



The Hay Garden features an antique hand pump that was donated by Ed and Kathy Creighton. The original pump was just outside the side door of the mansion. The Hay Garden is named after John Hay, the owner of the mansion in 1831. John was the father of Mary Ann Hay, first wife of David Huston. John, who was also David's first cousin, sold the property to David in 1849. David's second wife was Elizabeth Mack, daughter of Erastus Mack, for whom Mack Road is named. In 1858, David and Elizabeth Huston added the Greek revival section to the rear, with a sleeping porch, at a cost of \$1000. (Photo by Scott Fowler)

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ffhistoricalsociety@gmail.com



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Cornerstones

Building on the Past, Present and Future of the City of Fairfield and Fairfield Township

Summer 2018

Fairfield Historical Society

Vol. 5 Issue 2

Four Seasons Garden Club Features Christmas Preview Aug. 4

The Four Seasons Garden Club is bringing Christmas to the Elisha Morgan Mansion early this year as part of the home is transformed into an 1800's holiday. Volunteers will also be hosting tours of the Heritage Gardens.



Christmas at the Mansion will come early this year as the living room is dressed up for the vintage holidays.



SPECIAL EDITION >>>

10th Annual Sunbonnet Heritage Days Aug. 4 and 7



The Fairfield Historical Society and the Four Seasons Garden Club combine their talent to present exhibits and events focusing on life as it was in the 1800's and early 1900's on **Saturday, Aug. 4 from 11am-6pm** at the Elisha Morgan Mansion at Gilbert Park. Admission is free or one non-perishable food item to be donated to the Fairfield Food Pantry. Saturday's events include:

- An 1869 style baseball game with Fairfield's own Blackbottom 9 beginning at 1pm. Friends of Elisha Morgan will provide complimentary hot dogs and drinks during the game.
- Tours of the Elisha Morgan Mansion and Heritage Gardens.
- Local crafts people, such as Uniquely Knotted, Foxmoon Jewelry and the Butler County Soil & Water District.
- Music will be provided by the Cincinnati Dulcimer Society from 2-4pm.
- Face painting by Emma will be available for children.
- Sacred Heart church will be selling their infamous Fairfield city landmark Christmas ornaments.
- 1800's inactive schoolhouse with Ann Brabbs.
- Fairfield Independent School exhibit.
- 1800's farm with Fairfield farmer and historian Pete Groh.
- Special Fairfield historical exhibits by Fairfield Historical Society Archivist Bob Pendergrass.
- Enter our free drawing for one of 10 U.S. Buffalo nickels in 24k gold plating. Just fill out our entry form inside the Elisha Morgan Mansion. There is a limit of one entry per person and you have to be at least 18 years old to enter.

Sunbonnet Heritage Days continues on Tuesday, Aug. 7 at the general meeting of the Fairfield Historical Society. The meeting is open to the public and begins at 7pm. Our featured speaker will be former Fairfield City Council member Howard Dirksen who will speak about the Elisha Morgan Mansion and its rich history.

thank you for your support >>>

Robert D. Webster
Director

3080 Homeward Way
Fairfield, Ohio 45014

(513) 942-3293
(513) 942-5057 Fax



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FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL

DEBBIE PENNINGTON
Councilmember
Third Ward

Cell: 513.910.3258
Office: 513.867.5383
Fax: 513.867.5329
dpennington@fairfield-city.org

5350 Pleasant Avenue
Fairfield, Ohio 45014



FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL

STEVE MILLER
Mayor

Office: 513.867-5383
Home: 513.829-8739
Fax: 513.867-5329

5350 Pleasant Avenue
Fairfield, Ohio 45014
smiller@fairfieldoh.gov



CITY OF FAIRFIELD

CRAIG W. KELLER
Vice Mayor

Office: 513/867-5383
Home: 513/714-4174
Fax: 513/867-5329

5350 Pleasant Avenue
Fairfield, OH 45014
Email: ckeller@fairfield-city.org

dedication saved the elisha morgan mansion >>>

Gilbert House is suitable for museum

Architectural report good news to citizens group

BY IRENE WRIGHT
The Cincinnati Enquirer

A 150-year-old Fairfield mansion kept shedding bricks and boards while debate raged for years about its future, but June will bring answers on whether the building can be restored as a museum.

A preliminary architectural report last month indicated that Gilbert House, recently renamed Elijah Morgan Manor House, could be converted to a museum, said Michael J. Sage, chairman of Fairfield Museum Advisory Board.

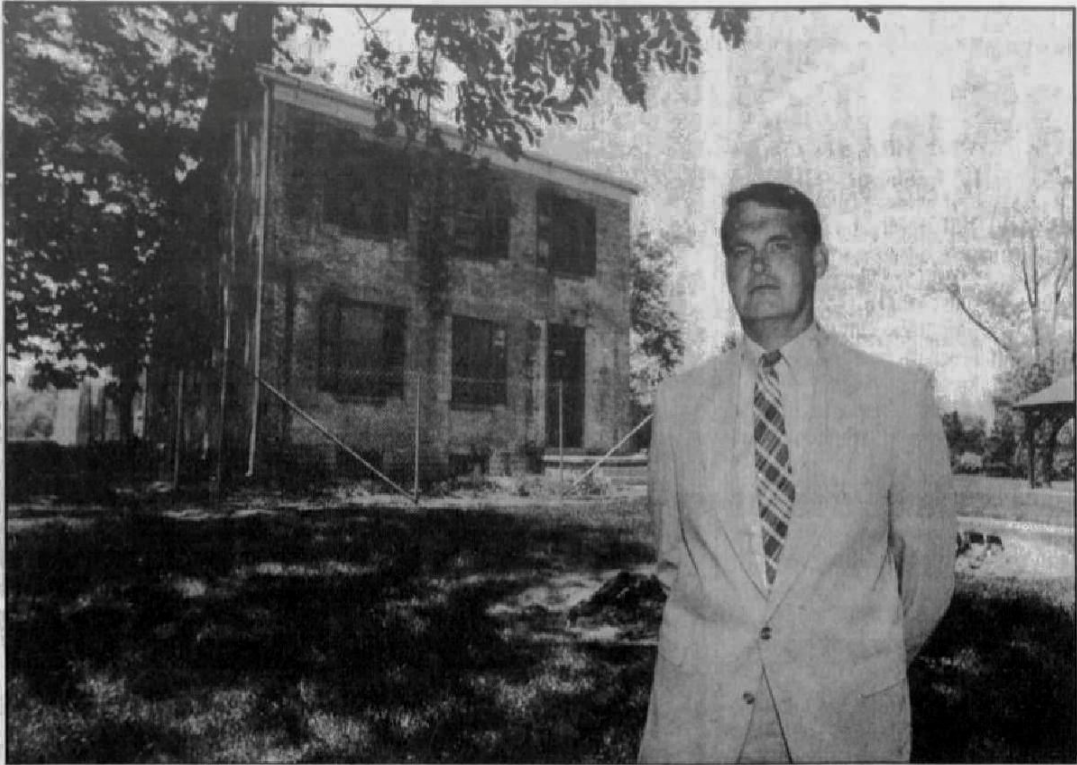
Cost is the next major factor. Sage said a report is expected this month from the architect, Bruce Goetzman, a University of Cincinnati associate professor of architecture.

A citizens group raised \$5,000 in private donations to hire Goetzman and historical consultant Ann Antenen. Antenen is trying to get the Elijah Morgan Manor House, the second-oldest residence in Fairfield, placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Antenen, who is president of Citizens for Historic Preservation Inc. in Hamilton, said the building could qualify because of its age and style.

But it couldn't qualify on the basis of Elijah Morgan's history. Little is known about him.

"He (Morgan) bought the prop-



Michael J. Sage, chairman of Fairfield Museum Advisory Board, at the Gilbert House.

erty in 1817 and died in 1827," Antenen said. "He was married before and had children, and in 1820 married a widow. The census showed them living at the site in 1820."

The manor house was built with Flemish bond, an expensive brickwork, and had a wide entrance hall and elegant features at a time when most people in rural Butler County lived in log cabins.

The museum advisory board plans to ask Fairfield City Council soon for \$5,000, which could be matched by federal funds, to tell people about the area's historic highlights, Sage said.

The board was created in December to gauge public support for a museum. The manor house is one of several options.

"We are looking at other structures to see if they available, more

economical and equally viable as a museum," Sage said.

Museum board member Robert F. Wessel said a recent park board opinion poll done by Indiana University indicated a dire lack of cultural activities in Fairfield.

"I think in view of the poll, council would be wise to spend the \$5,000 to educate citizens and explain the importance of history," he said.

Paranormal Activities Haunt the Elisha Morgan Mansion

The Elisha Morgan Mansion was the focus of paranormal activity when a research team from the Tri-State Ohio Paranormal Society (TriOPS) held tours in October 2012 and 2013 of the mansion and made a fee-only presentation of their study results. The team spent the night in the mansion in January 2012 along with officials from F&F Paranormal using state-of-the-art detecting equipment. TriOPS is a local and established paranormal investigation team announced their findings of possible unseen forces at the Elisha Morgan Mansion. The organization combines scientific equipment and procedures with old world theories and spirituality to collect paranormal evidence.



Elisha Morgan Mansion as it stood in 1995. (Fairfield Historical Society Archives)

200th Anniversary Celebration

The Elisha Morgan Mansion, built in 1817, is a Flemish Bond brick farm mansion that stands as a treasured historic landmark in the City of Fairfield. It was awarded an Ohio Historical Marker in 2000 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Morgan-Hueston House, one of the oldest homes in Butler County. Yet, in 1980, the home was slated for demolition. The Friends of Elisha Morgan Mansion, formed in 1984, were instrumental in the drive to save the home. With funding from grants, individual contributions and activities, the home was restored and formally dedicated in 1998 for public use.



In the summer of 2017, the Fairfield Parks & Recreation Department and the Friends of Elisha Morgan partnered to celebrate the 200th anniversary and the contributions of past residents to the history of the Mansion.

As outlined in the 2014 Needs Assessment, Fairfield residents listed the goal of "preserving what we have" as one of their major concerns. The 200th Anniversary event served to bring the home's historical significance into focus. The Elisha Morgan Mansion stands as a reminder of the formative years of the Fairfield area. From the 19th century settlers in Butler County, who took advantage of the Symmes Purchase, to the gentlemen farmers of the Civil War era, and from the vintners of the Ohio wine manufacturers of what was Rose Hill, to the social circles that made up the small communities that were then known as Stockton Station and Fair Play, the Elisha Morgan Mansion was the home for many of the families that made Fairfield a great place to live, work and play.

4 EXTRA/Central THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER Thursday, August 11, 1994

Mansion restoration still short of funding

Historical group counting on public

BY IRENE WRIGHT
The Cincinnati Enquirer

FAIRFIELD — Helen Wessel says the 177-year-old Elisha Morgan farmhouse on Ross Road can provide a memorable history lesson to people who become involved in its restoration.

While renovation plans have been on hold, the building continues to deteriorate. That will change soon, when new renovation bids are received that can be covered with an existing \$120,000 grant. Still, public support will be increasingly important, said Wessel, who is involved in the restoration effort.

Donations or offers of support can be sent to Elisha Morgan Farm Mansion Inc., 315 Society Bank Building, Hamilton, Ohio, 45011.

Vacant since 1981, the two-story brick mansion was built with a wide entrance hall, unusual mantels and elegant features at a time when most people in Butler County lived in log cabins.

"Abraham Lincoln was only 8 years old, and our fifth United States president, James Monroe, was inaugurated the year the mansion was built," said Wessel, wife of former Fairfield mayor, Robert Wessel, who heads the mansion's restoration committee.

"The Elisha Morgan Mansion is a marvelous opportunity to learn, appreciate and dream about this country," said Wessel, a former teacher in the Hamilton school system. "There also is mystery —



Helen Wessel says that the old Elisha Morgan Farm Mansion will be able to pay back its benefactors by providing valuable lessons in local history.

how and why did (Elisha Morgan) come here?"

Efforts to save the farm house began in 1984. The city of Fairfield, which bought it in 1979, was ready to tear it down. Residents complained that the deteriorated home marred the landscape of the adjoining Gilbert Farms Park.

Fairfield officials earlier this year approved spending \$120,000 of the city's \$135,000 community development block grant to improve the mansion's exterior.

Bids opened May 16 came in at about \$40,000 over what the city had allocated, said Timothy Bachman, Fairfield planning director.

"We have not rebid," Bachman said. "The committee restoring the mansion were a redesign of the project, so it can be rebid within the available funds."

New bids could be sought soon, said Robert Wessel, an attorney and president of the nonprofit Elisha Morgan Farm House Inc.

"I talked to the architect, Bruce Goetzman," he said. "We tried to cut back on some of the items. We hope to have construction under way before the summer is over."

Little is known about Elisha Morgan, Helen Wessel said, other than he was a Welsh settler who bought 48.6 acres in 1817 and married widow Elizabeth LaBoiteux three years later. They had six children.

At Morgan's death in 1827, an auction left the widow the mansion and 20 acres. Additions to the mansion were constructed by other owners until 1929.

"We know little about the peo-

ple, but the mansion is telling us the story of this land," she Wessel said. "It gets so close to basic America."

Wessel said Ohio homes built before 1830 are rare. Of those remaining, few are unaltered or have reliable documentation.

When the mansion is restored, the structure will not be loaded with memorabilia. It will be furnished in keeping with its history and used by the public for meetings and events.

Wessel said if Fairfield's 37,000-plus residents would make a donation to the restoration, they would become more interested in the mansion and enjoy it more.

"It's a rare opportunity for all of us to participate and learn history in an unusual way," Wessel said.



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Cornerstones is printed by



6600 Dixie Highway, Suite H
Fairfield, Ohio 45014
(513) 860-3435

