

## Hudson Heritage Association WAYSIDE Presentation

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Tom Vince presented an historic overview of Wayside and concentrated on telling the audience about the people who lived in the house during the first 100 years, namely the Whedon and Rogers families. Mr. Vince, a local historian, gave a perspective that added to the significance of how the Wayside was connected to Hudson's early history. Though much of the documentation about Wayside's inhabitants can be found in this Wayside Report and the 13 Owen Brown Whedon Carriage House report, Mr. Vince added to the information with his historical expertise. Excerpts from Mr. Vince's presentation were transcribed because it give us a valuable breadth and perspective and adds to the research documentation, quality and helps prevent the information from being lost in Hudson's video archives in the years to come. (Minimal transcribed changes from the original oral presentation have been made for clarification.) We hope you enjoy Mr. Vince's presentation:

*The house is a house of some architectural distinction, it is a Greek Revival house noted for the split fan windows on the second story of the house, it has a very nice and tidy door yard, and the fact that the exterior of the house has been largely original. In a few minutes we will hear of the architectural inspection of the house that was just carried on recently. Tonight it is my job to present the story of the house and this house will receive a marker noting it as the "John B. Whedon House" built in 1833.*

*So our story will be mainly about the owners of the house and it will cover the first 100 years of its life when it was owned by really one family, the Whedon and then the family that married into them, the Rogers family. So Whedon and Rogers together built and owned it for about 100 years. The lot itself, just above Owen Brown, was actually sold by Owen Brown to Deacon Benjamin Whedon in 1832 for \$40 and by the spring of 1833 the house was under construction as was noted in the diary of David Hudson, Jr. when he writes for Tuesday, April 20, 1833, noting that this house "had been when raised in the afternoon" and the location of it "right across the street from Oliver Clark's house." It was finished that summer and the title of the house was conveyed by the builder Benjamin Whedon to his adopted son John Bishop Whedon, for \$1000, a considerable sum. John B. Whedon was about 26 years of age at the time; he may have been living with his parents at their home, Benjamin Whedon House, 30 Aurora Street, the house we call the "Whedon-Farwell House," very imposing house but he was soon to be married and so he now moves into the house.*

*Before we go to John's story, I feel I need to tell you more about the builder, the man who planned this house, Benjamin Whedon, a famous name in Hudson history. He came here with the Owen Brown family in 1805 from Torrington, Connecticut. So Benjamin Whedon came at the same time and you know Owen Brown had a five year old son who was tagging along as the ox cart made its way across the country; John Brown was the son. So the Whedons and the Browns came to Hudson together. Benjamin Whedon's wife, Deborah Whedon, died four years after they arrived in Hudson and she was one of the first people in the Chapel Street Cemetery, dying in 1809 at age 43. Benjamin*

*Whedon then married a second wife, Rosina Rogers, who had a son who was then about 3 or 4 years of age. This is the boy that Benjamin Whedon legally adopted and who became John Bishop Whedon; John B. Whedon for whom the house is named.*

*Benjamin went on to other things; he was actually a state representative for Portage County; Hudson was still in Portage in the early years. Benjamin Whedon was elected for a two year term; he was then foreman of the grand jury for the County, 1813; he was elected deacon of the Congregation Church, 1815; and then he built that fine house on Aurora Street in 1826 but you know, he got into some trouble in 1828 because Benjamin Whedon decided to support Andrew Jackson for the Presidency. You might not think that would be a particularly controversial thing, but look around you in Hudson even today; these things can be controversial especially when Deacon David Hudson was a firm supporter of the incumbent President John Quincy Adams. But it wouldn't have been so bad, but of course Jackson was elected and he decided to replace every US Postmaster with his own people. This was early in 1829; David Hudson who had been the founder of the town, founder of the church, founder of the Western Reserve College and Postmaster for 25 years lost his job. He was indignant about it and wrote a very spirited article in the form of a letter to the newspaper. Well do you know six months after Benjamin Whedon took over as Postmaster in Hudson, Ohio, Benjamin Whedon was suddenly brought up on charges of heresy at the First Congregational Church of Hudson. I find the timing of this to be quite interesting especially when Deacon David Hudson was the principle accuser in this matter which is fully covered in the Minutes of the Church. And so Benjamin Whedon is brought up on these charges that: first, he had neglected duties as a deacon in the First Congregational, second that he allowed a dance to be held in his house at 30 Aurora House, that large ballroom that was up on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the most grievance offense was that he has allowed a puppet show to also be in his house. These were the three big charges that were brought against Benjamin Whedon and he decided that he would not even appear in person to answer these charges; he knew Deacon David Hudson was out to get him and so he stayed away. The elders met; they prayed over it before and after but their decision was firm, he was excommunicated from the church as of May 21, 1830.*

*Benjamin Whedon did not seem too terribly upset by the whole thing. He never denied this dance or puppet show, he just went on with his life and of course, he went on being Postmaster in Hudson, Ohio; that was something Deacon David Hudson couldn't take care of. And so living quietly in his house he now decided to build this house, this house on North Main Street that we call Wayside for his son. And you know, no sooner then he conveyed the title of the house to his son when he himself passed away October 1833, just two months after the conveyance of the house. So now we have John Bishop Whedon his legally adopted son moving into the house, moving into Wayside. What was his background?*

*John B. Whedon was about 26 years when he moved in and I believe he married right away, must have been married as soon as he moved into the house. He had previously worked for the newspaper, The Western Intelligencer, and he had been a circulation clerk. I think he was in charge of subscriptions for the paper. He was a close friend of*

*David Hudson, Jr.; interesting that David Hudson, Jr. was a friend of the son of Benjamin Whedon. They were about the same age and I guess they shared a lot of similar interests. So now with his father gone, John Whedon becomes the Hudson Postmaster and serves in that position 1833-37 which you'll note was the balance of Andrew Jackson's term for the Presidency then he was replaced as postmaster but then he came back in as postmaster in 1845 when another Democrat, "Young Hickory," James Knox Polk was elected the Presidency; John B. Whedon got the position of Hudson Postmaster back again which he kept until 1853.*

*So in the meantime John B. Whedon had married a widow, Catherine Wells; she had two young children and then she and John had two children of their own, John B. Whedon, Jr. and a daughter, Catherine Whedon. So in addition to his postmaster job, John B. Whedon also became Hudson's leading druggist opening a drugstore in the building next to Wayside right on Main Street, the one right at the corner of Owen Brown Street and North Main; that is the one at 248 N. Main and it also has a Hudson Heritage Marker. So he became a prominent druggist and he also was an agent and supplier of school books and school supplies and he advertised the fact that he was the one to go to if you wanted to buy your school textbooks. And I think in Hudson he probably did a very good business. Well, John B. Whedon then passes away early in 1861; he dies of consumption at age 54 which incidentally was the same age as his father, Benjamin, died.*

*Now we have the two children who are going to share in the operation and living in Wayside. We have John B. Whedon, Jr., now nine years after John B. Whedon, Sr. died; his son (John B. Whedon) was still living at Wayside and there were other people living in the house, the Holtons, and wouldn't you know John B. Whedon, Jr. decided that he would marry one of them, Marcia Holton. And so John and Marcia now become husband and wife and they move around the corner to what was the Whedon Carriage House that faces Owen Brown Street; they move over there because he is going to turn over Wayside, the house, to his sister, Catherine, who had married Dr. Edward E. Rogers at the Episcopal Church in 1867.*

*So now, this is the next generation, Catherine Whedon Rogers and her husband Edward Rogers, they move into Wayside. And did you know, this Catherine Whedon Rogers who was in fact born in the house, first child born in that house, 1834, would live there the rest of her life, would die in that house in June of 1927 at the age of 93. And so we have this remarkable family connection with the same house; Catherine Whedon Rogers remains at Wayside for the rest of her life. As a young girl she had displayed a lot of musical talent; she was a pianist and she started to teach music at age 14 and do you know she even had James W. Ellsworth, Hudson's benefactor-to-be, as a music student and while she does not tell us how he did musically, she did say he showed characteristics which make for success. So there you have it from James W. Ellsworth's music teacher. Catherine Whedon Rogers was also sometimes the organists at Christ Church Episcopal which she had joined as a child and you should notice parenthetically that since Grandfather had been excommunicated from the First Congregational Church of Hudson, well the Whedon's never went back, even though Benjamin did get his funeral there; I should have mentioned that earlier. The Whedons never went back to the*

*Congregational Church, they hooked up with the Episcopalians and they stayed with them. So some of these old arguments continue on through the generations.*

*Also as a girl, Catherine helped her father, John B. Whedon, in the post office and she is the one who recalled a stagecoach coming down from Cleveland bringing the mail to throw at the curbside in front of Wayside. And she recalled stagecoaches from Cleveland often getting caught in the mud and muck in Hines Hill, you know what hill that is, that is the big hill on Route 91 that goes up to Middleton Road, that hill was called Hines Hill, not necessarily the road we call Hines Hill. The Hines actually had their farm on the west side of Route 91 and that is why it was called Hines Hill.*

*Anyway, Catherine married Dr. Edward E. Rogers, a Hudson boy, who became a dentist and they lived at Wayside for their entire marriage. Her husband was well-known in the community; he was a Township Trustee for 26 years, Justice of the Peace for 25 years, Vestrymen at Christ Episcopal for 25 years; he and his wife had four children, two died in infancy, two living on, Elizabeth Rogers Miller and her younger sister, known as Kitty Rogers. This is the last generation to live at Wayside. Both of these girls were born in the house, Elizabeth in 1869 and Kitty in 1872.*

*Elizabeth had taught mentally challenged children in Columbus before she married a Hudson doctor, George A. Miller. George A. Miller also had a degree in pharmacy and was the partner of Fred Saywell in founding the famous drugstore on Main Street which I believe was founded in 1908, over a hundred years ago now. Elizabeth after her marriage to George Miller also was active in the Lee-Bishop Post of the American Legion- Women's Auxiliary, because her husband, Dr. Miller, had been in World War I. This couple did not have any children and Elizabeth died, November 17, 1927. Did you know that year, 1927, marked the year when the last three Rogers people all died in that house, Wayside. The 93 year old mother, Catherine Whedon Rogers, she died in June, the younger sister, Kitty Rogers died five days before her mother and then Elizabeth Rogers Miller died in November of that same year so one of the entries that was noted said, "They all died, this year 1927." And so we are really at the end of that 100 years of occupancy by the Whedon-Rogers family; it comes to an end in 1927, the only survivor was Dr. George A. Miller, the husband of Elizabeth.*

*Dr. George A. Miller now puts the house on the market and sells it in 1928. Between that year and 1962 there were three or four other owners, in 1962 Robert and Pauline Cook purchased Wayside and they lived there until 1984 when the current owner, Marya Bednerik, purchased the home and she is with us this evening. And some of you may have recalled Bob Cook as a member of the Hudson Village Council, his wife Polly was very active in the Hudson Garden Club.*

*And now as I conclude my remarks, I think we need to ask the question: Why is this house called Wayside? Did it have to do with the fact that the house was used as a Hudson Post Office for so many years? We believe that it did. The principal researcher, Fritz, who is sitting back there, did find a diary entry over at the library where the diarist mentioned about the mail carrier coming down from Cleveland and tossing the mail pouch into the*

*mud when they passed the Wayside house. And so this house, somehow, had the name attached to it. I asked Bob Cook, Jr. who spent his youth in that house and who is now living in Montana, I asked him what he thought was the origin of this house being called Wayside? He said he always thought of Longfellow's Tales of the Wayside Inn. The Wayside Inn is located at Sudbury, Massachusetts on the Old Post Road between Boston and New York. Now you know the Post Road was the road the mail was carried between Boston and New York. And so when the mail carrier reached the Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Mass., that's where the mail was tossed out. So is there a connection between this Wayside Inn and this house in Hudson being so called? So I am not sure, I haven't answered your question Marya, and I know you are going to tell me of it later of what you think, but we can only speculate then about how it got that interesting name. And I think it's great, that's nearly 180 years after this house was built, there is still an air of mystery about this little aspect: Why it is called Wayside? And today we are going to present it with its formal Hudson Heritage Association name, John B. Whedon House.*

**Tom Vince, May 10, 2012.**