wide event - opening doors that normally aren't open and free. (see www.fortrecoverymuseum.com). Check out the following special places and events (many more included - pick up a map on the porch of the museum that day!):

The State Museum, will be celebrating its 80th birthday party that day with balloons and cupcakes! The Museum building, a beautiful and impressive structure was a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project of 1938. (See the WPA article at the end of this newsletter.)

The Opera House, a rare and unique structure was the center of community activities in the early 1900's. The old stage with gas lights is all intact. Past visitors have found it fascinating. Opera Houses like this were generally found in Protestant villages as they did not have the large churches like the Catholics in which to hold functions. Mary Ann Olding, a preservation specialist, will be present to share information and to answer questions.

The Murals The artist, Dan Keyes, himself, will be present at the location of the 1791 and 1794 battle murals to offer commentary of the mural subjects and artistry.

The Businesses and their buildings' histories were researched by Helen LeFevre who, in 2016, published a book containing that information. That information and more will be available at the merchant establishments of the town.

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant Awarded!



We are pleased and excited to receive news that Ball State University, in collaboration with the Ohio History Connection (OHC), has received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant to plan a traveling exhibit titled "A New View of the Battle of the Wabash". Once implemented, this traveling exhibit and associated public presentations will originate at the OHC, and then travel to multiple American Indian tribal museums throughout the nation.

This NEH planning grant funds collaboration, engagement and input gathering with the descendent tribes who fought at the Battle of the Wabash, and will be followed by another NEH grant application to fund the exhibitions. We are very proud of this latest example of the continued partnership amongst the Fort Recovery Museum and Historical Society, the Ohio History Connection, and Ball State University!

The partnership the museum formed with Ball State University when Chris Thompson became a staff member there has paid great dividends for the museum, the community and the body of knowledge acquired, discovered and created since that joint venture began. Chris' research and the products of that research have been shared across the nation. It certainly was a positively fateful day when that joint venture first took shape. Hats off to Chris! And through her, to Ball State University too!

WHAT WAS THE WPA? (<https://www.history.com/topics/works-progress-administration>)

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the WPA with an executive order on May 6, 1935. It was part of his New Deal plan to lift the country out of the Great Depression by reforming the financial system and restoring the economy to pre-Depression levels.

The unemployment rate in 1935 was at 20 percent! The WPA was designed to provide relief for the unemployed by providing jobs and income for millions of Americans. At its height in late 1938, more than 3.3 million Americans worked for the WPA.

The WPA – which in 1939 was renamed the Work Projects Administration – employed mostly unskilled men to carry out public infrastructure projects. They built more than 4,000 new school buildings, erected 130 new hospitals, laid roughly 9,000 miles of storm drains and sanitary sewer lines, built 29,000 new bridges, constructed 150 new airfields, paved or repaired 280,000 miles of roads and planted 24 million trees.

As weapons production for World War II began ramping up and unemployment dropped, the federal government decided a national relief program was no longer needed. *The WPA shut down in June of 1943*. At that time, unemployment was less than two percent. Many Americans had transitioned to work in the armed services and defense industries.

CRITICISM OF THE WPA

*A Gallup poll in 1939 asked Americans what they liked best and worst about FDR's **New Deal**. The answer to both questions was "the WPA."* 😊

Some politicians criticized the WPA for its inefficiencies. WPA construction projects sometimes ran three/four times the cost of private work. Some of this was intentional. The WPA avoided cost-saving technologies/machinery in order to hire more workers. Unions protested the WPA for its refusal to pay wages as high as those in the private sector.

WPA arts programs drew frequent criticism from Congress and the lay public. "**Boondoggling**" entered the American lexicon as a term to describe these and other government projects that critics tagged wasteful or pointless.

Despite these attacks, the WPA is celebrated today for the employment it offered to millions during the darkest days of the Great Depression, and for its lasting legacy of smartly designed, well-built schools, dams, roads, bridges and other buildings and structures – many of which are still in use today. **For Sure! This is our Museum! Happy #80 Birthday Dear Beautiful Museum!** site director, nk

Big Events - Open Doors Fort Recovery - Sept. 8
Speaker, *Ken Sowards*, "*Fort Loramie*" - Sept. 9, 3:00