



## From Circus Aerialist to Victim Rights Pioneer....

by Mary Anne White  
Senior Times Reporter

Granville, Ohio senior Sharon Cosner Sellitto drives a car with a window sticker that says, "I brake for elephants!" underscored by the Ringling

Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus logo.

It is a reminder of Sharon's time as a circus entertainer, who danced while riding atop an elephant and performed as an aerialist on a 40-foot-long rope.

After graduating from Reynoldsburg High School in 1966, she moved to California and danced in Ballet Celeste - a professional traveling ballet troupe. At age 21, Sellitto took her dancing talents to Tahoe and Reno, where she performed in a variety of shows with entertainers like Bob Hope and Johnny Cash.

Sellitto has framed a photograph sent to her by Bob Hope, inscribed with her name and thanking her for the memory of her dancing.

"He was such a nice man!"

(continued on page 2)



**Sharon Cosner**  
**1966**





## From Circus Aerialist to Victim Rights Pioneer....



(continued from page 01)

"So funny, and so much fun to work with! At one show, he arrived in a chauffeured limousine with Buddy Hackett. As he got out of the limo, Bob handed his drink to Buddy, headed in for the performance; and when he was done, he got back in the limousine, Buddy handed Bob his drink, and off they went."

The Tahoe and Reno shows would run about three months.

Between shows, Sellitto worked as a Kelly girl, taking on secretarial and odd jobs. She and a friend learned that Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus was holding auditions for performers, so they both decided to give it a try.

Several weeks had passed, and Sellitto was attending a wedding in New York when her friend called and said, "The circus called and said we're hired, but they want us to start training on Monday in Venice, Florida. What am I supposed to do?" Sellitto told her, "Pack your stuff, pack some stuff for me, put the rest on the curb, and head to

Venice. I'll drive down from here and meet you there."

Sellitto continued, "We were only in our 20s, so we didn't have much to leave on the curb, but other people could use what was left behind. The circus paid for our airfare, but I saved the money and drove down. Our trainer was the first woman to perform triple somersaults on a trapeze and she had starred with Burt Lancaster in the film *The Greatest Show on Earth*. The first day, she had us climb up the 40-foot rope, then down, then up again, then down again. The first week, my friend and I had to sit up all night clenching each

other's hands while keeping our arms outstretched so our arm and shoulder muscles wouldn't constrict and get contorted.

The circus had already left, but we were hired to replace people that hadn't worked out, and we had six weeks to learn six routines. I trained on the rope, on elephants, and the trapeze, but I never per-

formed on the trapeze in a show."

Riding the circus train was the most fun for Sellitto. The train had about 60 cars, and the cars carrying the men were separated from the show-girls' cars by the cars carrying the animals, food, costumes, and other equipment. She told *Senior Times*, "There were about eight cars that we could walk through; but it was just the most fun to sit on wooden chairs in a vestibule (open spaces between train cars) and (continued on page 03)



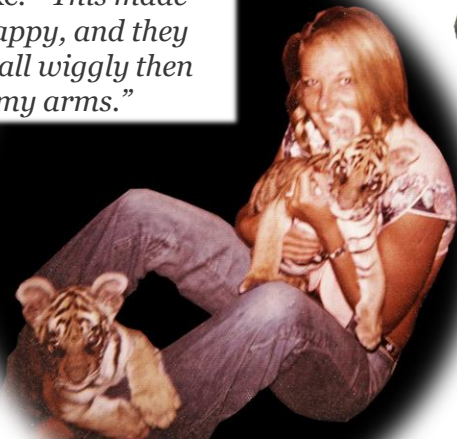
(continued from page 02)

*watch the world go by while drinking coffee or a beer, depending on the time of day. Riding the train, you would see things no car would ever see."*

When the circus train arrived in town, it took all 200 people on the train, working extremely hard, to set up, and get ready for the shows. Three shows were scheduled on Saturdays, two shows on Sundays, and if there was time, there would be a show on "move in" night – when the train arrived at a destination early enough.

The circus performed 15 shows a week. There were two totally different shows called the Red Show and the Blue Show. Whenever the train switched routes, the show was a new one.

One of Sharon's favorite memories was caring for the newborn tiger cubs that a mother tiger refused to feed. Sellitto would bottle-feed the tiger cubs a warm milk formula. After the cubs fed, she would cuddle the cubs, rub their bellies with a soft warm moist cloth to simulate the licking of the mother tiger's tongue, then softly vocalize a sound like a mother tiger would make. *"This made the cubs happy, and they would get all wiggly then curl up in my arms."*



It is Sharon's opinion that PETA (*People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals*) destroyed the circus. The circus animals were well cared for and traveled with two veterinarians. Sellitto stated, *"Why would the circus people mistreat their animals? They were the bread-and-butter of the circus --- they were what brought people to the circus. We used to laugh that the animals got two vets, but the performers got a box of band-aids."*

Sellitto traveled and performed with the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1973 to 1977. She married and worked in Chicago as a Kelly girl in 1978 and 1979. In 1980, she decided to move back to San Francisco where her brother lived, and she started taking dance classes.

On November 2, 1984, Sharon's brother, Paul, disappeared

*(continued on page 04)*



*(continued from page 03)*

after talking about meeting with a potential buyer for his car. When Sellitto tried to report her brother's disappearance to the police, they refused to take the report. She decided to report her brother's car as stolen so the police would take a report. She continued to report the car as stolen every 28 days, so it would remain on the police "hot sheets."

Cosner's car was eventually found being driven by Leonard Lake, one of a pair of serial killers that according to Sellitto were eventually found responsible for the deaths of between 11 and 25 single men, single women, and families. Leonard Lake killed himself while in police custody by

United States because of the death penalty statutes. Ng was eventually deported from Canada in 1999 and was in San Quentin Prison but is now in what California calls the "Vacaville" Medical Facility.

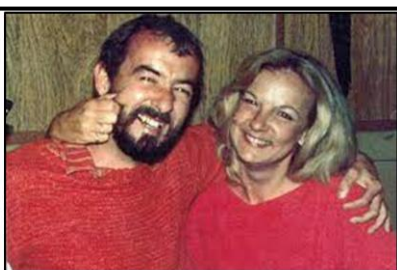
Sellitto's efforts to find her brother's remains have been a 40-year long



odyssey during which she became a pioneer for victim's rights. She was instrumental in getting the laws

changed so that victims of crime would be notified of trial dates, offender releases, parole hearings, and that victims would have rights to make victim impact statements in court.

After the awful 1989 earthquake in San Francisco, Sharon decided to move back to Ohio. Since moving to Granville in November 1991, she



**Paul & Sharon Cosner**

swallowing a cyanide pill sewn into his shirt. Charles Ng, Lake's partner in crime, escaped to Canada. Canada would not extradite him back to the

United States because of the death penalty statutes. Ng was eventually deported from Canada in 1999 and was in San Quentin Prison but is now in what California calls the "Vacaville" Medical Facility.

*(continued on page 05)*



*(continued from page 04)*

continues to follow the ongoing DNA investigations in San Francisco related to other victims of her brother's killers. She remains hopeful that someday soon she will bring her brother home, too.



*Mary Anne White is a local freelance writer and frequent contributor to Senior Times*

# THE COURIER

**March 2025 Issue**

**Reynoldsburg-Truro  
Historical Society**

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Cornelia M. Parkinson

## SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY

**Join the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society**

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

***Invite your friends to join!***

RTHS Courier MAR 2025-05

# 2025 CALENDAR

## MARCH

- 15 – SAT – Open House Mini-Mural Coloring Contest Elementary Art Exhibition 10:00am-2:00pm
- 20 – THU – German Village Society Clock Talk 6:00pm
- 21 – FRI – Grand Opening–Bruster's Ice Cream Family–Ribbon Cutting will be at 2:00pm
- 29 – SAT – Spaghetti Dinner – by the Reynoldsburg Community Assoc. 5-8pm - Messiah Lutheran Church

## APRIL

- 01 – TUE – “Third Grade Tours” presentation by Mary Stoots for the Reynoldsburg Civic Club
- 15 – TUE – Board Meeting – 6:30pm
- 19 – SAT – Open House, 10-2pm Helping Hands Shower
- 30 – WED – RTHS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY Celebration at the Pizza Cottage 5pm

## MAY

- 07 – WED – Slate Ridge School Tour 10:00am-12:15pm
- 08 – THU – Family STEM Night at Summit Elementary 5–7pm
- 13 – TUES – Board Meeting 6:30pm
- 14 – WED – Taylor Road School Tour
- 17 – SAT – Western Electric Open House 10am-2pm
- 19 – MON – French Run Elementary School Tour
- 20 – TUES – Western Electric Open House 5pm-8pm
- 26 – MON – MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE 10AM-SECEDER CEMETERY



Contact **Carol Deuber** if you are aware of an RTHS member who could use a Get Well, Thinking of You, Sympathy, or any other type of card for some added sunshine in their life  
**Cell: (614) 581-7048**  
**Home: (614) 471-3288**

Write “SUNSHINE” in the subject line of your email:  
[cadeuber@gmail.com](mailto:cadeuber@gmail.com)



## NEW MEMBERS!

**Chuck & Karen Arbuckle**  
Lifetime Membership

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, we started promptly at 10:30am and we worked all day making ribbons and matting pictures for our **Third-Grade Art Exhibition** that will happen on March 15th, during our Open House 10-2pm



visit us at the

# Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Mini-Mural Exhibition  
Saturday, March 15, 2025 - 10am to 2pm  
RTHS Museum, 1485 Jackson Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

A graphic for the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society exhibition. It features a collage of various historical images, including a house, a person, and a landscape. The text "visit us at the Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society" is prominently displayed at the top. Below it, the text "For the 3rd Grade Mini-Mural Exhibition Saturday, March 15, 2025 - 10am to 2pm" is written. At the bottom, the address "RTHS Museum, 1485 Jackson Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068" is provided.

An aerial photograph of a town, likely Reynoldsburg, Ohio, serves as the background for the title. A cartoon figure of a person with a magnifying glass is positioned in the upper right corner, appearing to search for something. The title text is overlaid on the image.

# When Did the 'H' Fall Off of REYNOLDSBURG?

*By Stacy Conradt  
Cornelia M. Parkinson,  
& Mary Turner Stoots*

During the early expansion of the United States, the U.S. Postal Department created a list of names for new postal stations, ensuring that no two towns in a state could share a post office name.

Simultaneously, the members of the Geographic Board streamlined names by removing the 'h' from -burgh (e.g., Reynoldsburgh became Reynolds-burg) and eliminating apostrophes from possessive names, such as changing Taylor's Station to Taylor Station.

Tables of the Post Offices in the U.S. were published as early as 1808, giving names of the postmasters, counties and states in which they were situated, and the distance of each town from Washington City. Distance determined the amount of postage, which was paid by the recipient.

Thanks to the United States Board on Geographic Names, big cities and little towns alike lost a lot of character in the late 1800s.

In 1891, with President Benjamin

Harrison's stamp of approval, the board decided a few things about how towns should be named:

**"The possessive form should be avoided whenever it can be done without destroying the euphony of the name, or changing it's descriptive action."**

Hence Downers Grove, Pikes Peak, and Harpers Ferry. In fact, as of May 2013, the Committee has only approved five official possessive apostrophes in the entire United States—Martha's Vineyard, Mass.; Ike's Point, N.J.; John E's Pond, R.I.; Carlos Elmer's Joshua View, Ariz.; and Clark's Mountain, Ore.

And even Martha's Vineyard had to fight for three decades until getting their possessive restored in 1933.

**"The word 'center,' as part of a name, should be spelled as above and not 'centre.'"**

At least two places in the U.S. have managed to skirt the issue: Centre, Alabama, and Centre County, Pennsylvania. *(continued on page 09)*

(continued from page 08)

**"The use of hyphens in connecting part of names should be discontinued."**

There are a few hyphenates still in existence today: Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; and Milton-Freewater, Oregon, among others. But names like Ne-Ha-Sa-Ne Park, New York, were obliterated with the new 1891 rule. In its place, of course? "Nehasane."

**"Names ending in 'borough' should be abbreviated to 'boro.'"**

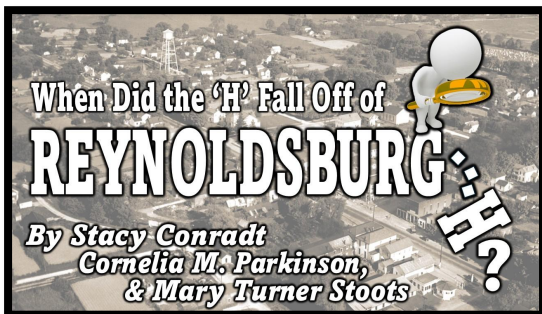
Middlesboro, Kentucky, a little town of about 10,000, near the Cumberland Gap, lost its "ugh" thanks to this rule. So did Marlborough, Massachusetts, which was named after a town in England. The Massachusetts town really felt the three-letter loss and rallied to have them restored.

**"In the case of names consisting of more than one word, it is desirable to combine them to one word."**

Obviously that one didn't stick as well as the ban on hyphens and possessive apostrophes, but it wasn't for lack of trying. In 1894, a slew of cities with two names, like Olive Bridge, New York, were smushed together into single words: Olivebridge.

**"It is desirable to avoid the use of diacritic characters."**

Those are accented letters such as "á," or letters with glyphs such as "ö." It's possible that San Jose fell victim



to the 1891 homogenization of city spellings. Though it was originally founded as "El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe" in 1777, let's be honest - that was never going to fit on a postmark. Whether or not the change was due to the Board on Geographic Names, the city's spelling morphed into "San Jose" over the years. Since 1979, however, the city has been using the diacritic-infused "San José" on the city seal and official city correspondence. The city charter still recognizes "San Jose" as the city name.

**"In names ending in 'burgh,' the final 'h' should be dropped."**

Oh, you've been happily using that "h" for more than a century? You've got newspapers, baseball teams, and buildings already bearing the consonant? Too bad! While most cities didn't mind enough to raise a stink about it, Pittsburgh didn't make the change to "Pittsburg" quietly. The city was originally named to honor William Pitt the Elder, but it was General John Forbes who did the naming.

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# When Did the 'H' Fall Off of REYNOLDSBURG?

By Stacy Conradt  
Cornelia M. Parkinson,  
& Mary Turner Stoots

(continued from page 09)

His Scottish background is the reason for that extra "h" (think Edinburgh). To edit the spelling to the German "burg" was akin to editing the city's founding.

After 20 years of complaints, the Board finally overturned their previous decision on Pittsburg(h)'s controversial consonant on July 19, 1911. Town representatives got a little sassy when they finally announced victory:

Hon. George T. Oliver  
United States Senate

Sir: At a special meeting of the United States Geographic Board held on July 19, 1911, the previous decision with regard to the spelling of Pittsburgh without a final 'H' was reconsidered and the form given below was adopted:

Pittsburgh, a city in Pennsylvania (not Pittsburg).

Very respectfully,  
C. S. SLOAN, Secretary

Pittsburgh isn't the only city that battled for an 'H.' In 2006, the citizens of Alburg, Vermont, voted to change the name of the town back to its original spelling of "Alburgh," which had endured a stunted spelling since the 1891 Board decision.

**"It is desirable to avoid the use of the words city and town, as parts of names."**

Hey! Tell that to Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Atlantic City,  
New York City, Iowa City, and **Salt Lake City!**

## The RHS Class of 1967 January Luncheon at the Longhorn Steak House



### MAX'S BARBER SHOP

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7369 EAST MAIN STREET  
REYNOLDSBURG, OH 43068



MON - FRI 9:00-5:45

SAT 8:00-12:00

CLOSED SUNDAY

# Upcoming Events

The second Annual Mini-Mural Coloring Contest Artist Exhibition was on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Since I didn't get the newsletter out on time, we will try to keep the exhibit up for the April 19<sup>th</sup> Open House!



This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> Helping Hands Saturday this year. They can use all the help we have to offer, so look in your cupboards for some non-expired cans and boxes!

I hope you all have a  
**VERY HAPPY  
EASTER!**



As of April 30<sup>th</sup>  
RTHS will be  
**FIFTY YEARS OLD!**

The Board decided that we all wanted to go to the Pizza Cottage to celebrate the RTHS 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary! Be sure to bring the enclosed flyer because it's going to be a fundraiser!



This is our 5<sup>th</sup> school tour for this school year! We did four last Fall, and we will have three this Spring.

# More Upcoming Events

RTHS has been invited to our 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Family STEM night. You are welcome to join Mary Stoots there! Let her know if you are interested.



On May 14<sup>th</sup>, we will host tours for the Taylor Road Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at the museum, the barn, the mural, and Silent Home Cemetery!

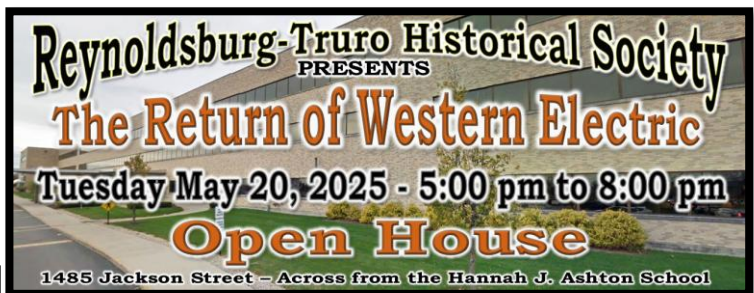
This month, on May 17 **AND** May 20, we will welcome the Western Electric folks to a Saturday Open House, and an evening open house on Tuesday!



May 19<sup>th</sup> will be our LAST 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade tour of the schoolyear!

We are looking forward to seeing all the kids, teachers, and maybe even the new Principal!!

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, we are looking forward to a visit from the Western Electric folks for an evening Open House from 5:00 to 8:00pm.!!



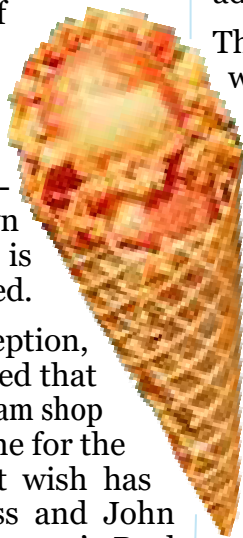
# Reynoldsburg Celebrated Harriet Tubman Day on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at the City Hall!

## THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN REYNOLDSBURG



# GRAND OPENING

JUST  
EVERYTHING  
**SWEET**  
& **GOOD**  
CORP



*Portions of the following are from the Bruster's July 2024 Courier article:*

The Paragon mixed use project on the northeast corner of Lancaster Avenue and Main Street is finally **FINISHED!** At nearly 20,000 square feet, it has remade the character of the old downtown district in a way that is being very well accepted.

Since the project's inception, it was always anticipated that a family-oriented ice cream shop would help set the tone for the development and that wish has come true! Sean Cress and John Haag, co-owners of Bruster's Real Ice Cream of Reynoldsburg, had targeted the last week of July 2024 for the Grand Opening, but that date was delayed.

The store sits on the site previously occupied by The Happy Dragon Chinese Restaurant. The land upon which Paragon sits was

purchased from the City of Reynoldsburg as part of its larger community development plan supported by multiple city administrations.

The two tenants who opened first were Bruster's Real Ice Cream of Reynoldsburg and Edward Jones Investing. The project adds 38 public parking spots for all of the downtown businesses, and two beautiful patios that are open to the public.

So, ..... It's time for a Grand Opening! The celebration will be from March 21<sup>st</sup> through March 23<sup>rd</sup>, but the **BIG day will be the Ribbon Cutting, which will be at 2:00pm on March 21<sup>st</sup>!**



# It's a Matching Challenge!

By: Mary Turner Stoots

Don't you just hate it when you go outside to get your mail, and your mailbox is full of nothing but people begging for money?

How many address labels does an individual need? And the worst part is, that I (personally) find it difficult to throw them away! I wonder how much it costs to print all those itty-bitty labels anyway!

The RTHS Board of Directors has decided to try something a little different.

A while back, RTHS received a donation of two lift-chairs. We were excited that we would finally have a means able to carry our stair-challenged visitors and members from the lower level to the first floor!

The only problem is, that we are considered a business, and therefore, the building code requires a commercial-grade lift-chair. When we found out about that, we delegated the donated lift-chairs out to the garage, while we investigate if there is anyone who might offer a decent trade-in value for them.

Our next step was to apply for a grant. So, what do you suppose happened?

Yep! Our grant was declined. But guess what! We are NOT quitters! NEVER SAY NEVER!

Now, you are thinking, "What happens next? What's left?"



First, we will contact the commercial grade lift-chair vendor to see how long the pricing quote that they gave us will remain in effect.

At the Board Meeting this month we talked about it, and decided to propose the following idea to our members:

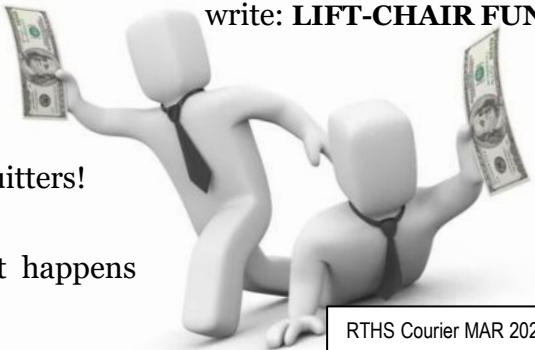
*Would you be willing to donate to help us buy a lift-chair if RTHS offers to **match** your donation?*

*If so, it makes the funding amount much more attainable!*

We could even keep track on a posted chart so you can all monitor our progress! If you agree, just make your check payable to RTHS, for an amount **affordable to you**, and send it to the following:

**Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society**  
**PO Box 144**  
**Reynoldsburg, OH 43068-0144**

On the memo line of your check, write: **LIFT-CHAIR FUND!**



# BOOKS FOR SALE!

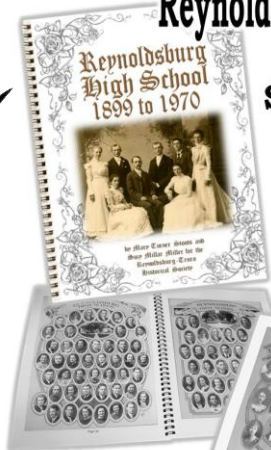
## Reynoldsburg High School 1899 to 1970

A compilation of RHS class pictures published for the  
Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

**\$37.00 for Non-Members\***

**\$35.00 for Members**

**\$5.00 S&H** (Tax included)



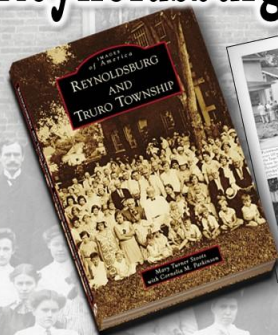
*\*A Free Membership will be given to Non-Members through 12/31/2025 for the purchase of a book, which includes Bi-Monthly issues of the Courier Newsletter to be delivered by email ONLY (no hard copies)*



**NON-MEMBERS  
GET A FREE  
MEMBERSHIP\*  
THROUGH  
12/31/2025**

*by Mary Turner Stoots and Suzy Millar Miller*

## Reynoldsburg and Truro Township



**Only \$26.00** plus \$5.00 Shipping

*by Mary Turner Stoots with Cornelia M. Parkinson*

**A Book Order Form insert is included inside your Courier**

**RTHS Museum, 1485 Jackson Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068**

Mailing address: Reynoldsburg-Truro Historical Society

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