



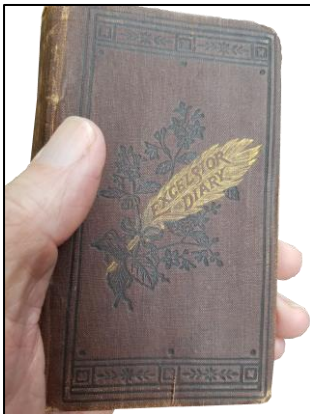
Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown



by Mark Myers

We first saw it on eBay, with a price tag that made us wince. It was risky, but how often do we get a chance to see what life was like in the ‘Burg in the 1890s?

To avoid draining the treasury, several of us pooled our resources and purchased the Diary of Nettie Brown.



We received a small book, shirt pocket-size, the binding still intact, and gold leaf on the edges still shining brightly. Once we opened the diary, however, we noticed that Nettie had good and bad ink days, even though, ironically, she occasionally wrote in pencil and these pages are still perfectly legible.

Then, her handwriting. Her capital C’s look like a buggy spring; her capital T’ looks like a 9; and -/o is the symbol for the word “to.” Occasionally she resorts to spelling phonetically: awful becomes “offul.” Service is “servis.” And she seldom uses periods.

Eye-fatigue set in quickly, as I had to balance a magnifying glass, my notebook, pen, and the light, often moving to my deck to get some help from the sun. And there was tension lest I crease a corner, or worse, spill my coffee on these precious 129-year-old pages.

I needed a couple of breaks, like a time when there would be practically nothing else to do, with few outside distractions, like during a pandemic lockdown.

And another break: I discovered that Richard Barrett, one of the original “investors,” had scanned the entire diary onto a disk, and now I could sit comfortably in front of my computer, zip back and forth, enlarge the text at will, with no concern about overhead lighting or spilling anything.

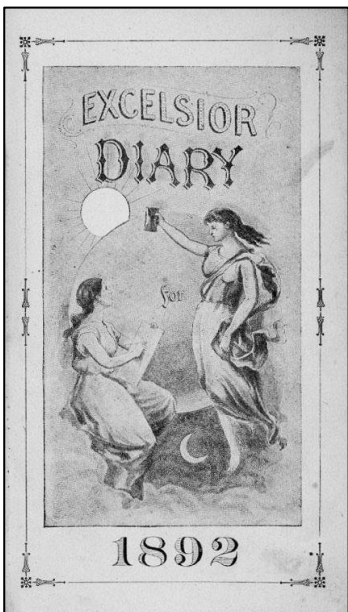
I quickly discovered that Nettie is very consistent, never missing a day. Oh, there were slow news days, when she makes her words bigger and her margins wider. She wrote effortlessly because she used a template: At the top of each page she

(continued on page 02)

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puts the weather. Then (except Sunday) she starts off with something like, "I spent all day in the store." And the last line is usually always: "We closed at 9½ o'clock tonight, and I went home, so tired that I went to bed early."

Between the template marks, though, we learn a lot. The store was the center of her life. She seems to be the manager, with her sisters helping out occasionally. She was a seamstress in the store which probably was on her family's property.



Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown

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She did alterations and sewed dresses, "comforts," "tidies," "waists" and other types of apparel and household coverings. In addition, the store sold shoes, cigars, and groceries. Her mother sold butter; thus, they may have lived on a small farm with at least one cow and a few chickens for eggs to sell.

We can't discern exactly where she lived, but she refers to walking home through the quarry and the cemetery next to it; she makes note of a relative walking from the train station in Blacklick to her home, so I believe that she lived somewhere on what we call Waggoner Road.

We know how old she is; for, on January 17th she writes, "Today is a day long to be remembered. It is my birthday, and I am 22 years old."

Taylor was on her mind constantly. She called him "my man," "my hubby," "my best fellow," and "my boy," among other endearments. She looked forward to getting mail from him and spending her annual vacation with him in Ashville, about twenty miles away.

She lived with her mother, father, sisters Belle and May, and brother Glen, and helped out with the housework: filling oil lamps, washing clothes and carpets, moving the stove around, ironing, and stoking the fireplace.

Her father was an itinerant preacher. He traveled by his own buggy, a "hack" (horse taxi), or the Blacklick, Brice, or Pickerington trains. The Brown family would hop from church to church (United Presbyterian, Methodist Episcopal, and Universalist). On Sundays



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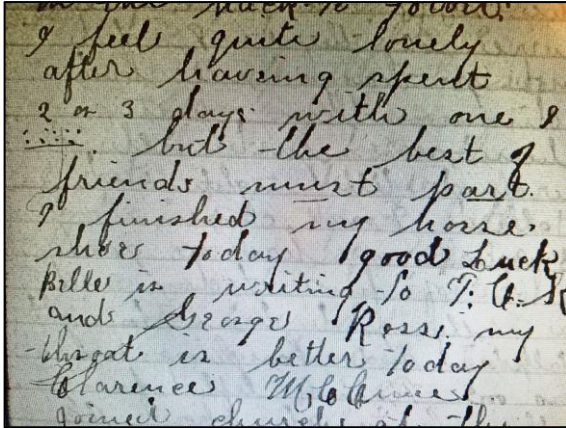
she went to Sabbath School in the morning, and preaching later in the day, to different churches, depending on what the service was like (Nettie did not like long-winded preachers.) There were

Also, prayer meetings on Wednesday nights. They did not “belong” to one church as we do today.

Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown



by Mark Myers



Chronicles the leap-year festivities, when young ladies wrote flirtatious letters to eligible men around town, inviting them to a picnic; and the encampment of a caravan of Indians, selling their famous braided moccasins, and pulling teeth at a cut-rate price, before moving on to another city. It was the year Seymoure Hickman’s horse kicked him so hard that Seymoure expired, and his funeral was so crowded Nettie and her folks could not get a seat in the Methodist Episcopal Church (still standing on Main Street, as an office building). The sale of the Hickman horses, several weeks later, was also a major event that year.

On the state and national scene, she mentions McKinley becoming Governor of Ohio, and Grover Cleveland becoming President. It was also the 400th anniversary of Columbus discovering America, which, She relates, Reynoldsburg celebrated on October 21, instead of with the rest of the country on October 12.

And she doesn’t hesitate to report on the seamy side of town: the Magistrate busy with slanderers, people running into buggies, the drunk and disorderlies, whom he put in the “Little Red House” overnight, and the thieves, including one well-known thief who would always skip out of town before the Constable could catch him.

Nettie relates that she suffered from many ailments: “the sick headache,” “the



**May Brown
1892**

(continued on page 04)

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palsy,” “the grippe,” “the foot ache,” as she called them. Nevertheless, she seldom stayed in bed. She medicated with quinine and rose to finish her work, like the time she had terrible pain from two pulled teeth, but still managed to get the blackberry preserves canned.

Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown

by Mark Myers



Her life was not all work, however. She liked to go on picnics, have friends over to visit and stay overnight, go to county fairs, water the mules and take rides on



them; go to oyster dinners in Mason Hall (atop what was later to become Connell's Hardware, now Vick's Pizza), go to lectures, debates, and "The Literary," and participate in carpet-rag sewing bees. She also liked to play board games, her favorite being "Around the World with Nellie Bly." Like Monopoly, you roll the dice, and move forward or backward. She attended a debate in Chapel Hall at the high school: "Resolved that 'the power of granting women the privilege of voting for school direction should become a law.' The negative side beat." Nettie adds no

(continued from page 04)

further comment, as is often her way.

At times, though, she does share her innermost feelings. She uses the word “scared” and writes often of spirits and ghosts, and she “hears things” at night. She can show disappointment, when Taylor doesn’t show up as he promised for May’s graduation, and then deep concern, when he writes that he had to stay home because he was in an accident. On March 14, she says: “I feel quite lonely after

having spent 2 or 3 days with one I ... (she uses dots to shape a 3-letter, abbreviated word beginning with L and ending with V), but the best of friends must part.” Then on the next day, “(Our neighbor) had an increase in her family last night, of a girl baby. She has been married 6 months and 4 days. How is that?” On November 9: “I guess Cleveland is going to be President. I expect to lose \$5.00 on a bet. This has been a very disagreeable day.” She is hurt when someone plays a prank on her or gets mad at her, and she laments, “I did not get a valentine today, did you?”

But Nettie is mostly positive, reliving her joy at being gifted with a lilac perfumed handkerchief, for example; and boasting about the first time she led the Young People’s Meeting. At times she muses out loud, as on her birthday, “I wonder where I’ll be next year on this day?” On January 14, “Took a sleigh ride with Carrie and Anna tonight, around the Square. Had a jolly good time, a pleasantly beautiful evening for sleighing, nice moon-light, and very cold. Bye Bye to All.”

She can lapse into jaw-droppers also: “I was weighed this evening. Weigh 112 lb. I am ‘offul’ fat.” She referred to her physical appearance only one other time, when she revealed, “For a change, I got my bangs curled.” She attended a play in Mason Hall where “I left before they cut his head off.” “Grandma Dickerson died yesterday. She had 27 gallstones.” On July 26: I am so warm I can hardly survive.” And then, on December 26: “I could not keep my bottom warm, haha.” At one point she and some of her single friends were discussing what married life must be like. Two days later, she states, “I am reading a splendid story--The Deserted Wife.” She once attended the Opera in downtown Columbus. A week later, the opera house burned down, the smoke visible from Reynoldsburg. Another time, when visitors were in the next room chatting-- “They didn’t tell no secrets because we could hear haha.” On October 19, “I fell out of bed about

Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown



by Mark Myers



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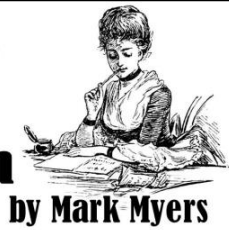
RTHS Courier JULY 2021-05

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about 2:00 in the morning and hurt myself pretty bad.”

After the diary comes an appendix of 34 pages, wherein, for the next thirty years Nettie inserted births, deaths, marriages, addresses, tidbits about her family, store sales and sewing expenses, listed all May’s classmates in her graduation class, and dutifully recorded the seven monthly payments for her new \$21.00 bed. Finally, this recipe appears, with a fittingly appropriate name, given the past year:

Diary of the Unsinkable Nettie Brown



by Mark Myers



Hard Times Cake
3/4 cup of butter
1 cup of sugar
1 cup of molasses
1 cup of coffee (brewed)
4 cups of flour
1/2 tsp of nutmeg
1/2 tsp cloves
1 teaspoon of (baking) soda
-dissolve soda in coffee
2 cups of raisins
Frosting:
1 cup granulated sugar
1/3 cup thick cream/ milk

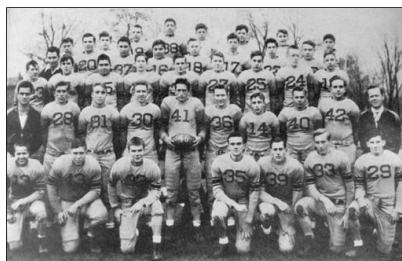


I wanted to try it. I cut her ingredients in half to fit my 8x8 baking dish. I baked it at 325 degrees for about half an hour, covering with tin foil for the first fifteen minutes and was finished when the center firmed and passed the “toothpick test.”

For the frosting: I heated the sugar and cream until just boiling, then put it in the freezer until it hardened a bit. Nettie promises the frosting “won’t crack.” It was the first time I’ve ever used molasses and it turned out to be a great coffee cake: sweet and rich; and every morning for a week, I felt close to Nettie, tasting what she tasted so long ago, with my morning coffee. Next time, though, I’ll reduce the sugar, add nuts, cut the cake into squares and freeze for later on.

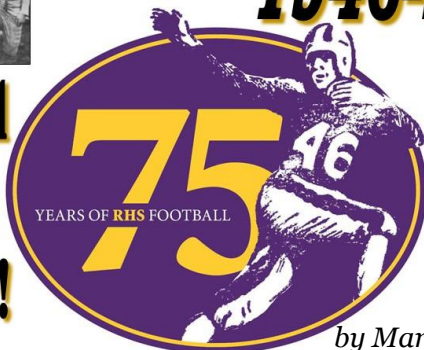
The real insight into Nettie’s character, though, comes during the last week of 1892-- the preparations for Christmas and New Year’s, getting their tree, decorating both the house and the store, exchanging gifts. Taylor arrives for Christmas and presents Nettie with a sparkling set of earrings. He stays a couple of days, then goes back to Ashville. Nettie keeps busy making dresses for both May and herself for an upcoming special occasion. But, she gets sick on December 30 with a sore throat and fever, while continuing to work feverishly on the dresses, so that on December 31, the last day in her diary, she can triumphantly declare:

“Taylor came this evening on the hack, the last trip as my Lover. Next time he will be my husband. We will be married tomorrow at 12 o’clock. Good Bye!”



75TH ANNIVERSARY 1946-2021

**September 17, 2021
Celebration at the
RHS Football Game!**



**FOOTBALL
HELMET
DECAL**

by Mary Turner Stoots

Mark your calendars!

Especially our local RTHS members!

At the September 17th RHS Football game, there will be a ceremony commemorating the 75th anniversary of the very first home game that took place on September 27th, 1946, against the Pataskala team.

You are ALL Invited!

Several RTHS members were on that team! William Butts, Ray Karnes, and Jack Friedlander.

Team members Marsh Mobberly and Melvin Babbert still live locally. They aren't RTHS members, but we will invite them to join us because they need to be part of this!

There were a lot more people involved than just the football team. The only Varsity Cheerleader we could locate can't make it, but Gwen (Slack) Thabet was happy to hear from us.

Marjorie (McCall) Strouse lives in Ashland, Ohio. She was on the Fall Festival Homecoming Court.

Grace (Graham) Tanner is a member,

and she was in the Marching Band. Nancy (Gorey) Sigman marched with Grace as well, so I will be sending Nancy, and other non-members (that we can find), a special invitation to the football game.

These are the names of folks I could locate from the yearbook. My Mom was in the Marching Band.

The current football team will all have decals (pictured above) on their helmets honoring the 75th Anniversary.

I will have more details in the next newsletter including the time of the game and cost to enter, so watch for those facts in our September issue.

The day following the game, is our Open House on **September 18th**. Please try to come and bring a snack. Ray Karnes is coming to town, and he will be at the game, but if you can't come to the football game, join us at the Open House from 10:00am to 2:00pm. Ray will be there, and I'm sure he would love to see you. This will be the first time he has seen the museum, and I'm sure he will be amazed.

THE COURIER

July 2021 Issue

Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

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2021 CALENDAR

JULY 2021

13 – TUE – Board Meeting, 7:00pm

17 – SAT – Open House 10:00am-2:00pm

21 – WED - Pizza Cottage Fundraiser

AUGUST 2021

12-13-14 Tomato Festival

17 – TUE – Board Meeting, 7:00pm

20 – FRI – Deadline for September Courier

21 – SAT – Open House 10:00am-2:00pm

28 – SAT – RHS Class of 1970 Alumni

Walk-Thru 10:00am-Noon

SEPTEMBER 2021

Publish September Courier

14 – TUE – Board & General Meeting

Combined, 6:30pm Family Indoor Picnic

17 – FRI – 75th Anniversary RHS 1946 Football Team

18 – SAT – Open House 10am-2pm

22 – WED – Max & Erma's Fundraiser

28 – TUE – Board Game & Card Party at the Reynoldsburg Senior Center 5:30pm to 8:00pm

SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY

Join the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

Individual - \$20 Family - \$25 Sustaining - \$30 Contributing - \$50 Life Membership - \$300

Name _____

Additional Names _____

Address _____

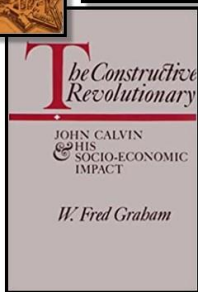
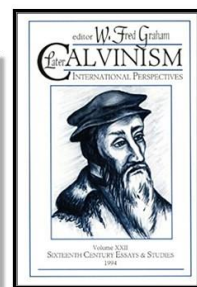
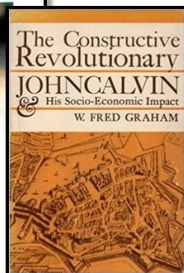
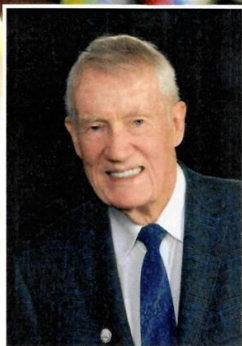
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Make Check Payable to RTHS and mail to: RTHS, Box 144, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

Invite your friends to join!



William Fred Graham (1930-2021)

was a retired Professor, a minister, an author, speaker, teacher, a husband, father, and all-around good man. He was one to be respected in every way. Fred was born in Columbus, Ohio, 31 October 1930, son of W. Fred "Ted" and Serena (Clark) Graham. He graduated from Reynoldsburg High School in 1948, where he was very active in sports. He was a lifelong baseball fan. Fred went to Tarkio College in Missouri, earning his AB in 1952, then to the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for his bachelor's degree in 1955. He received a Master of Theology degree from Louisville Presbyterian Seminary in 1958 and earned Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Iowa in 1965.

An ordained minister, he served churches in Iowa, and on an interim basis in Michigan. He was a member of Lake Michigan Presbyterian (Presbyterian Church, USA) and sang in the choir at Eastminster Presbyterian Church in East Lansing, where his ashes will be interred in the church gardens.

In 1953, he married Jean Garrett of Braddyville, Iowa, who was his companion in ministry and during his

30 years on the faculty at Michigan State University. In addition to his Jean, he is survived by four daughters: Terese "Terry" of East Lansing, Bonny of Champaign, Illinois, Marcy (Doug) of Kirksville, Missouri, and Geneva "Genny" (Chris) of Vienna, Virginia. Also surviving are six grandchildren and one great granddaughter: Marcy, Reese, and Peter Havlatka, Will Murphy, and Benjamin and Samuel Looker, and Reese's daughter April. Two sisters also survive him: Grace Tanner of Columbus, Ohio, and Lucia Sims of Lawrence, Kansas.

Much of his work as a scholar was in 16th and 17th century history. He wrote books on John Calvin, on the Reformation in Scotland, as well as the sociology of religion. Locally, he was president of the Michigan State University chapter of the Honors Society Phi Kappa Phi. In retirement he served as president of the Michigan State University Retirees Association. In a lighter vein, he wrote occasional pieces on running and religion, on church growth and decline, on ecumenical issues, and doggerel from the family Christmas cards.

(continued on page 10)



**William
“Fred”
Graham
1930-2021**

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His accomplishments include Emeritus Professor at Michigan State University in East Lansing (Instructor, 1963-64; Assistant Professor, 1964-69; Associate Professor, 1969-73; Professor, 1973-92). Fred was an ordained Presbyterian Minister; Pastor, Bethel United Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, Iowa, 1955-61. President, Sixteenth-Century Studies Society, 1988-89. His publications include *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and His Socio-Economic Impact*, 1971; *Picking Up the Pieces: A Christian Stance in a Godless Age*, 1975; (editor) *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, 1994. William Fred Graham has been listed as a noteworthy Religious studies educator by Marquis *Who's Who*. Fred earned a Grantee Travel to Collections Grant National Endowment for the Humanities, Scotland, 1985, Finance Grant American Philosophical Society, Scotland, 1987. And he was president (1987, 1991) of the Calvin Studies Society, American Society for Church History, Phi Kappa Phi.

He will be remembered as a kind man who tried to blend humor and faith in whatever he did, whether playing a game, running, singing, or teaching. He enjoyed playing golf, tennis, and softball with his friends, but was not avid at his games. He believed that nature betrayed, but did not parade, its creation and sustenance by God, and that the same God spoke to him and called him to ministry by Jesus of Nazareth.

His family is peaceful in the knowledge that he will be playing baseball with his youthful body in the hereafter on God's team.

June 13, 2021

Mary Turner Stoots ~ president,
Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

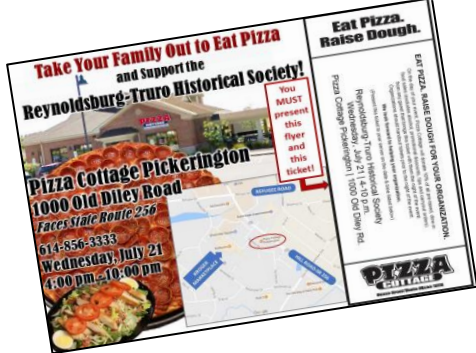
Grace Tanner sent me an email today that broke my heart. Another member of the historical society has passed away. When I first took office, Fred and I spoke a couple of times. He tolerated my questions with patience and kindness. I found out that he was a Dr. of Theology and Presbyterian minister. Most importantly, he was raised in my church, and maybe he could explain the difference between a First Presbyterian and a United Presbyterian. I never understood as a kid why we had two Presbyterian churches a block apart in this small town. Am I the only one that wondered about that?

I never got the chance to meet him, but I will miss him, and his bantering emails with Ray Karnes and Grace Tanner.

His picture is from the 1948 Reynoldsburg High School Yearbook. Under the “Campus Leaders” section, there’s a cartoon of Fred as a bookworm. He was on the Editorial Staff for the Reynolian; on the Franklin County Honor Society; Varsity R, Varsity Basketball, Baseball, Football, and Track.

By his picture it says, “*An athlete and a mighty one, who plays the game until it’s won.*” Absent-minded professor in the Senior play ... crazy crew cut ... glasses ... sister Grace ... screwball ... hobby-baseball ... friend to all.

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P.O. BOX 144, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068
STREET ADDRESS (NO MAIL): RTHS Museum, 1485 Jackson Street
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068



Local Members!

Mark your calendars for

Wednesday, July 21

We are having a
Pizza Cottage fundraiser!

Purchases apply for
DINE-IN ORDERS ONLY.

4:00pm-10:00pm

You can also download a flyer at our
website under "Calendar & Events"

www.RTHS.info



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needs some Sunshine?**

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could use a Get Well, Thinking of
You, Sympathy, or any other type of
card for some added sunshine in
their life ...

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Please call after 2:00pm

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by Cornelia M. Parkinson

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Help Support the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society while enjoying a night of fun!

BOARD GAME & CARD PARTY!



Tuesday, September 28, 2021

5:30pm – 8:00pm

Tickets are only \$5 each*

Where: Reynoldsburg Senior Center

1520 Davidson Drive

Reynoldsburg OH 43068

Your \$5 Ticket includes:

- Pizza & Side Dish Buffet
- Non-Alcoholic Drinks
- Door Prizes



Questions?

Call

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Feel Free to Participate in our Silent Auction and 50/50 Raffle!

BUY TICKETS BY MAIL: Make your check payable to RTHS and mail it NO LATER Than 09/20/21 to: RTHS, PO Box 144, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

WRITE "CARD PARTY" IN THE MEMO LINE OF YOUR CHECK!!!

** All proceeds benefit the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society, which is self-supporting and receives no funding from the City of Reynoldsburg*