

# Renewed Remembering: The Newsletter of the Conneaut Area Historical Society and the David Cummins Octagon House

March 2025

Volume 3 Issue 27

March opens the curtain of the weather stage,

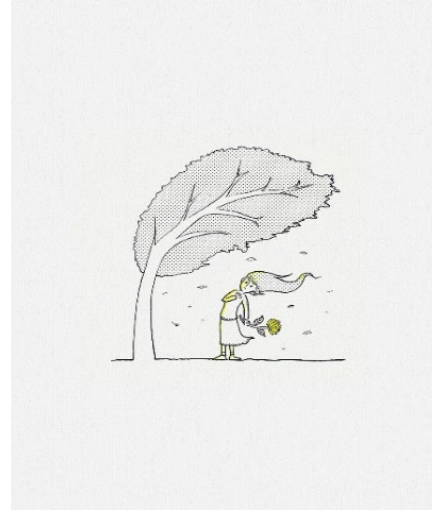


Act one lamb or  
lion, tickling  
breeze, or windy  
rage,

Her audience  
stands hopefully  
in the aisle

Waiting for the  
debut of spring's

sensuous smile!



## In This Issue

Jeff Morrell Took Us to the Movies: Premiere and Encore

One Night Lost in the Salem Woods

Hump Day History Wednesday

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, from  
6 to 7 at the David Cummins  
Octagon House

"The Checkered Careers of David  
Cummins and His Octagon

## We Remember

“Remembering” was the name of the original Conneaut Area Historical Society newsletter. Joan Barnett was the last editor, and with her death and the Covid pandemic the newsletter has not been published for a time. It seemed fitting to name this new version of the old newsletter “Renewed Remembering,” in honor of the former editors including Louise Legeza and Joan Barnett who edited and published the newsletter for so many years. We hope you enjoy it!

### The President’s Paragraph

The Conneaut Area Historical Society wants to thank you for your continued support. As always, new members are welcome. You can call: 440-599-6011 with further questions or write to Conneaut Area Historical Society, P.O. Box 563, Conneaut Ohio, 44030. Our Historical Museum street address is: 518 Mill Street and our David Cummins Octagon House address is 301 Liberty Street, Conneaut, Ohio 44030. Come and visit us. Jim Jones, President

## Up to Date and Doing with the Conneaut Area Historical Society and the David Cummins Octagon House

Another Conneaut Area Historical Museum season has whizzed by as fast as the summer. We celebrated our 28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Labor Day weekend with free hot dogs and festivities. It has been an eventful 28<sup>th</sup> years, full of progress, joys, and sorrows. In the last few years we have lost some long-time, faithful members, including Jack Mathay, Rosemary Bennett, Martha Benson, and Karl Rowbotham in July. They are missed and mourned, both in the Society and in the Conneaut Community.

Our joys include reopening the David Cummins Octagon House with a June Open House. We are open all winter as a base of operations for our historical society since the historical museum doesn’t have heat. The Octagon House hours are Friday, 12 to 3, and on Saturdays and Sundays we are open from 12 to 5. Come and visit us. As well as antiques and a unique building, we have Conneaut history displays, scrapbooks, city directories; we have school year books, and military, musical, and other interesting exhibits. We have a

monthly history program on the third Wednesday of every month that we changed from Time Travel Tuesday to Hump Day History Wednesday.

We are encouraging public school and home-schooling parents and teachers to bring pupils to the Octagon House for a field trip to glimpse into the past. Come and have fun and win prizes in local history bees.

Our research library is stocked with material waiting for people to come in and use, and we have over 100 scrapbooks crammed full of Conneaut History. Come and explore!

In December we had our first Octagon House Tea. We had to cancel the first two that we scheduled because of the weather. We had planned to have two separate teas because of space limitations, but we finally decided to have one tea on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The tea had a World War II Theme, featuring Glenn Miller music and Connie Naylor reading some of her grandmother's letters that she wrote as she came of age during the World War II years. Twelve-year-old Aubrie also modeled some of our vintage clothing to the delight of the tea goers. We are planning to have four seasonal teas a year: a spring tea with a Jane Austen theme; summer, fall, and Christmas tea.

We are working on several new exhibits, including the panoramic photographs of William Haines and a Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock exhibit.

We are busy and we know you are too, but take some time to drop in and see us at the David Cummins Octagon House, and mark next Memorial Day on your calendar for the next season for the Conneaut Area Historical Museum and the David Cummings Octagon House.

## Conneaut Area Historical Museum People

### Museum Officers

**President: Jim Jones**

**Vice-President: Jerry Janco**

**Secretary: Debbie Jones**

**Treasurer: Pat Jones**

**Historian: Kathy Warnes**

### Steering Committee

Jerry Anderson

Pat Jones

Jerry Janco

Debbie Herbrl

Delmas Bennett

Mo Tanner

Jim Lyon

Nancy Lamb

Jim Jones

Kathy Warnes

Debbie Jones

## One Night Lost in the Salem Woods



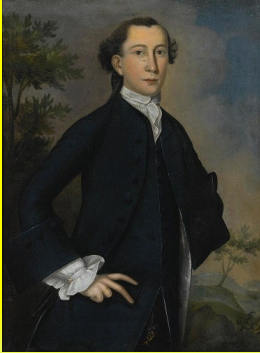
I seek the Lake Erie shore, because father and mother and my sisters and I came to this new place called Salem in a batteaux and the music of the waves resounds in my ears. I seek the Lake Erie shore because Orange Tabby and I are lost in these tree meadows, and I want to go home!

I know to follow the winding creek that father and mother called Conneaut Creek to find the lake. I know to follow Orange Tabby my cat, who had sailed with us on the lake. I want to go back home



If I follow Conneaut Creek and Orange Tabby, I will find the lake. Already, I hear the sound of the waves and my toes in my tight cowhide shoes twitch, anticipating the feel of beach sand. I walk faster, thinking just as fast and remember what Reverend Simpson told me after he baptized me at the camp meeting by Conneaut Creek.





Cold lake water ran down my face. Shaking my head and splattering drops of water on the Reverend's sleeve, I watched him talk to an Indian he had baptized after me. The Indian looked like he got baptized deeper than I did. He dripped water from his leggings and his feathers drooped half-mast.

"He is telling me of the Eriez people who once lived here. The Iroquois destroyed them after they cheated in running races," Reverend Simpson explained. "They left their name and memories of their lives on our lake, Lake Erie, and its shores."

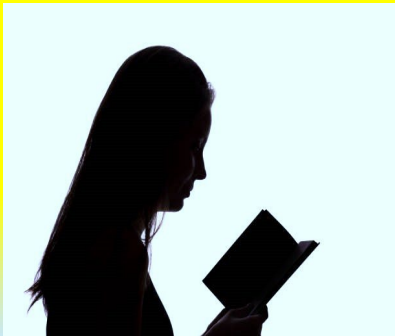


I listened to his Eriez story, because his heart for the Indian people shown in his eyes and rang in his voice, and I looked more closely at the Indian. Reverend Simpson's gaze directed mine and I focused on the Indian's face and words instead of the hatchet hanging from his belt and his hair waving in the wind like a flag instead of laying smoothly on his forehead like...well, like it does on the head of Thomas Bentley.





I squared my shoulders even though they are soggy from my cape. Thomas Bentley. Our families sailed from New York on the batteaux with us. I remember lazy sunny afternoons, the waves lapping against the sides of the boat. I read *The Children of the Abbey* by Miss Regina Maria Roche, and I felt Amanda's love for Lord Mortimer. I looked over the top of my book, darting a quick glance at Thomas who helped our father steer the batteaux. I have fought with him since I was old enough to chop wood, fire a gun, and inform mother that I did not intend to marry.



I would write books like the *Children of the Abbey* and become independently wealthy. I stole a second glance at Thomas. The muscles of his arms rippled like strong waves as he and our fathers propelled the batteaux toward our new homes in Conneaut. He looked over at me and I quickly buried my nose back in my book.

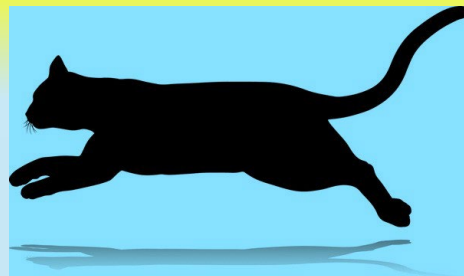
The setting sun sent fingers of colored light dancing on the waves. I imagined I see Eriez Indians canoe dancing over the water. I wanted to be gliding their watery ballet with them, not standing dripping on the shore.

Mother settled my warm wool cape around my shoulders.. “You and Orange Tabby quickly follow us home. You need to change those wet clothes before you catch your death of cold!”



“Get your feet moving, Sally!” My Sister Rachel thumped me on the shoulder, creating a Lake Erie shower. Most of it landed on Orange Tabby, who streaked into the woods like mice taunting her from the trees. I ran after her, squishing water with each step. “Orange Tabby, come back!” My voice sounded watery in my ears.

“My child, come back!” Reverend Simpson shouted. His is the last human voice I hear that day.







I hear a growl behind me.  
 “Orange Tabby, is that you?  
 Stop squawking and let us head  
 for home. If we walk together,  
 we should find the way.”

Instead of purring and rubbing  
 against my cape, which all of  
 the running through the woods  
 had comfortably dried, Orange  
 Tabby growls again. Another  
 growl answers her. I follow  
 what I think is Orange Tabby’s  
 growl. But she streaks from  
 behind me like a shooting star. I  
 hear a thump and then the  
 screech of Orange Tabby’s  
 battle cry.

The growling fades away something  
 runs heavily through the brush.  
 Confused, I follow it for a few paces  
 until I feel Orange Tabby rubbing  
 against my skirt. I grab her and hug  
 her.

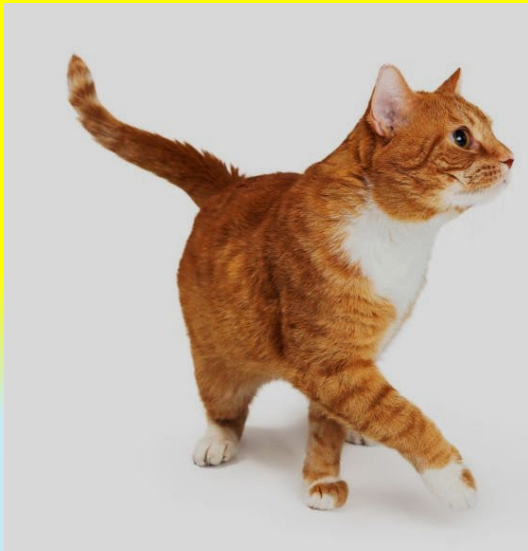
I jerkily stroke Orange Tabby’s fur.  
 “That was just a bear following us.  
 Now, can we go home?”

Orange Tabby scuttles under a maple  
 tree and I follow her. I bury my face  
 in her fur and pet her. We sink into  
 the darkness of sleep, surrounded by  
 the darkness of the woods.





The sun rising over the treetops tickles my eyelids and for a minute I think I am in our cabin feeding wood to the wood stove to make the cornmeal mush for breakfast. Orange Tabby unwinds herself from around my neck where she has been sleeping. She gives herself a tongue bath and then stands in front of me meowing a command. Meekly, I follow her through the woods. She is light and can easily pass through the brush and saplings



I am heavier and have to push them aside. I fight valiantly, but after a time, I just want to sit on a log and rest.

Orange Tabby disagrees. She rubs against my legs until I get up and stumble along behind her. We travel through the woods that I am convinced have no end like the love that Reverend Simpson says that God has for us. Then I see water gleaming through the trees. Pushing the bushes aside, I run to Conneaut Creek.

But this isn't Conneaut Creek! It is just a tiny thin stream, thin as my hope of getting home. I sink down in a heap of disappointment and cover my face with my cape. The voice of my sweetheart floats over the shoulder of my torn cape and mends it with threads of hope. "Sally Montgomery! Get up and act like yourself."



I peer through a large tear in the cape. Orange Tabby is staring at something on the other side of the tiny stream. Or someone! I know who that someone is, but I won't say the words out loud. Instead, I jump up, snatch my cape, and run down the bank of the tiny stream. Thomas Bentley runs across from me, keeping perfect pace. "Sally Montgomery, get up and act like yourself!"





I hear my sister Rachel's voice. "Get your feet moving Sally!" I get my feet moving faster.

Realizing that he has made no inroads with me, Thomas turns to Orange Tabby. "Come here, Orange Tabby," he croons to her. That traitorous cat jumps across the stream, landing on his shoulder. She sits there smirking at me and purring. I keep running, but Thomas still keeps pace with me even with a cat on his shoulder. Finally, I can run no more. I sink under a maple tree, gasping for breath.



Thomas easily catches up with me. He pulls me to my feet. I ignore the touch of his hands, but they feel like a warm blanket.

"Come in and we will have a cup of tea." Orange Tabby runs ahead of us. "Where are we going, Thomas?"

My cabin is just around the corner." He puts a guiding arm around me.

His cabin sits in a sheltered nook but high enough from the stream to keep the water from invading it.



Before I know it, I am sitting in a rocker in front of a warm fire sipping a cup of tea. He sits on a stool in front of me. I remember that I had helped his mother embroider the daisies on it.

Thomas tucks a blanket around me. "Now, we will talk," he says.

I glare at him. "Now, we will not talk," I say to myself. Orange Tabby knows what I am thinking. She growls at me. I growl back.

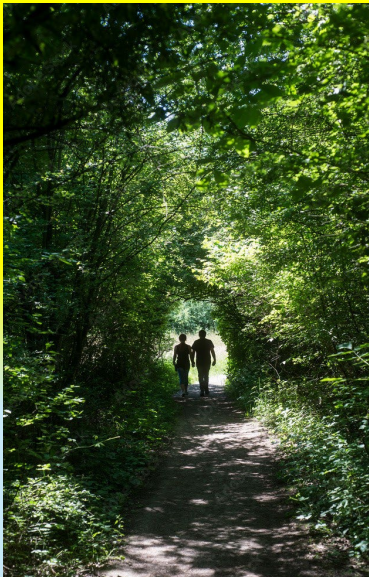
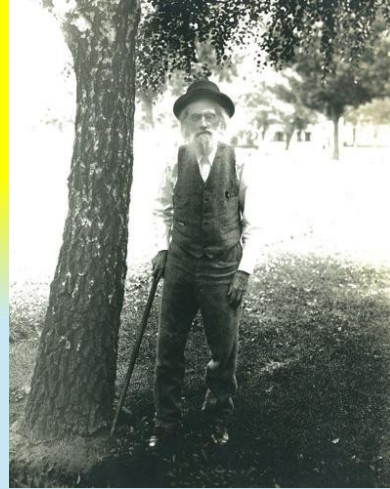


"Everyone has been looking for you," Thomas says. "I am so glad you are safe. Rest for a while, and then I will take you home."

I do not get a smidgen of rest. Besides Orange Tabby, my thoughts also betray me. They tell me I am already home. I want to rise from my comfortable rocker and cook some corn bread and venison for Thomas. On the long winter evenings with snow covering the windows, I will rock in front of the fire, reading or knitting while Thomas sits polishing his boots with bear oil.



I run out of the cabin and whirl around not sure about which direction to take. Then, I remember. Lake Erie is north. I have to run north. I run north, with Thomas and Orange Tabby close behind. I am ready to stop running and sit on the nearest log when I hear father's shouting, "Sally!"

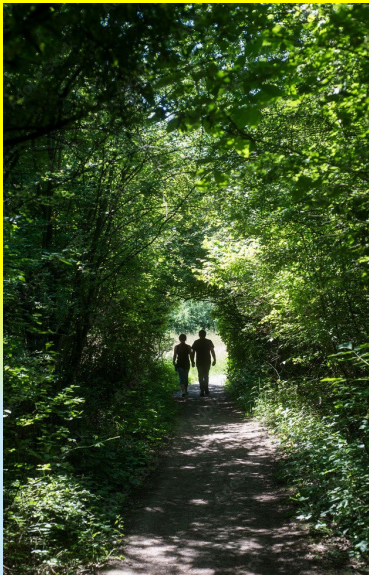


I help Mother prepare a knapsack lunch for us to take on our wedding journey. Thomas and I have to walk thirty miles through the woods to Harpersfield so that Justice Avery can marry us.

"He is carrying the knapsack," I tell mother as we walk down the dirt path toward the woods. Orange Tabby starts to follow us, but I pick her up and shut her in the barn. Her paws are still sore from our overnight adventure in the woods and her meow is hoarse from screeching at the bear.

I don't answer. I just run into his arms. I peek around his elbow to make sure Thomas has followed me. Thomas smiles at father. "I found her," he said. "Now, I will have to marry her just to be sure she stays safe."

Father gives Thomas permission to marry me. I do not, at least not yet.



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Thomas and I walk along silently. I hear crows cawing and some rustlings in the thick underbrush, but I do not feel afraid, and I do not feel like running. Thomas is a steady rock beside me. Then I hear a different noise. A snuffling and growling noise that grows louder as we walk deeper into the woods.

I break the silence. "I know that noise."

"I do too." Thomas takes his gun out of the crook of his arm.

"Wait before you fire. Spare this bear," I tell him.



"Why this bear?" Thomas asked.

"This bear snuffles like the one that led us to your cabin. I owe him a thank you."

I screech like Orange Tabby and the snuffling stops. I hear the sound of a heavy body crashing through the underbrush.

Thomas laughs. "You scared that bear away with your screeching. Where did you ever learn how to do that?"

"You will soon enough find out since Orange Tabby is going to live with us."



“Then you will marry me, and I am not taking this 30 mile walk just to walk?”

Would Amanda have said yes to Lord Malcomb’s proposal?

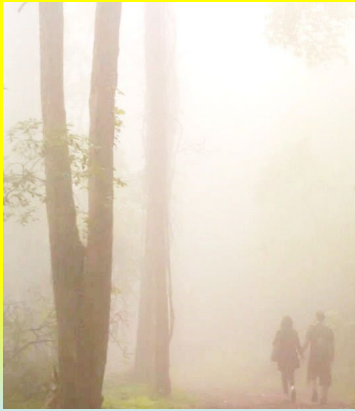
“I’ll think about it,” I said. “Sweetheart, “ I add under my breath.

We spend our honeymoon trip walking back thirty miles to the cabin Thomas built in the Conneaut woods. We talk about partners instead of the little wife. We talk about women voting sometime in the future and Thomas says he thinks it a good idea.

We finally arrive weary and footsore, back at the cabin in the woods. I run ahead and throw open the door. “Welcome home, sweetheart.”

I never did let Thomas carry me over the doorstep! We walked in together.





*From "Memorial to the Pioneer Women of the Western Reserve," Part IV, Mrs. Gertrude Van Rensselaer Wickham, Editor [Women's Department of the Cleveland Centennial Commission, February, 1897], p.p. 917-920.*

This fictional story is based on the true Conneaut story of Anna Montgomery and Aaron Wright, early Conneaut pioneers who were married in 1800. They had to walk through dense woods the thirty miles from Conneaut to Harpersfield for the Justice of the Peace to marry them. There was no Justice of the Peace in Conneaut. They also had to walk the thirty miles back to Conneaut through the same woods.

Reverend Simpson is based on Reverend Joseph Badge, a pioneer minister who worked with the Native Americans in what later became Ashtabula County.

## Jeff Morrell Took Us to the Movies, February 2022

In February 2022, when the Conneaut Area Historical Society sponsored a program called Time Travel Tuesday Jeff Morrell presented a program about Conneaut Movie Theaters and the movies they showed at the Conneaut Library.

On a Wednesday in mid-February 2025, he presented an encore program at the David Cummins Octagon House, this time under the event's new title, Hump Day History Wednesday.

Click on the PDF to view his original program.

[Jeff Morrell Took Us to the Movies](#)

Beth Anthony, who was the woman who talked about The Bridge on the River Kwi during the first program, also attended his second movie presentation and enjoyed it just as much. Jeff focused more exclusively on the Le Grande Theater in his second presentation and it was just as interesting the second time around.



# Patron's Pages

## Join Our Patrons Program

The Conneaut Area Historical Museum is excited to announce a new Merchant Patron program which is available to any local business who desires to help our museum to function and improve. For \$50 per year (January to December, renewable every year) we will include your business name and phone number in the publications the museum produces, including a monthly newsletter, any future books the museum produces, and our website. If interested, send your donation of \$50.00 to P.O. Box 563, Conneaut, Ohio 44030. We will include you in our list of great merchants and businesses in this area.

*American Legion Post 151*

*162 Broad Street*

*Conneaut, Ohio*

*440-593-2205*

*Crafty Shanty 153 Park  
Avenue Conneaut, Ohio  
44030*

*Biscotti's Restaurant  
186 Park Avenue*

*Conneaut, Ohio  
44030*

*440-593-6766*

*Leslie & Donald O'Bell*

*2 Bretenahl Place*

*Bretenahl, Ohio 44108*

*Kathi's Golden  
Retrievers of Albion*

*11790 Penside Road  
Albion, PA 16401*

*Maureen Mo Tanner*

*930 Main Street*

*Conneaut, Ohio 44030*

*Angela's Café*

*268 Lake Road*

*Conneaut, Ohio 44030*

*440-593-6060*

*Chris Brecht State Farm  
Insurance Agency 216  
Main Street Suite B  
Conneaut, Ohio 44030  
440-593-1191*

*Gerdes Pharmacy  
245 Main Street  
Conneaut, Ohio  
440-593-2578*

*Lake Erie Auto West  
Main Road Conneaut,  
Ohio 44030*

*Conneaut Dairy  
Queen 1009 Main  
Street Conneaut,  
Ohio 440-593-  
2765*

*Conneaut Creek  
Veterinary Clinic West  
Main Street  
Conneaut, Ohio  
44030*

*Lynn Armington  
48 Ranch Road  
Willoughby,  
Ohio 44094*

*Marcy Funeral  
Home 208 Liberty  
Street Conneaut,  
Ohio 44030*

*Susanne Trigg Canfield, OH*

*Normal for Norway is a culture shock  
humor podcast where in each episode two  
foreigners living in Oslo discuss one weird  
thing about Norway. Listen to Normal for  
Norway wherever you get your podcasts!*

## Membership Application



The dues period runs from January through December.

Single \$15.00\_\_\_\_\_

Couple \$20.00\_\_\_\_\_

Family \$25.00\_\_\_\_\_

Patron \$50.00\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_Address\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_State\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_Zip Code\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number\_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to volunteer at the Museum or at the Octagon House during the summer months or help us with winter projects?

The Conneaut Area Historical Museum is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon until 5 p.m., starting on Memorial Day and ending on Labor Day.

The David Cummins Octagon House is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day from noon until 5 p.m. We also plan on keeping the Octagon House open during the winter for special programs and tours. What day or time is best for you?

Thank you for your membership.

P.O. Box 563. Conneaut, Ohio 44030