

Restoration of Amherst's Old Spring Stone Arch

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Efforts to clean-up, maintain, and conserve Amherst's Historic Old Spring and surrounding site have been ongoing, albeit interrupted from time to time, since just after Amherst was founded. The naturally flowing unconfined aquifer seep spring is a major reason for the location of downtown Amherst – one that Josiah Harris clearly used when organizing and laying out the original Town Center. He chose this spot in 1818 for the Town Center's location; Jacob Shupe and his family had already settled about a mile and a half northward, also along Bever Creek in 1811, establishing a saw and gristmill in that location.

Restoration and maintenance efforts by myself, a local historian and lifelong Amherst resident and current resident of Amherst's Historic Shupe Homestead, have been ongoing since 2013. Initial efforts included general cleanup; assessing the Old Spring basin; cleaning out the Old Spring basin drain (with regular maintenance of it); and rebuilding a large portion of the deteriorated stone basin. The large sheet metal birdfeeder has also been cleaned and repainted at least three times.

On April 7, 2023, I met with master artisan and stone restoration expert Ben Criss at the site, along with my father, Bill Nahorn, and long-time Amherst resident Mark Haff. The topic of this meeting was to discuss restoration of the upper arch, along Milan Avenue. Comparing the arch along Milan Avenue to historical photographs of it, one may easily note that it had somewhat shrunken in size, and deterioration had occurred. Furthermore, the metal "OLD SPRING" sign had been long-missing from its place of honor, once having been suspended from underneath the arch.

The large arch, a very unique conglomerate of stone, tile, and mortar, at the Milan Avenue entrance to the Old Spring was created in the 1930s, at the direction of August Nabakowski, who had a roofing and sheet metal business located directly across the street from the Old Spring site. It was built as a compliment to the Spring's cobblestone backdrop, constructed about 1914, for Amherst's Old Home Week community pride celebration. The arch is quite an artistic feat and certainly unique to our Old Spring here in Amherst. Like the Spring itself, the stone structure flows from Milan Avenue, down the steps, directing the visitor to the Old Spring basin. A very nice design for the site.

My father and I spent the next two weeks working to stabilize and restore portions of the arch that had deteriorated (noteworthy, portions of the base and sides); tuck-point other areas; replace individual rocks that had gone missing; recreate a small "flowing stone" feature on the right side; jack back into place and stabilize the back wall; and finally restore, paint, and rehang the metal "OLD SPRING" sign in its rightful place, where it once again hangs from the arch. I also prepared and repainted the upper sheet metal bird feeder.

Lastly, we installed a solar light in the space where a hard-wired light had once been located, to illuminate the Old Spring metal sign, from the underside of the arch.

Further maintenance will always be necessary of this site and its features. As a local historian and lifelong Amherst resident, I wanted to be sure that our Old Spring site and associated features, such as the arch, are properly maintained and will continue to be a part of our community for years to come. My hope is that we all will continue to be able to visit and enjoy the historic Old Spring site. Let us take the opportunity to recognize Amherst's Historic Old

Spring and its significance to our community, especially during this time of Lorain County's bicentennial (created 1822; organized 1824).

A few before and after views:

