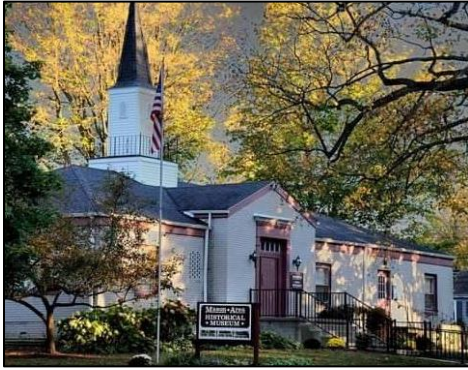


Mason Area Historical Society -- A Brief History



The Mason Area Historical Society was established on September 28, 1976. The Society was an outgrowth of a temporary Mason Area Bicentennial Commission and was led by President Helen Grainger, Vice President Lyman Freshour, and Secretary/Treasurer Cathy Carter.

The Mason Area Bicentennial Commission raised funds during the previous year to move and restore a one-room schoolhouse that was built in 1854 and located at the intersection of W. Columbia and College Roads, just west of Mason. The Ingham County Road Commission, who was doing road work that would have demolished the building, donated the schoolhouse -- but the Bicentennial Commission instead paid to move the building. A moving contractor was hired for a cost of \$1,200.

Volunteers from the Mason Lions Club removed the wings on the school and others stabilized the building for moving. In March 1976, the building was moved from Columbia Road to a lot on W. Ash Street that was donated to the City of Mason by James Fox and Associates. This space became Mason's Bicentennial Park.

The Mason Area Bicentennial Commission also raised approximately \$12,000 more to restore the building and many dedicated volunteers spent subsequent years completing the exterior and interior restoration. Ownership of the Pink School was assumed by the Mason Area Historical Society in late 1976. The Pink School was used as a museum, for monthly meetings, and was open to the public for tours. The school was also used by elementary-age students to experience learning in a one-room school.



In 1997, the Mason Area Historical Society once again found itself at a crossroads. Wyeth, an employer of hundreds of area residents for decades, had recently closed and Bill Husband approached the Society with artifacts from the plant. The Pink School had no room to display the items. Talks began about acquiring a larger building for a museum led by Society President Virginia Schlichter.

At the same time, the Christian Science Mason Society was planning to sell their building on the corner of Oak and Barnes Streets. Their building began as the Rayner family "town home" built in 1868 by the patriarch pioneer John Rayner (1804-1879). The Rayners had another "country home" on what was then the outskirts of town at 725 E. Ash Street. It was owned by three succeeding generations of family: son William Rayner (1836-1905), grandson Robbins Rayner (1873-1927), and great-grandson Langley Rayner (1905-1985).

The church members were willing to sell their building to the Society for \$50,000. Virginia Schlichter tirelessly pursued her dream of a new museum for Mason and along with the MAHS Board, members of the Society, the Mason community, grants, and corporate donors, \$90,000 was raised to not only purchase the building but bring it up to building codes and buy display hardware. Librarian Dorothy Ferris cataloged and developed a research library to be housed in the museum.



On April 17, 1998, the Mason Area Historical Society's goal of opening the new Mason Area Historical Museum became a reality. MAHS President Virginia Schlichter, Vice President Rex Hauser, Secretary Jean Pollock, and Treasurer Patricia Harvey performed the ribbon cutting at the front steps during the grand opening.

The Mason Area Historical Society is a non-profit organization with a mission to collect, preserve, and tell the stories of Mason area history. MAHS is run by volunteers, and upkeep and maintenance of the Museum and Pink School are funded by membership dues, program sponsorships, and donations for publications and tours. Support also comes from grants, bequests, rentals of the Virginia Schlichter Auditorium to outside groups, and community contributions to the Society's capital improvement fund.

The Mason Area Historical Society will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Mason Area Historical Museum at 200 E. Oak Street with a ceremony at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 17, 2023. A ribbon cutting by President Charlie Herrick, Vice President Scott Preadmore, Secretary Doug Klein, and Treasurer Susan Hubbard will follow.