

Mt. Healthy Historical Society



November 2025

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Around the Society...

Our holiday dinner and program will be held on Wednesday, December 3, starting at 6 p.m. in the basement of the Mt. Healthy United Methodist Church at the corner of Perry and Compton.

The dinner is potluck and is for members only. If you would like to attend, please email us at mt.healthyhistory@yahoo.com to say how many will be attending and what dish you would like to bring. Our guest speaker will be Greg Hand, formerly of the University of Cincinnati. Here's his description of the program: "We will take a tour of Cincinnati as it grew from a single cabin to the metropolis we know today, with stops in 1835, 1848, 1866, 1886 and 1900. We will zoom in on the city's skyline and visit landmarks that no longer exist as well as familiar sights in unfamiliar locations - and also discover what appears to be a UFO landed in the middle of the city." **Everyone is welcome to attend the presentation**, which will begin at 7:00.

Our holiday Open House will be part of the Christmas in Mt. Healthy celebration on Saturday, December 13, from 4 to 8. We will be selling cookies and hot chocolate, and raffling our Mt. Healthy-opoly games, at the community room in the park. The museum will also be open from 4 to 8, with a children's storytime every half hour. Stop in to see our current exhibit featuring vintage and antique dolls.

The January and February Historical Society meetings will begin at 5:30 rather than our usual 6:30.



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Our museum is open Saturday mornings from 10 to 12, as well as by appointment, except for January and February, when we will be closed to the public.

The Brutal Winter of 1917-1918

October of 1917 hinted at the possibility of a coming nasty winter. A series of Canadian fronts swept across the Ohio valley, bringing snow and cold. On October 30, the high temperature in the Cincinnati area reached just 31 degrees, a record that still stands as the coldest high temperature for that date. November saw milder conditions, but by mid-December it turned frigid. The high on December 5 was just 5 degrees, and on January 12 it reached just 2 degrees, both records that also still stand today. And these were air temperatures, not taking into account the high winds created by the Canadian systems sweeping southward.

Then there was the snow. The winter of 1917 saw 35.7 inches of snow, the ninth snowiest year on record. For comparison, in 2024 Cincinnati had just 11.8 inches of snow; on the other hand, some may recall the winter of 1978, with its 44.3 inches, or the even worse winter of 1977, at 53.9 inches. So the end of 1917 and the start of 1918 did not mark the snowiest winter recorded in the area, but between the snow, the cold temperatures, and the type of infrastructure and transportation used at the time, things became dangerous.

Madison, Indiana recorded that the Ohio River was frozen solid there on Dec. 11. The river froze over at Cincinnati on Dec. 17. This halted all river traffic, including the barges carrying the coal that was crucial for heating homes and running factories. The snow blocked rail lines, further cutting off deliveries. In January the Hamilton County Fuel Administration set limits on the stockpiling of coal by industries so homes could be heated. It's easy for us to forget how vulnerable people can be to winter weather, but the residents of Mt. Healthy in that season over 100 years ago were all too aware of the danger.



There were likely few customers at Peter's Ice Cream Shop on Hamilton Avenue. This photo shows a man (possibly shop owner Peter Smyth) looking out at the desolate snowy street. This photo is part of our digital collection and was scanned from an album of Hoy family pictures.



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The tollhouse is becoming a new museum space

Our tollhouse was built along the Cincinnati & Hamilton Turnpike in 1859. The turnpike was a privately operated road, and tolls were charged for its use. The gatekeeper and his family – his wife and several children – lived in the tollhouse, as well. It was moved to its present location next to our museum around 1980.



The tollhouse being backed into its current location.

Since its relocation, the building has mainly been used as an office for the Historical Society, as a small meeting space, and for storage. We are now planning a major upgrade, as the tollhouse joins the old Free Meeting House as a museum and exhibit space. It will be set up as a family home, depicting life at the end of the nineteenth century.

Over the winter we will be sprucing it up a bit: refinishing the floors, new interior paint, a new furnace, and air conditioning. We have secured some donations to cover the costs, but if you would also like to donate to the cause, we will gladly accept. To prepare for this refurbishment, we will be moving everything out of the tollhouse and into the museum building while the work is being completed. This move will take place December 20th and 21st, and we would welcome volunteers to help haul things next door.

We also need to acquire some furniture from about 1870 to 1900: a bed or headboard (about twin size), one or two living room / parlor chairs, and possibly a kitchen table with chairs. Nothing fancy, just ordinary pieces that would have been used by a not-too-affluent family. If you have any of these – or anything else from that era that you think might be good for the space – that you would like to donate, please contact us at mt.healthyhistory@yahoo.com. The rooms are small, so we don't need much, but we do want it to look homey and era-appropriate.



Do you have anyone on your gift list who might like a custom-designed Mt. Healthy-opoly game? We are once again offering these games for sale at \$25 each, or 6 for \$120.

They will be available at the museum every Saturday morning through December 20, from 10 to noon, at the December 3 dinner, and December 13 at both the cookie / hot chocolate sale (where we will be able to accept credit card payments) and at the museum. You can also order through our website, where you can pay with PayPal. Shipping is available.

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To become a member, please remit check or cash :

Mt. Healthy Historical Society

c/o Treasurer

1546 McMakin Avenue

Mt. Healthy, OH 45231

Or pay through our website: MtHealthyHistory.org

Membership Form

Name: _____

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Please indicate membership type: Individual (\$10) Business (\$25)

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Cincinnati, OH 45231