

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

July 2023

A Publication of the Wyoming Historical Society and the Wyoming History Museum

ANNOUNCING 2023-2024 PROGRAMS

September 20

Wyoming's own Graydon Sikes, an expert on Antiques Roadshow, regales us with stories of his experiences appraising items. And, you can bring an item for appraisal.

November 9

Michael Morgan, a reformed lawyer, talks about the long and storied history of beer brewing in Cincinnati.

February 8

Dr. Eric Jackson, Professor of History, explains the part the Ohio River played in the Cincinnati Underground Railroad.

April 11

Dr. Julie Aronson, Curator of American Paintings, Sculpture and Drawings at the Cincinnati Art Museum will take us on a tour of the artists of the Queen City.

June 13

Greg Hand leads a rambunctious tour through the old weird Cincinnati. A Cincinnati with UFO's, Witchcraft, Sea Monsters, and so much more.

**PROGRAMS ARE AT
7 PM
Wyoming Civic Center**

FREE - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - REFRESHMENTS

Wyoming Historical Society
800 Oak Avenue
Wyoming OH 45215
513.842.1383

History@Wyomingohio.gov

Open Tuesday 10:30-3:00
or by appointment.



Wyoming History Museum

A Unique and rewarding
place to visit.

Member of:
Ohio Association of Historical
Societies and Museums,
American Association for State
and Local History,
Ohio History Connection

Wyoming Historical Society
is a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit
corporation.

BUY A BOOK.....SUPPORT YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Another way to support your Wyoming Historical Society...Wyoming Resident and prolific author Bill Mefford (W.H. Mefford) is giving us 10% of the profits from your purchase of his most recent book *The Stalin Stain*.

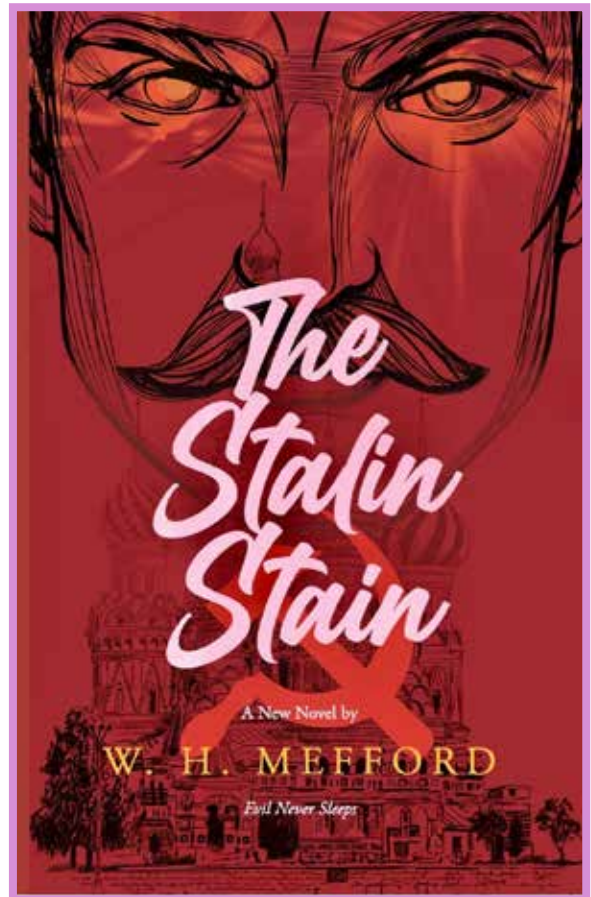
The Stalin Stain is Mefford's seventh book. Previous books include *The Sydney Access*, *Thunder Down Under*, *Trumpy: 10 Years With The Bengals*, *Games of 80*, *The President's Brother* and *The Rasputin Stain*. An award-winning marketing consultant, Mefford, earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Arizona.

Ready for a good summer read? Beleaguered Moscow Police Inspector Illya Podipenko is back...and in big-time trouble! When an attractive and frightened young woman suddenly approaches him in New York's Central Park, she claims that the Russian mob has just murdered her grandfather and they are now chasing her.

The flummoxed Moscow investigator must now protect an irrepressible young girl's life while solving clues to uncover billions in gold and diamonds once secretly hidden away by Russia's mass-murdering dictator Joseph Stalin. Each step plunges the investigator and his beautiful young companion further down a dangerous rabbit hole of pursuit, deceit and betrayal from which they may never escape!



Bill, his wife Marnie, and their three children are all Wyoming High School graduates.



Check out this link to learn more about *The Stalin Stain*...

<https://youtu.be/xEk6Vfo0E5A>

This offer is good for digital or bound books. And, they can be purchased anywhere including Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

MEMBERSHIP...

Our membership year is January-December with our membership drive happening late each fall. However, we gladly welcome new members at anytime of the year. For a year dues are: Individual \$25, Family \$50, Business \$75, Lifetime \$500. High school and college students are free. New members joining after August will be credited through December of the following year. New members please send your check, name, address, phone and email to us and we will handle the rest. 800 Oak Avenue, Wyoming, OH 45215. Thank you.

BUSINESS MEMBERS



LEARN MORE ABOUT....

Jenni McCauley, Real Estate Executive VP

If you are looking for a real estate professional you don't have to look any farther than our business members. This month we highlight Jenni McCauley. Jenni, a founding member of the Wyoming Historical Society, has been selling Homes in and around Wyoming for 29 years. Jenni is an Executive Sales Vice President at Sibcy Cline and a Certified Residential Specialist.

Please support our Proud Business Members.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME...

Nancy Ruchhoft

2023 Wyoming Historical Society

OFFICERS:

Jim Walton, President
David Savage, Vice-President
Maureen Geiger, Treasurer
Mickey Jewett, Secretary

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Anne Black
Jeff Blunt
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Kevin Grace
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Amy Pursley
Sue Saylor
Graydon Sikes

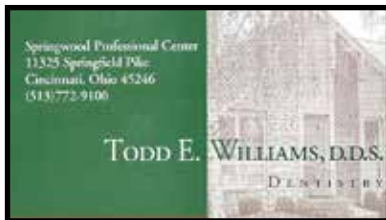
Sherry Sheffield
Newsletter Editor &
Office Manager

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Jim Briggs
Sheri & Bryant Callaghan

Tom & Susan Handley
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John Sears
Kathryn Shahani
Sherry Sheffield

BUSINESS MEMBERS



CELEBRATING 130 YEARS OF THE WYOMING FIRE DEPARTMENT....

Founded in 1893, the Wyoming Fire Department has been lead by only 14 different Chiefs. In this 130th anniversary year, we honor the chiefs and all those who have served in the WFD and the cadets who carry on the tradition. Learn a little about our second chief, Henry A. Hills,

Henry A. Hills

Wyoming Fire Chief 1894-1902

Chief Hills, better known in later years as "Captain" Hills, a mark of distinction reserved in Association circles for former Chiefs, was one of the first Fire Department consultants on record. In 1876, he contracted to organize and equip the Salvage Corps in Atlanta and Nashville, Tennessee and earlier had consulted on the organization of the Cairo, Egypt Fire Department.



HENRY A. HILLS

Born June 7, 1838, in Boston,

Massachusetts, he began to run with the "Masheens" at 16 and at 18 became a full-fledged firefighter with Niagara Engine No. 3 of Cambridge. In 1868, he moved to Rome, Georgia to enter business with his brother where he organized Citizens Hook and Ladder No. 1 of which he became foreman. Elected Chief in 1872, he served for six years. During this period, he became Superintendent of Water Supply for the city.

In 1878, he moved to Dallas, Texas to take charge of the Water Department and while there became President of East Dallas Steam Engine Company No. 2.

In 1883, he moved to Wyoming, Ohio to become Live Stock Clerk of the CCC & L Railway with offices in Cincinnati. This was reported to have been a lucrative position. At the same time, he helped organized the Wyoming Volunteers Fire Department and became its second Chief.

WFD CHIEFS 1893-2023

1893-1894	L. George Lilley	1984-1987	James Benken
1894-1902	Henry A. Hills	1987-1992	Andrew Fladung
1902-1911	Dr. William B. Fahnestock	1992-1997	John Wirtz
1911-1934	August C. "Gus" Spreen	1997-2003	John Benken Jr.
1934-1950	Walter F. Spreen	2003-2013	Robert Rielage
1950-1965	Harry W. Stockmeier	2013-2018	Steve Owens
1965-1984	James R. Donovan	2018-	Dennis Brown

George Benson Fox Civil War Letters

By: Joe Hornsby

Wyoming is much greater than a nice area to live. Our history creates a 'sense of place,' contributing to Wyoming's enduring community and linking generations in building its history past, present and future.

Recently completed is the digitization and copying of almost 80 letters written during the Civil War by George Benson Fox from 1861 to 1863, mostly back home to his mother and father – Lockland industrialist Thomas Fox. Post-war, George Benson Fox would serve as the first Treasurer of the Village of Wyoming and later in the Ohio General Assembly. These letters are historically significant not only because of the battlefields from which they were written, but due to their fullness and detail describing this tumultuous time in American history.

Having stumbled upon a reference to this collection of letters online, I reached out to the Cincinnati Museum Center to see how one might read and view these letters. The museum archivist indicated I'd have to make an appointment as they'd have to transfer the collection from one library to a special viewing area in another. At this moment, the thought came to mind that this would be quite a bit easier if the collection was digitally accessible online.

Digitizing vast amounts of content and collections is difficult due to the time it takes and the associated cost. In working on another history related project for Miami University and Oxford, I learned of the W.E. Smith Family Charitable Trust that provides grants to local history projects relating to Southwest Ohio. W.E. Smith (former history professor and chair at Miami) was known to have had an affinity for personal letters, diaries, and journals capturing history first-hand from those who witnessed it. In applying for the grant funds for the Miami project, I went ahead and submitted an application for funds to digitize and copy this George Benson Fox Civil War collection for the Wyoming Historical Society.

This collection of letters will be added to the Cincinnati Public Library online digital archives where it will be accessible to anyone across the globe in research, projects, and preservation of Civil War history. To learn more about George Benson Fox, a Wikipedia page has been composed and published about his life and this special collection of letters.

Visit: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Benson_Fox or simply Google: George Benson Fox

Sample of the George Benson Fox letters, hand written and very descriptive.



400 QUIZ.....

With the recent announcement of another restaurant opening at 400 Wyoming, Gilligan's on the Green, we take a look at this Historic Building.

It was built in 1909 as a Fire House. Since then it has served as home for the Police Department and later housed a variety of offices. Can you name the six restaurants that have been located at 400 Wyoming Avenue since this Historic building was converted to restaurant use in 1991? The answer is on page 7.



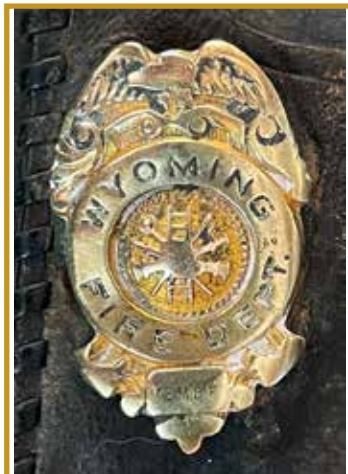
400 Wyoming Avenue in 1958.



When remodeling a building you discover all kinds of things. This is the bottom half of the narrow door that led to the tower of 400 Wyoming, where the Fire Department entered the tower to hang the hoses to dry after a fire. Today the tower carries electric and cable and those things that a 114 year old building wasn't constructed to handle.

BELIEVE IT....

Gunsight Pass, Hell Roarin' Gulch, Ten Sleep, Bear Track and Rabbit Hash are real places of early American Settlement. Each suggests a unique story from the past. Knockemstiff, Ohio qualified as one of those places. Its name came from a rough, no-nonsense tavern-keeper who often threatened to knock anyone stiff if they gave her any trouble. Old maps of Ross County show this small community at the junction of Black run and Shady Glen Roads near Bainville. Today the tavern is closed and the landmark sign is gone, but thanks to old maps and to historians this place and story live on.



Your Wyoming Historical Society recently received this small Fire Department badge from John Sears. It belonged to his father. We have yet to determine exactly when this little badge, 1 3/8 inches tall, was used.

IMAGINEERING...

Many people who live or lived in Wyoming have 'invented' something. Whether its a formula for a soap, a cooking spray or a piece of art. We continue to highlight some of those people who helped make our life better in their special way.

Go-Basket.....Amy Pursley

Samuel Withrow had been working as a traveling salesman when he applied for a patent for a new type of "perambulator". More commonly known today as a baby stroller, Samuel's idea was to use only two wheels on the stroller and make it convertible into a baby carrier. Samuel's brother, Stanley, founded the Withrow Manufacturing Company in 1902 to mass produce this novel product. The invention came to be known as the "Oriole Go-Basket".

In 1909, Samuel left the firm to become the superintendent of Cincinnati's Anti-Tuberculosis League. Stanley remained president of the firm and obtained two of his own patents for improvements to his brother's original design. The first improvement was to add a reclining seat for the child. The second improvement was for a more traditional four-wheel baby stroller, but with retractable wheels for carrying purposes. Also, because the "basket" portion of the baby carrier device was made from rattan, the manufacturing company branched out into making rattan furniture.

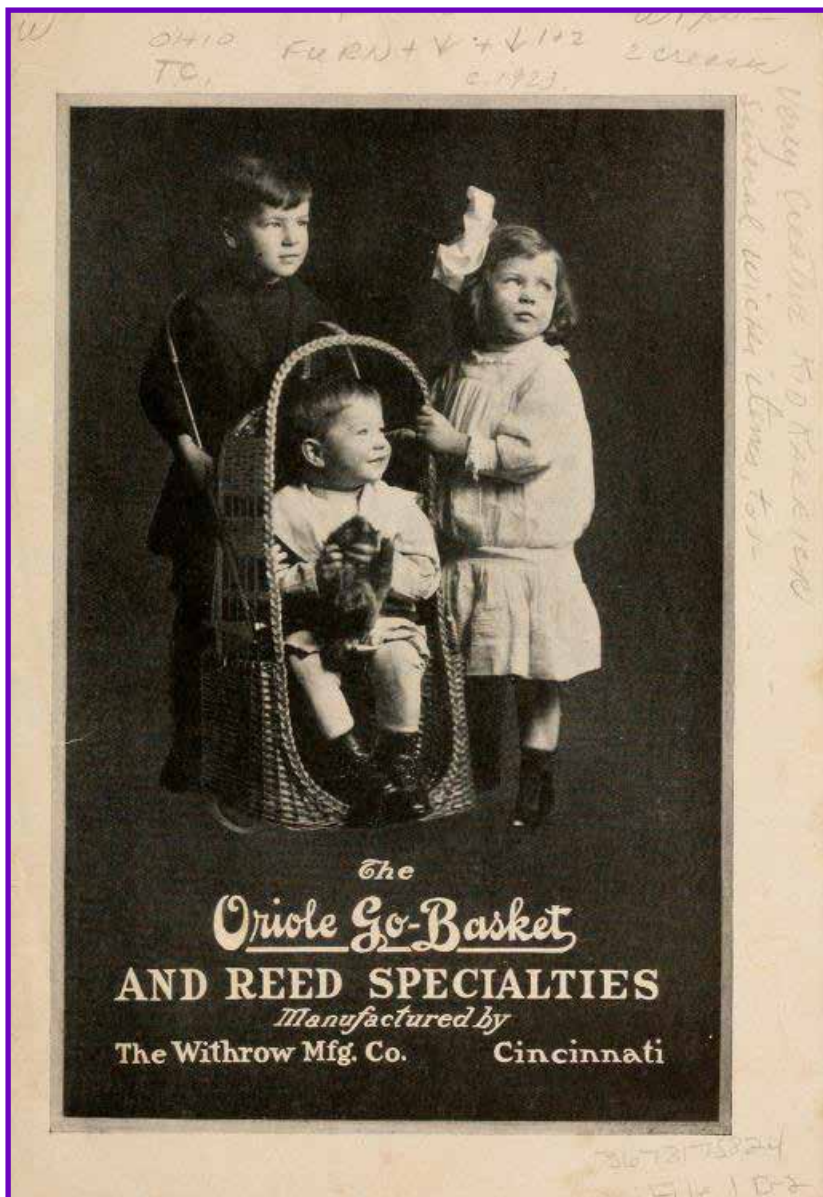
Stanley sold the company in 1924 to pursue a career in real estate. Stanley Withrow and his family lived at 34 Walnut Street in Wyoming from 1904 until 1920.

1907 Withrow Catalog: <https://archive.org/details/oriolegobasketre00with/mode/2up>

Samuel's first patent: <https://patentimages.storage.googleapis.com/f6/7e/74/2dba85c9e4e90d/US700397.pdf>

If you know of someone who deserves recognition for their 'Imagineering' please let us know!

Answer to restaurant quiz on page 6, Village Green, Boston Beanery, Sturkey's, Encore Bistro & Bar, DiStasi's, Station + Family BBQ.



The Wyoming Historical Society
800 Oak Street
Wyoming OH 45215

Look forward to seeing you at our
next program in September!



Former and longest serving mayor, David Savage, rode in one of our two automobile "floats" in this year's Fourth of July Parade.



PRESIDENT'S LETTER...Jim Walton

Dear Members,

Happy Summer! The July 4th Parade was a great success as we marched along with many others celebrating the country's independence. We saw many familiar faces cheering and waving as we carried our banner and passed out candy to the kids.



This time of year things tend to slow down as residents travel and enjoy outdoor activities. During this time your Historical Society continues to be busy and active. The office remains open on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., so please feel free to stop in and visit.

Jim Walton