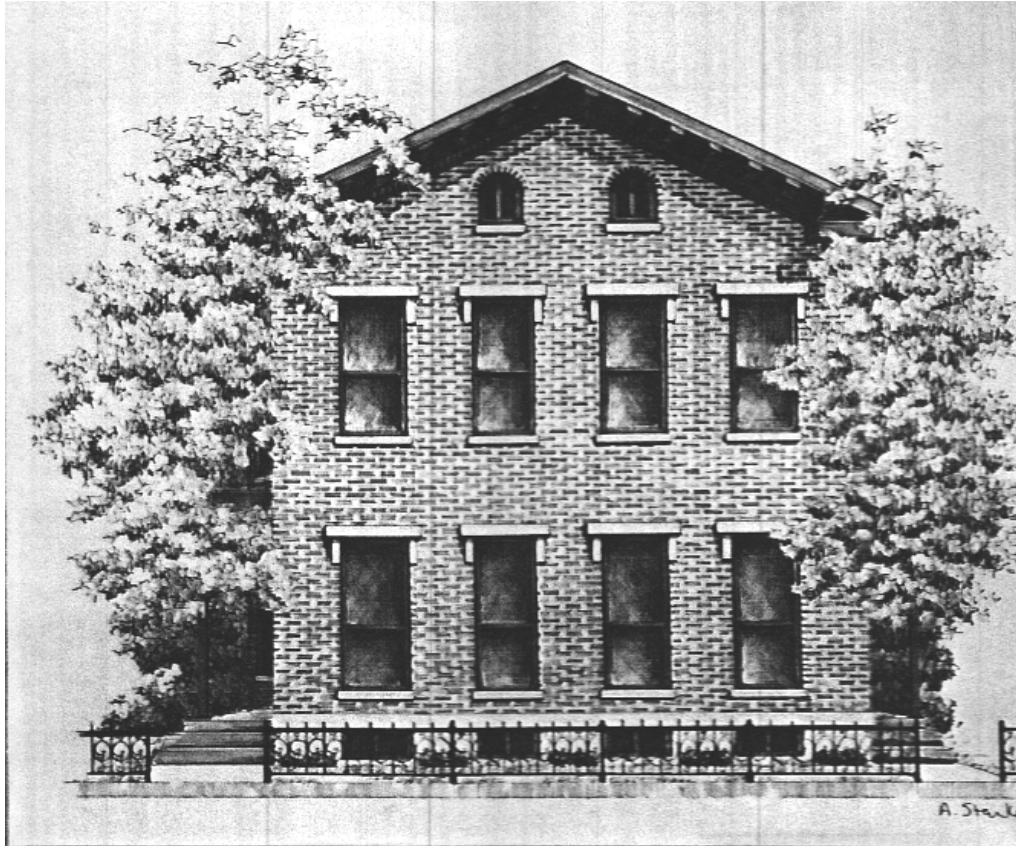


*written fall 1994; updated March 22, 2012*



**THE HOUSE AT 121-123 BROWN STREET  
An Oregon District History**

**by Marguerite LeBreton Merz**

"As in every town past its nonage, it is our big houses, old or new,  
 and old houses, large or small, that have their names and pedigrees.  
 It is not the same, in our tongue, to say, 'That is where the Smiths live,'  
 as it is to say, 'That is the Smith house.' If it is the Smith house,  
 there may be no one of that name living there now, but once and for a generation or more  
 it was theirs, built or truly possessed by them....  
 Sometimes a house lapses into anonymity, when tenants are too impermanent to save its name:  
 when that happens, it will before long be a rooming house,  
 or apartments, or a hairdresser's establishment....  
 The young among us sometimes rebel in their inexperience, saying 'nothing ever happens  
 here.'  
 They say it because they do not know the old houses.  
 If they live long enough they will learn that everything has happened here, and may happen  
 again.  
 The town is Winesburg and Spoon River,  
 it is Highbury and Cranford,  
 it is even Illyria and Elsinore."  
 --Helen Hooven Santmyer, Ohio Town

## I. Beginnings

Before settlers of European descent pushed westward across the Appalachian Mountains,  
 southwest Ohio was Indian territory. Such tribes as the Shawnee, Miami, Wyandots, Chippewas,  
 Delawares, and Ottawas lived in and around the Miami Valley area. But according to the History of  
 Dayton, Ohio published in 1889 by Dayton's own United Brethren Publishing House, no Indians actually  
 lived in the area where the Oregon District now stands:

"Long before the Miami valley was visited by white men, the country between the Great and Little  
 Miami rivers, and bounded on the south by the Ohio and on the north by Mad River, was used  
 only as a hunting ground. No Indians lived on this land since 1700. Probably for a century before  
 Dayton was laid out, no wigwam was built on the site selected by the original proprietors. The  
 town lay just within this immense game preserve, and was, previous to the invasion of the whites,  
 the home of buffaloes, elks, deer, bears, wild cats, wolves, panthers, foxes, and all the animals  
 and birds of the temperate zone, which literally swarmed in the forests."

*Both the English and the French laid claim to the area, and the Indians were caught up in the struggles between the two European powers. Starting in 1779, military expeditions were launched against the Indians of Ohio by the infant United States of America. Repeated raids from bases in Kentucky and West Virginia gradually drove the Indians out and opened the way for white settlers to build towns.*

*The first plan to erect a white settlement at the present site of Dayton was formed in June of 1789, and proposed to call the Mad River the Tiber and the town at its mouth Venice. Misunderstandings with the government and renewed Indian "troubles" caused the plan to fall through. The Treaty of Greenville in 1795 was regarded as securing the safety of settlers in Indian country, and on August 20 of that year, less than three weeks after the treaty was signed, a "party of gentlemen" including Gen. Arthur St. Clair, Gen. Jonathan Dayton, Gen. James Wilkinson, and Col. Israel Ludlow contracted for the purchase of land for three settlements. The original settlers of Dayton, including Benjamin Van Cleve and Daniel C. Cooper, arrived to survey the territory in September of 1795. On the 4th of October, said Van Cleve, "Israel Ludlow laid off the town at the mouth of Mad River, and called it Dayton, after one of the proprietors. A lottery was held, and I drew lots for myself and several others, and engaged to become a settler in the ensuing spring." In March of 1796, the settlers left Cincinnati in three parties. The first to arrive at the site did so on April 1. "Two small camps of Indians were here when the pirogue touched the Miami bank, but they proved friendly, and were persuaded to leave in a day or two."*

*From this beginning, Dayton grew steadily, with industries spurred by the abundant available water power, and both trade and town growth strongly stimulated by the opening of the Miami-Erie canal in 1829. Along the canal sprang up Dayton's first suburb, called Oregon because it was so far out from "civilization."*

The earliest deed recorded for the lot on which the bulk of the house at 121-123 Brown Street sits is in 1845, from the Cooper Cotton Co. to William Roth (*see ad below, from Williams' Dayton City Directory, 1864-65*).

# **T. A. PHILLIPS, COOPER COTTON FACTORY**

**DAYTON, O.**

Manufacture and keep constantly on hand

**Assorted Carpet Yarns, Carpet Warp,**

**COVERLET YARNS, TWINE WICKING, BATTING, &c.,**

**In large quantities and at Lowest Prices.**

William Roth, about whom I know nothing further, was apparently a land speculator; when his estate passed to his daughters Caroline Roth and Catherine Roth Dudley in 1859, quite a number of lots in the city were involved. Both Caroline and Matilda Roth, William's widow, gave Catherine quit-claim deeds on lots 497 (the one the bulk of the house now sits on) and 499 (the one immediately south, on which part of the south half of the house now rests), as well as several other lots. Matilda's deed specified that Catherine and her husband Orison D. Dudley, a carriage roof manufacturer, were to pay \$250 annually toward Matilda's support. The Dudleys boarded at the Phillips House, and Matilda lived on the north side of Third Street, between Ludlow and Wilkinson.

**GEORGE LEHMAN,  
CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER.**



**DEALER IN  
IRON, MARBLE AND SLATE  
MANTLES,  
ENAMELED GRATES,  
CHIMNEY TOPS, FIRE BRICK, CLAY, &C.**

**OFFICE AND SALESROOM:  
South-East Corner Second and Jefferson Streets  
DAYTON, O.**

**Particular Attention Paid to the Setting of Grates.**

A little less than five months later, in September 1859, the Dudleys sold lot 497 to George Lehman, listed in the Williams' City Directory for 1858-59 as a bricklayer. Either at that time or very shortly thereafter Lehman also acquired lot 499 and soon commenced a major construction project.

The city directory listing for George Lehman was a bit misleading. He was quite a bit more than a simple bricklayer (*see ad*), and he built himself a substantial spread on his two lots on Brown Street, including a large double brick house with a frame kitchen behind, and a large brick stable extending along the western boundary of both lots. The house itself filled all but a narrow strip of lot 497 and overlapped around ten feet onto lot 499.

Lehman's house, built in 1860, was Greek Revival in style. According to [A Field Guide to American Houses](#) (Virginia & Lee McAlester, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), the front-gabled roof design of the house is a subtype of Greek Revival particularly common in the northeastern and midwestern states. But it also shows Southern influence, first in being Greek Revival at all, as late as 1860 (the time span usually quoted for Greek Revival is 1825-1850, but extending to 1860 in the South), and secondly in the large Italianate brackets along the cornice line, typical of post-1850 examples, especially in the South.

The interior woodwork in the two front rooms on either side (the library and dining room of current 121, the living room and kitchen of the apartment at current 123) almost certainly dates back to George Lehman's time. The simple, geometric Greek-key-like ornamentation at the tops of the windows and doorways is in keeping with the Greek Revival style, and nail holes in the woodwork indicate that it was originally attached with square hand-cut nails.

G. W. Hawes' Ohio State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1859-60 includes a description of Dayton as it was at the time that Lehman built his house:

*DAYTON, a flourishing city, capital of Montgomery county, Ohio, is situated on the left or east bank of the Great Miami, at the mouth of the Mad river, and on the line of the Miami canal, 52 miles north north-east from Cincinnati, 67 miles west by south from Columbus, and 460 miles from Washington....This is the fourth city of Ohio in respect to population and wealth, and surpasses all other Western towns of equal size in the variety and extent of its manufactures. It is the terminus of six railway lines, viz.: the Mad River and Lake Erie, the Dayton and Cincinnati, the Dayton and Western, the Greenville and Miami, the Dayton and Xenia, and the Dayton and Michigan, leading to Toledo. All of these are completed except the last. Nine Macadamized or hard gravelled roads radiate in all directions from Dayton, with an aggregate length of more than 250 miles. The town is laid out with streets 100 feet wide, crossing each other at right angles. The public buildings are remarkably splendid, and excellent taste is displayed in the construction of the private residences, and in the embellishment of the adjoining grounds. The county courthouse, built of compact, white marble, quarried in the vicinity, is perhaps the most elegant edifice of its class in the Western States. The style of architecture is that of the Parthenon. The dimensions are 127 feet in length, by 62 in breadth. It cost about \$100,000. Dayton contains about 27 churches, a public library, three banks, two market-houses, several well organized free schools, and the Cooper female seminary, a large and flourishing institution, and seven or eight newspaper offices. The streets, stores and public buildings are lighted with gas. Quarries of excellent limestone are worked in the vicinity, and furnish material for the finest buildings of Cincinnati. The abundant water power which Dayton possesses is one of the chief elements of its prosperity. In 1845 an hydraulic canal was made, by which the water of Mad river is brought through the city. It is the seat of extensive manufactories of railroad cars, of wrapping and printing paper, and of stoves and hollow ware. The annual products of these three branches are valued at \$500,000. It also contains several cotton factories, woollen factories, oil mills, and flouring mills. Population 20,000.*

An article from the Dayton Journal of June 14, 1856, paints a picture of the Oregon neighborhood itself only four years earlier:

*This populous portion of our city is deserving of more notice than it has received, but this is accounted for by the people generally not being aware of the extent of its territory, or the amount of business carried on in that quarter. Oregon, twenty years ago, contained four dwelling houses, one woolen factory and one grocery. It now has seven groceries, three dry-good stores, two shoe stores, one hardware store, one drug store, two meat stores, two bakeries, two livery stables, three blacksmith shops, one jewelry shop, and eight churches. Great improvements are being made in the way of building, and we notice a great many houses going up; the streets are also being extended and improved, and new ones being laid out. In fact everything "over there" looks prosperous, and bids fair to make Oregon the handsomest part of our city.*

It must be remembered, of course, that Oregon as described above was a substantially bigger neighborhood than the present historic district; it extended southward from Fifth Street nearly to the present University of Dayton area, without the modern interruption caused by U.S. Rte. 35.

## II. George Lehman: Fire and Water

Apparently George Lehman didn't move far when he built his house on lots 497 and 499. The city directory published in 1856 lists him as "Geo. H. Lehman bk layer w s Brown b Smith [later Sixth] & Green," and a slightly later one specifies his address as 31 Brown (after his house is built, his address is 27 Brown). Clearly, he was already a resident of the Oregon neighborhood and of Brown Street, and a civic-minded one at that. The Illustrated History of the Dayton Fire Department, published in 1900 and reissued in connection with the 1996 Celebration Dayton Bicentennial, reveals that he was an active volunteer firefighter.

The Oregon Fire Company, one of several volunteer companies in Dayton, was organized in 1840, with its headquarters at Sixth (then Smith) and Tecumseh Streets. In 1847 they built an engine house at that address. The various volunteer companies were privately financed, and according to the history mentioned above,

*All sorts of projects were resorted to by the different fire companies to keep up with the times and to pay expenses. They gave all sorts of entertainments, balls, fairs, sprinkled the streets, and sought subscriptions on all manner of schemes. Some of the companies had particular friends among the wealthy men of the day, and always could depend on them in grave emergencies....but still the burden of expense fell on the efforts of the members of the divers organizations.*

I don't know at what point Lehman became involved with the Oregon company, but he was involved and is in fact one of the key men credited with both pushing for and eventually successfully establishing a paid fire department. As the Illustrated History points out, the outbreak of the civil war hit the volunteer fire companies hard. Key volunteer firemen became volunteer soldiers instead; the Oregon Guards were established in 1861.

*...the natural result was that all of them [the volunteer fire companies] were partly decimated and broken up. It was here that the circumstances prevailing aided the men who were struggling to establish a paid department, and though the organizations were maintained in a way to the close of the war, with its terminus came the finis of the volunteer fire companies. Probably the last big fire at which the volunteer companies of Dayton may be said to have still been intact, was the mobbing and setting on fire of the Dayton Journal Office [following the arrest of Clement Vallandigham, the prominent Copperhead], though even then many of the boys differed on the war question. There was some hesitancy in pulling out the engines, for fear of the mob destroying them, but when John W. Harries offered to replace them with new ones if destroyed, one after another soon were at the scene of the fire. There, the Committee of Safety...took charge of affairs, and backed up by the soldiers, the laddies, with some annoyance and difficulty, were soon at work on the fire, leaving the soldiers to take care of the mob.*

It is intriguing to imagine George Lehman running over from his big brick double on Brown Street with his leather bucket in hand to help fight the literal flames, while figurative flames of controversy engulfed what was then very much a border city.

Ezra Bimm, "as enthusiastic a member of the Neptune Company as there was," was the first to push the idea of establishing a paid fire department. When he became a member of the City Council in 1859, he was able to promote the cause even more effectively. The Illustrated History continues,

*Geo. Lehman, also a prominent and enthusiastic volunteer fireman...[was] among the first converts to the new idea, and Lehman also breaking into council, made a strong team with Mr. Bimm. James Turner soon joined them in their ideas, and though the volunteer boys threatened*

*to wreck any steam fire engine brought to Dayton, and it took till near the expiration of the war--sometime late in 1864--before the proper legislation was passed, their efforts were finally crowned with success, and a paid department...was established.*

An earlier passage in the history gives a sense for why Bimm and Lehman were so eager to establish a paid department:

*It appears ludicrous to picture such well-known and successful men as...Ezra Bimm...Geo. Lehman...[and others], all still living, chasing pell-mell down the street, forty or fifty years ago, with leather buckets to extinguish a big blaze; and later, to think of them dragging by a long rope a fire engine that first had to be filled with water with these same leather buckets, before a stream could be pumped from it on to the flames. Such was the manner in which these old time fire laddies had to contend with destructive flames, and they often made up by persistent effort, daring and hard work, for what in latter years was easily accomplished with improved machinery...*

But it was not only the natural desire to replace arduous and dangerous volunteer effort with superior machinery manned by a paid staff that fueled the push for a paid department. As the United Brethren History puts it,

*It came to be a closely disputed honor as to which company threw the first water on the fire, and this gave rise to outrages, cutting hose, throwing stones, and occasionally the firemen would cease fighting the fire and commence fighting each other. It was necessary to stimulate the rivalry of the firemen as to which should throw the first water on the fire, but it was found equally necessary and more difficult to quell the spirit thus evoked.*

This somewhat cleaned-up version of the story is expanded upon in the Illustrated History:

*The Vigilance Company was disbanded by the mayor of the city in 1856, after the fire at the Morrison residence, because of the murder of William Richards, one of the "Wooden Shoe" [so called because largely composed of Germans] or Deluge Company. The two companies reached the scene of the fire together and were soon engaged in a bitter battle for vantage position. The air was full of flying bricks and clubs, and when it was all over, Richards was picked up with his skull crushed with a brick.*

It was during the time George Lehman lived in the house on Brown Street, on July 26, 1865, that T. A. Phillip's Cooper Cotton Factory was destroyed by fire, with a loss set at \$12,000. One cannot help but wonder whether Lehman and the rest of the Oregon Company joined in the unsuccessful fight to save the premises of the original owner of lots 497 and 499.

Since the volunteer fire companies were, as noted above, privately financed, we can infer something of the prosperity of the Oregon neighborhood in general from the following passage concerning the ultimate fate of the Oregon Fire Company:

*The "Oregons" still maintain their organization [i.e., in 1900 when this account was being written], but no meeting has been held for several years. This company was probably the most prosperous company the city had, and it is due to this prosperity the organization is, in a manner, kept alive. When the steam engine relegated the laddies of the company to a state of uselessness, they possessed horses, money, property, and the present Oregon Engine House, on Fifth Street, opposite Brown Street. A Board of Trustees was elected to take care of this...and they with the consent of the members of the company, used the money they had for the relief of soldiers families living in the wards where the boys composing the company lived--thus establishing the first Soldiers Relief Commission in the state. All the money secured by the sale of their horses and other property was used for this purpose. And the engine house property was turned over to the city by the company, without any consideration other than that the place must*

*be used always as a fire house, and if not, it must be sold, and the receipts divided among the surviving members of the old Oregon Company. This is the object of keeping alive the old organization, which was the only company in the city chartered by the state.*

There follows a list of twenty-one members of the company still alive at the time of writing and whose whereabouts were then known, including “George Lehman, now residing in Chicago.”

George Lehman served on the City Council, as one of two representatives of the Fifth Ward, from about 1862 to 1870, which means during the time he lived in the house on Brown Street and for a few years after moving out of it. When he did move, he didn’t go far--only to 80 Jones Street, still in Oregon and the Fifth Ward. In the last few years of his City Council service, he distinguished himself for spearheading the creation of the municipal water works.

In May of 1869 (after Lehman moved to 80 Jones Street), the council established a three-man committee to visit places having water works, gather information about different systems, and make a recommendation. When this committee had done its job, and several bids were submitted, another committee of five was charged with evaluating the bids and contracting in the name of the city for the construction of a water works. George Lehman served on both committees.

Although my source for this information, the United Brethren History of Dayton, Ohio, does not indicate who chaired these committees, Lehman must have played a significant leadership role in the process, whether formal or informal, because he is commemorated for it in the monument incorporated into Riverside Metropark on the riverbank, in a spot just to the east of the point opposite the head of Jefferson Street. The monument consists of a stone bench with seats for each of seven eminent men of Dayton, plus a low square stone with inscriptions specifically commending each of them. The central, and most majestic, seat is given to Daniel C. Cooper, who first platted Dayton in 1801, donated lands for parks and public buildings, and served as a public official and community leader. Two seats to the left of Cooper’s seat is one for Lehman, and the square tablet commends “GEORGE LEHMAN PUBLIC OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR INSTALLING THE HOLLEY WATER WORKS IN 1869.”

On Lehman’s seat his dates are given as 1829-1901, meaning that he was about thirty-one years old when he built the house on Brown Street.

Perhaps it was Lehman’s experience as a volunteer firefighter, carrying leather buckets to the flames, that instilled in him a sense of the importance of a reliable municipal water supply.

Although Lehman’s name is unknown to contemporary Daytonians, there is further evidence that it was well-known towards the end of the nineteenth century. At least as early as 1888, it seems a street was named after him. A map of that date, included in the United Brethren History, shows “Lehman Street” running along the north bank of the Great Miami between N. Main Street and Forest Avenue (now a stretch of Riverview):





While I have no direct evidence that Lehman Street was named after our George, and I'm told that it is almost impossible to find records of why particular street names were chosen, it seems likely that, if he was considered eminent enough to be included in the memorial on the south bank of the river, he might also have been eminent enough to have a street named after him on the north bank.

The Illustrated History of the Dayton Fire Department includes a picture of George Lehman, described as a likeness made from a photograph taken when he was a member of the City Council and hence at the time when he lived in the big brick double:



GEORGE LEHMAN

### III. A House Divided

Lehman and his wife Amelia lived in the house he built until March of 1867, when he sold the property (including both entire lots) to Samuel Boltin, judge of the Probate Court. Within weeks, Judge Boltin re-sold the south half of the house, plus the stable and the rest of the lot to the south, to Thomas Cramer, about whom I know nothing further. About a month later, Judge Boltin sold the north half of the house to Eliza King, whose husband J. B. King was a traveling agent for the New York Life Insurance Company. The judge made a tidy little profit by thus dividing the property. He had paid George Lehman \$7500 for the whole thing, and he sold Cramer the "big" half for \$4700 and King the "little" half for \$3500, thus clearing \$700, which, as it happens, is exactly what George Lehman had paid for lot 497 alone.

From this point in the spring of 1867 all the way until 1921, the two halves of the house continued to be bought and sold separately from each other. The south half was the premier property, since it

included both the stable and the rest of lot 499, whereas the north half only included half of the house and a narrow walkway strip alongside.

The Kings did not live in the house for long; in February of 1868 they sold their north half to William C. Miller, about whom I know nothing further. The Cramers, too, did not stay; in March of 1868, Thomas Cramer and his wife sold the south half to John J. Mayers, listed a few years later in the 1871-72 city directory as both the proprietor of the Osceola Flour Mills and a manufacturer of flax bagging, the two businesses being at addresses across the street from each other on east Fifth Street.

Mayers and his wife Eliza lived in the house, then numbered 27 Brown, for ten years, but they were not entirely happy years. Following out his listings in successive city directories hints at the tale. By 1873, he is only listed as a manufacturer of flax bagging; there is no mention of any flour mills, then or later. By the 1876-77 directory, the (presumably more expensive) bold-face and capital letters are gone, and his listing has shrunk to the simplest available form. And by December of 1877, he is being sued by the Firemens Insurance Company for defaulting on a mortgage on the house. The mortgage was not taken out at the time of purchase, but rather two years later, and named in the lawsuit are numerous other creditors, also trying to get their money out of poor Mayers. One may infer that as his business began to fail, he began taking out loans wherever he could in an effort to keep it afloat. One such loan was from Joseph Kratochwill, proprietor of the grist mill on Sixth Street in the building now occupied by Jay's Seafood Restaurant and resident of the double house next to the mill, now occupied by Womanline.

Mayers did not even contest the suit, the mortgage was foreclosed, and the house was seized by the court to be sold at auction. "On the 8th day of June A.D. 1878 at the door of the Court House in the City of Dayton Montgomery County Ohio" Master Commissioner Frank Conover, at the direction of the court, did "expose said premises...to sale at public auction..." The Firemens Insurance Company, plaintiff in the suit, bought the property for \$3667, something of a bargain, since the court-ordered appraisal had come in at \$5500.

The ad that the Master Commissioner placed in the newspaper to announce the auction includes a description:

*Said premises contain the south side of a double brick house, containing seven rooms and kitchen; gas all through; Holly in yard, kitchen and stable; large cellar, a good brick stable, frame carriage-shed. Fifty-five feet front on Brown street, between Sixth and Green. Depth, 95 feet.*

Meanwhile, William C. Miller and wife had sold the north half of the house to Joseph Bigger in July 1870. Bigger and his wife Sallie lived there for a short while (the city directory for 1871 lists him at 25 Brown), but apparently moved out after only a year or so, although they owned the property for fourteen years, until December 1884, when they sold it to Mary M. Eckert.

It was Joseph Bigger's family who gave their name to Bigger Road in Kettering, which ran right through the Bigger family lands. The house now known as Polen Farm, on Bigger Road, was in fact built in 1854 by another Joseph Bigger, uncle (or maybe cousin) to the one who owned the Brown Street half-double. The Biggers were a pioneer family in southwestern Ohio. Two brothers, John and Joseph, both Revolutionary War veterans, moved west to claim lands awarded them for their military service. Our Joseph was the son of brother John, as recounted in the History of Greene County, by R. S. Dills, published in 1881:

*Joseph Bigger, retired farmer, was born in the state of Kentucky, in the year 1800. He is a son of John and Mary Bigger; the former born in Ireland, the latter in Pennsylvania. Mr. Bigger's father immigrated to this country when fourteen years old, and settled in Pennsylvania where he was married, and in 1806, by train and wagon, in company with Phillip More came to Montgomery County....They settled in a permanent house, cleared up and improved their land, living thereon*

*till their decease....They were members of the old Associate Presbyterian Church, of which they were life-long members. He was a ruling elder, and was much interested in the welfare of the church, and all matters pertaining to religion. He was an old line Whig, and a strong anti-slavery man, always laboring with might and main for the principles which guaranteed the freedom of the downtrodden and oppressed slaves. The subject of this sketch [i.e., Joseph, owner of the north side of the house on Brown Street] was reared on the farm, and received his education in the primitive district schools. He remained with his parents until twenty-five years of age, at which time...he was married to Margaret...who died without issue....After his marriage, he located in Sugar Creek Township, on the farm where he lived until 1859. September 15, 1857, he was married to Sallie (Robinson) Bosserman....In 1859, he sold his farm, bought property in Dayton, and in 1861, came to Xenia, where he purchased property, and went into business with J. B. Fleming; afterwards sold out and went to Springfield, purchasing property there. Again selling out he went back to Dayton, where he resided two or three years [this was when he bought and lived in the north half of the Brown Street house], and then went back to Xenia, where he has since remained. He owns a beautiful residence on west Market Street [and at the time of writing also still owned his half of the Oregon house], where he and his wife are enjoying all the comforts and necessaries of life. He and his wife are members of the United Presbyterian Church, to which he has been connected many years....He has been ruling elder while living on Sugar Creek, and like his parents is much interested in religious matters, being a zealous worker therein. He is a Republican in politics, having always voted with that party upon all questions at issue [the party of Lincoln--not surprising, for the son of that staunch anti-slavery father].*

To resume our story: just a few years before buying their half of the house on Brown Street, Mary Eckert's husband Jacob played a small role in one of the great epic tales of popular Dayton lore. I have to back up a few steps to tell the story.

In June of 1878 James Ritty, proprietor of the Empire Saloon at 10 S. Main Street, while on an ocean steamer bound for Europe, went down to visit the engine room. He became fascinated with the indicator that recorded the revolutions of the ship's propeller shaft, and conceived the idea of a similar machine to record cash sales in his saloon or similar retail businesses. Once he got home, he and his brother John (a machinist) fiddled with the idea, trying out several different designs. The United Brethren history says that he took the next step *"being a man of means, and not wishing to be troubled with the manufacture of the machine himself."* Theodore Armstrong, in Our Company, by an NCR Man (published in 1949), is a bit less kind to Ritty, simply saying that he could not make a success of his invention. At any rate, both sources agree that he turned to Jacob Eckert (the former says he gave him an interest, the latter that he sold out to Eckert for \$1000).

Jacob Eckert continued to manufacture cash registers until 1880 when, according to the United Brethren history, Gustavus Sander bought out Ritty's interest. Soon thereafter a company was formed, called the Dayton Manufacturing Company. Armstrong, less kind to Eckert, says that Jacob *"had neither the capital nor ability to develop the device and a year later [i.e., a year after he bought in] sold it to the National Manufacturing Company."* One has the impression that Armstrong, a self-described "NCR man," doesn't want anyone to look good except "Saint Patterson"!

At the time that Eckert ceased to be involved, however that came about (since the two accounts differ), nineteen machines had been sold, four of them to John H. Patterson. Evidently Patterson saw the possibilities in the Ritty-Eckert machines, because in 1883 (or 1884, depending on whether you believe Armstrong or the United Brethren--who were, after all, writing far closer in time to the actual events, and before John Patterson became a local saint) he bought up all the stock and renamed the company The National Cash Register Company. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Jacob Eckert disappears from Dayton city directories for a couple of years following his involvement with the cash register. When he reappears he is listed simply as a "traveling agent," then the

following year (and for many thereafter) as an agent for Buckeye Iron and Brass Works. This was a thriving company first established in 1844. The United Brethren History comments that

*...growth of the business was so rapid that it became necessary to increase the resources of the firm, and June, 1876, the present company was incorporated with a capital stock of seventy-five thousand dollars....The business of this firm consists of the manufacture of brass goods for steam-engine builders and steam fitters' use. A special department of the concern is devoted to the manufacture of tobacco cutting machinery. Linseed oil and cottonseed oil machinery are also largely made. The specialties of this firm find their way into nearly all parts of the civilized world. The annual output of the works...is constantly increasing.*

The Firemens Insurance Company was stuck with the south half of the Brown Street double for about two years, then sold it in May of 1880 to William A. Scott, an employee of J. W. Stoddard & Co. (agricultural implements). Like Lehman when he moved out of the house on Brown Street, Scott and his wife Lydia didn't move very far; the city directory for 1879-80 lists him as residing at 28 Tecumseh (old numbering), across the alley and down a little way from the Brown Street double.

#### IV. The House Expands, the Property Shrinks

Both Scott and his company apparently prospered. By the time of the 1885-86 city directory, he is listed as an officer (Secretary) of The Stoddard Manufacturing Co., described as "Manufacturers of Sulky Hay Rakes, Mowers, Disc Harrows &c." Jacob Eckert, meanwhile, must have been doing pretty well too, because it is around this time that the two sets of neighbors apparently decided to go in together to improve the property.

Either at the same time that they bought the north side of the house in 1884 or very shortly thereafter, the Eckerts (in Mary's name) purchased an adjacent three-foot strip of lot 495, the one immediately north on which the Thomas Brown house (built 1832) sits. And in 1885 the twin mirror-image bays were added to the north and south sides of the house, the three-foot strip of lot 495 providing the necessary space on the north side. The bays show the influence of the Queen Anne style in their half-octagon shape and especially in the exterior trim at the top, below the eaves. On the south side, the trim is reminiscent of the Stick style, often carried over into Queen Anne houses (according to the McAlesters, op. cit.), while on the north it is more "classic" Queen Anne. But while deliberate asymmetry is an element of Queen Anne style, the deep symmetry of the basic Greek Revival structure held sway, and the bays are mirror-image twins in basic structure and placement. Inside, the woodwork in the two rooms now graced with bays was replaced. The new woodwork shows two different versions of Eastlake style (a Victorian-era style), and the round nail-holes reveal that it was originally attached with machine-made nails.

It seems likely that it was also at this time that the flat roofs and wood posts were added to the front entryways on both sides of the house. Clearly they are not original; the wood had to be shaped around, and partially obscures, the original stone trim above the door and at the water table ("baseboard" level), and the turned shaping of the posts that rest flush with the house at the north entry is typical of the

Queen Anne style. A number of Oregon District homes (for example, 36 Tecumseh and 114 Green) show what the original “bare” entryways probably looked like.

The Eckerts and the Scotts owned the house at 121-123 Brown for a long time, but the two families did not live there all that time. The north side did not change hands again until Jacob Eckert’s executor sold it to Joseph E. and Bertha E. Inglesinger in May of 1921. The south side also remained in the Scott family until the Inglesingers bought it too in June of 1921, thus reuniting the property in the hands of one owner for the first time in over fifty years. But well before 1921, first the Scotts and then the Eckerts had moved to Dayton View (the neighborhood now called Southern Dayton View).

The Scotts moved around 1894, after about fourteen years on Brown Street, to a house on Grand Avenue, at the southwest corner of Grand and Arnold Place. Unfortunately, that site is now a vacant lot, so it is impossible to tell what their new house was like. But that neighborhood was one of large, gracious homes set well back behind grassy front lawns--very different in feeling from the older, very urban Oregon neighborhood. And the empty lot where their house was is quite a large one, so either they had a large house or a large yard or both. William Scott, after all, was an officer of his company, which suggests he was a man of means.

The Eckerts didn’t move until around 1912 (just in time to miss the flood!), after some eighteen years in their north half of the Brown Street house. They moved to 200 W. Oxford Avenue, described in the city directory of the time as the southwest corner of Oxford and Chester Avenue. Alas, that site too is now an empty lot, but it is in the same neighborhood as the Scott house. Interestingly, Chester Avenue is apparently an old name for the present Bryn Mawr Drive. So two former owners moved from Oregon to Dayton View, one to a house which sided on Bryn Mawr, and we moved from a house on Bryn Mawr in Dayton View to Brown Street in Oregon.

Presumably each family rented out their half of the house after moving out, but the city directories did not include a reverse listing by street address before 1914, so it is impossible to verify who was living there after the Eckerts and the Scotts and before that date. In 1914, a toolmaker and a painter lived in 121 and 123 respectively (with their wives); in 1915, a widow had moved in where the painter was; by 1917, there was a widow living on each side, which continued to be the case up until just before the Inglesingers moved in.

There was one further development in the evolution of the property toward the form we find today during this period.

In 1902 ownership of the south side passed from William Scott to his son Frank J. Scott and his daughter Hannah May Scott upon his death. Frank and Hannah, in turn, deeded it back to their mother Lydia “in consideration of \$1.00 and natural love and affection...paid by Lydia Bigelow Scott...widow of...William A. Scott.” What the son and daughter deeded over was the full south side, with all of lot 499, as it had been passed along ever since Judge Boltin divided the house in 1867. But what the Inglesingers bought in 1921 was the south half of the house, that portion of lot 497 that that part of the house sat on, and a *portion* of lot 499 a little over ten feet wide, with an “outpouching” around the bay and including as much of the stable as fit within the ten feet or so of 499. So apparently sometime between 1902 and 1921, most of the vacant part of lot 499 was sold off, and presumably at that time the small frame house that stands there now was built.

## V. After the Flood

The Inglesingers moved into 123, the south side of the house, and lived there until around 1938, so for around seventeen years the house was owner-occupied once again. But the neighborhood was very different during this period from what it had been before.

The character of the Oregon District changed sharply in the wake of the 1913 flood. Along with the rest of the downtown area, the district was under somewhere from 10 to 14 feet of water in the flood of March 25-27, 1913, in which 123 people died in Dayton (300 altogether) and John Patterson of National Cash Register became a hero. The volume of flood water flowing through Dayton was the equivalent of 30 days discharge of water over Niagara Falls. It covered 14 square miles; 1500 horses drowned in Dayton, and property damage was estimated at \$100 million.

In his introduction to a booklet of photographs entitled Great 1913 Flood Dayton, Ohio published not long afterwards, Clarence B. Greene offers a contemporary account which, in its rather overripe tone, gives some evidence of the powerful psychological, as well as physical and economic, impact of the flood:

### ***Photographic Contemplation of One of Nature's Cataclysms***

*With Respect To An Inland City, The Deluge at Dayton,  
March 25, 1913, Was The Greatest Since The Days of Noah.*

*On March 25, Dayton, strong and buoyant in its more than a century's growth; hopeful and planning in the bright sunshine of past achievements and industrial possibilities; righteous and profane in accordance with the temperament of its cosmopolitan population, was unmade. Flood and fire, undreamed of and appalling, bore its beauty to the mire, dashed present hopes to the depths of stunning loss, and made its population objects of the same kind of pity and abundant charity which had touched the quick of its human soul so many times when its business, church, fraternal and commercial kin in other places suffered. In one short week Dayton was unmade and born again. Her rippling Miami, unharnessed and rebellious, wrought the destruction--and now the placid, yet still murky stream, sighs a mellow and eternal requiem over the havoc she wrought and chimes entrance to Paradise of the hundred souls she claimed. Forty-seven years ago the stream went on a similar rampage, and fifteen years ago water flowed through the streets of Dayton; but not since 1789 to 1792, when the troublesome Miami Indians gave cunning, daring and relentless warfare to early settlers, has there been such desolation and despair upon her classic banks. Major Benjamin Stites, Major John Stites Gans and Judge William Goforth negotiated for the strip of territory lying between the Miami and Mad rivers on June 13, 1789, and they called the site Venice. Yet only once during half a century had the community ever taken on the appearance of a Venice, with boats and rafts and barges floating in her streets....*

The booklet includes a picture taken from the north side of Lehman Street (present Riverview) looking across the width of the street and the river toward downtown. Visible in the left foreground are the ruins of one house; in the right foreground, another with water up to the level of its second-story windows. The line of trees marks the levee, and is filled with the debris of other smashed buildings carried down as driftwood by the floodwaters.



As soon as the flood waters receded, everybody who could afford to do so moved to higher ground, many to either Oakwood or Dayton View, being developed around this time. No longer was the Oregon District attractive to solid businessmen like Scott and Eckert. From this point until the creation of the historic district in 1972, the neighborhood was largely one of rental properties, and as the decades passed many of the houses were cut up into apartments, converted into boarding houses, or further subdivided into individually-rented sleeping rooms.

The beginning of the decline in the neighborhood is evidenced by the fact that

Mary Eckert bought the north half of the house in 1884 for \$3500. After the addition of the three-foot strip of the adjoining lot and a very substantial improvement to the property in the form of the addition of the bay, the estate of Jacob Eckert sold it to the Inglefingers for \$2900 in 1921.

Those who rented 121 from the Inglefingers were certainly not the officers of major manufacturing firms. A blacksmith, a laborer, an assembler, another laborer, a rubberworker (who stayed for seven years), a machinist--these were the Inglefingers' tenants.

It was apparently the Inglefingers who were responsible for the last major improvement to the property before its long decline. Between 1923 and 1924, the assessed value of the property for tax purposes jumped by slightly over 50%, suggesting that it was at that time that the old frame kitchen was replaced by the present one-story, flat-roofed brick extension across the back of the house.

Simple as it is, the addition does reflect then-current architectural styles, with its flat roof surmounted by a parapet wall topped with ceramic tiles. Both the Mission (1890-1920) and Italian Renaissance (1890-1935) styles feature tile roofs, which may be flat and may have balustrades or parapet walls. But the simplicity of the addition to the house at 121-123 Brown most closely reflects the Spanish Eclectic style (1915-1940). According to the [Field Guide to American Homes](#), cited above, about ten percent of Spanish Eclectic homes have flat roofs with parapet walls, typically in examples showing a combination of one- and two-story units. And the style does typically feature tile roofs.

## VI. The Downward Slide

The middle decades of the twentieth century saw a vast northward migration of poor Southern blacks and poor Appalachian whites, drawn to Dayton and similar “border-Northern” cities by high-paying factory jobs that did not require much education. Working on the line, or even as a janitor, at “The Cash” or Frigidaire or one of the General Motors plants provided a far better living than mining or sharecropping, especially as the soil became exhausted and the mines began to play out. [See Isabel Wilkerson, [The Warmth of Other Suns](#), for a powerful account of the non-economic reasons motivating the migration of Southern blacks.]

In Dayton during this time period, the west side of town became an increasingly monochromatic black ghetto, while the inner east side, including the Oregon district, became something of a ghetto for Appalachian whites.

Throughout the 40’s and 50’s, the lure of the big Dayton factories is evident. Tenants in the two sides of the house (now strictly a rental property) include press operators, machinists, drivers, and mechanics for NCR, Delco Brake Division, Inland Manufacturing, Delco Products, and Frigidaire, along with a seamstress, a cook at Servis & Buhl Restaurant, a construction worker, and others, including a number of names with no occupation listed. Also during this period, frequently more than one (unrelated) name is listed for each side--sometimes as many as four.

Beginning in the early 60’s, the big brick double took on another character. For most of that decade, only one name is listed for each side, and it is that of a retired widow.

Beginning in 1970, the south side (123) is officially listed as consisting of four apartments, again often occupied by widows, or retired men, though with an occasional worker.

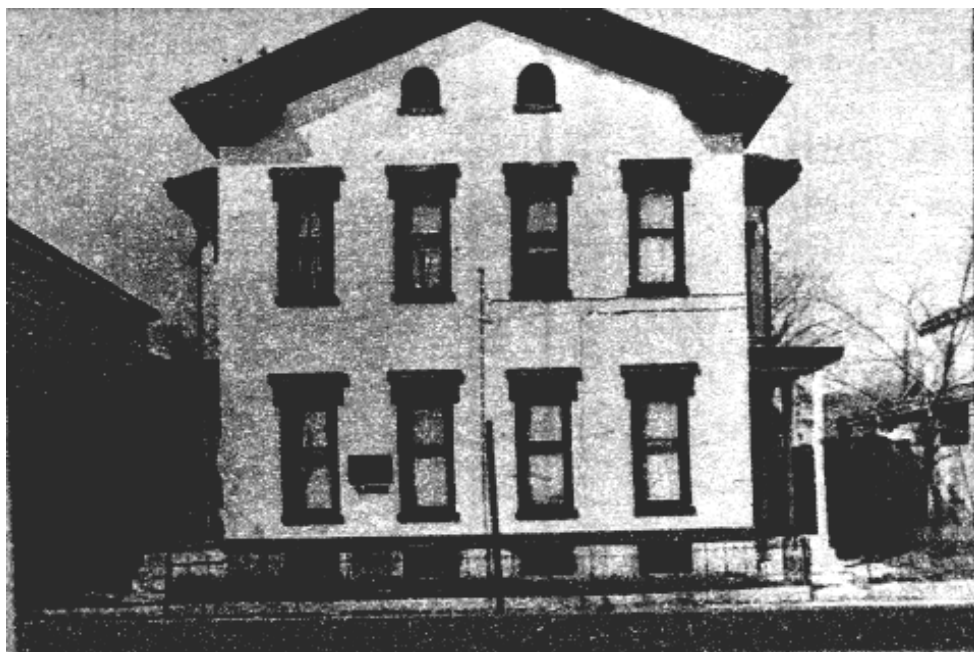
By 1974 the entire building is listed as vacant. It remained so until purchased by Rodger and Marlis Southworth in 1977, and for a short time after that, as they rehabbed the present apartment at 123 to live in while working on the rest of the building.

The listings in the city directories may not tell the whole story. Partitions discovered by the Southworths as they began their work suggested that the house at 121-123 Brown became a flophouse at some point during this period. Two new doorways were punched through the south and north sides, in the positions of the back windows of the (present) north side dining room and south side apartment kitchen. Just inside each of these doorways, a new stairway into the basement was created on each side of the house. The space on all three levels, basement, first, and second floors, was subdivided by partitions. There were eighteen rooms on the first and second floors, and more in the basement (perhaps as many as twelve), each apparently rented separately and sharing a few communal baths.

The sorry state of the Oregon neighborhood towards the end of this period is revealed in a popular nickname for the intersection of Fifth and Wayne, recalled by Wayne Springer, who grew up only a block or two away. He reports that they used to call it “Filth and Wine.”

An article written by Ann Heller and published in the [Dayton Daily News](#) on September 25, 1983, is accompanied by a picture (taken by Jim Rutledge) of the house at 121-123 Brown in its flophouse phase, just before the creation of the historic district:





## VII. Death and Resurrection

By 1957 conditions in the neighborhood had degenerated to the point that the East Dayton Urban Renewal project, the largest federally assisted one in the nation, called for “clearance and redevelopment” of 750 acres, including all of the present Oregon district neighborhood. That call was never acted on, but in the early 1960’s, construction of U.S. 35 East cut a swath of destruction through the old Oregon neighborhood (historically much larger than the present historic district) and separated off the neighborhood immediately around 121-123 Brown from the rest. The demolition of so many historic structures occasioned by that project and the construction of I-75 through the downtown during the same time period galvanized the energies of people interested in historic preservation. Under pressure from such activists, Dayton passed a zoning ordinance in 1968 providing for historic district zoning and calling Oregon “a significant grouping of structures of outstanding architectural and historical association which are of irreplaceable value to the City of Dayton.” In 1972 Burns-Jackson Historic District (later renamed Oregon) was created by city ordinance, and the following year City-Wide Development Corporation was formed to provide low-cost rehabilitation loans.

Ann Heller’s article, referred to above, describes the impact of these developments on the house at 121-123 Brown:

*Some large houses nearly defeated hopes of saving them. One of the problem houses was the big 18-room house at 121-123 Brown Street. Ten years ago [i.e., in 1973], it was literally a white elephant, an oversized brick double, painted white. It had been abandoned, then infiltrated by winos looking for any bed in the night.*

*The house stood open to any who would walk in. Rooms, furnished with urine-soaked mattresses, old couches, and ancient fixtures, were littered with old shoes and clothes and beer bottles. Peeling wallpaper dangled in foot-wide strips, and chunks of plaster littered the floors. Pigeons, dead and alive, occupied an upstairs bedroom, leaving behind piles of feathers and droppings. Outside, a tumble-down carriage house, no more than a pile of bricks, was a playground for children.*

*“There are rats as big as cats in there,” said a next-door neighbor who dourly predicted, “Nobody’s going to fix up that house. That plaster falls in of a night till we can’t sleep. You can hear it fall on a windy night, just like bombs falling down.”*

*She was wrong about the house. In 1977, Marlis and Rodger Southworth turned their backs on their Huber Heights plat house and bought the big Brown Street double and began its conversion.*

*"I don't know what came into me," Mrs. Southworth says now. "I was like a pioneer. There wasn't anything I didn't do." Under the tutelage of her husband, that included dry-walling, insulating, roofing, and stripping woodwork. In the past five years she sandblasted and stripped the paint from the trim for 54 windows. In August, nearly six years after they started, she stripped her last batch of doors.*

*"The whole thing was fulfillment," she says. "Everybody had to have a climax in their life--I guess this was mine."*

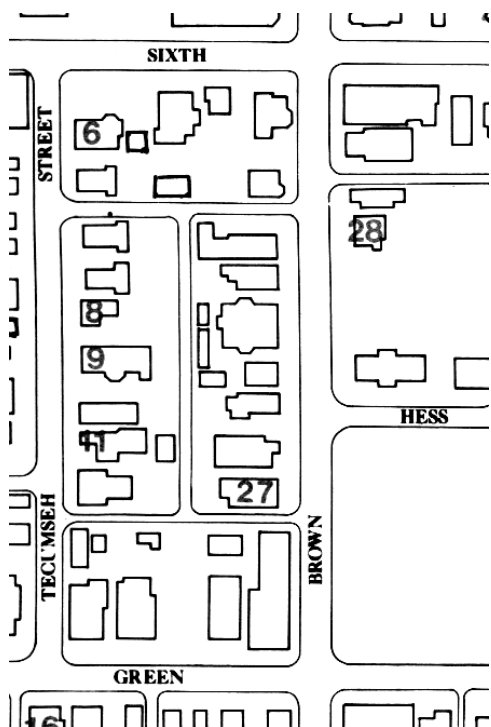
*But now, she says, "I'm burned out totally. I don't want to do anything." And so she casually dismisses the boarded up fireplace in the dining room, saying merely, "Of course, this is not finished."*

Marlis added more observations of the house as the Southworths found it that testify to its final years as a rental property and its years as an officially vacant flophouse. She said that there was evidence that people even lived in the closets. On the north side, partitions had been installed creating closets in the dining room and the living room, which people had apparently been living in. "We didn't find any treasures," she said. "We did find some old wine bottles--we had plenty of those!"

In the basement, Marlis said, the floor in the two furnace rooms was dirt. But people were living down there, and sinks had been installed for them. In fact, she said that they pulled twelve sinks out of the basement in the course of their rehab work. The basement has no floor drains, and the sewer line runs about five or six feet off the floor, so the basement sinks had to be installed above the level of the sewer lines. There were pedestals for people to stand on to reach the sinks, but even so they would have had to reach up overhead to turn on the water.

Marlis also reported that there were two big cisterns inside the house, one inside the back door on the south side, underneath the upstairs bathroom on that side (about where the laundry tub now is), and the other in the upstairs hallway on the north side, in the closet which used to be where the linen closet now is. The old closet was twice as wide as the linen closet, and the cistern was inside it.

Also, there was evidence of a fire in the attic; "it was all charred up there," Marlis said. She speculated that the fire happened perhaps ten years before they got the house.



The Southworths bought the property from Myron L. Hall, who lived across the street at 116 Brown. Mr. Hall had bought the property in order to try to preserve it; he had even repaired the roof a bit to try to prevent further water damage.

An outline map of the Oregon Historic District published in 1978 in a booklet containing historical and architectural background material and a walking tour of the district shows what structures existed on the property when the Southworths bought it. Clearly visible is the outline of the big brick double across from the vacant lot on Brown Street below the house marked "28" for walking-tour purposes (the vacant lot has since seen the construction of a five-unit condominium). Behind the house is the outline of the long brick stable, extending over into the next lot south. Just south of the stable is another structure, most likely the frame carriage shed mentioned in the Master Commissioner's auction ad in 1878. Just north of the stable is another small structure, nature unknown.

Ben Kline, owner from May 1975 and occupant from February 1976 until his death in June 2008 of the house at 28 Tecumseh just across the alley from the Brown Street double, reported that the carriage shed was two stories high, with the gable end facing the alley, and the stable had three bays. In the summer of 1976 or 1977, Kline recalled, the owner before the Southworths hired some boys to demolish the ruins of the stable. There were at that time still two bays and piers, but no roof. There was also a large cistern near the back steps which continued to collect water.

Marlis Southworth said that the stables in back were just shells, with knee-high wall fragments, when they got the house, so they knocked them down to make room to set the dumpsters needed for the debris of the rehabilitation work.

The task the Southworths set themselves was Herculean (the Augean stables come to mind), and their accomplishments truly amazing. When we bought the house in 1994, three different neighbors on three separate occasions told us the story of what happened when they began to clean the pile of pigeon droppings out of the second floor: it was so deep, they found a sofa underneath it that they didn't know was there.

The Southworths removed the partitions that had been added during the flophouse era and returned the floorplan much closer to the original one, with a few deliberate changes (e.g., to create the master bedroom suite and master bathroom on the 121 side). They reconfigured the house from a half-and-half, mirror-image double into a three-quarters, one-quarter, main unit plus apartment unit.

According to Marlis, in the course of their rehabilitation work they installed five miles of new electrical wiring and three hundred 12-by-6 sheets of drywall. They took advantage of the special rehab loans made available through City Wide Development Corp. and Winters Bank, but ran a 40% cost overrun on the entire project.

Initially, the Southworths worked on creating the apartment at 123 Brown, which occupies the front half of the south side of the property. For nine months after buying the house, every day after putting in a full day's work at their separate jobs, they would eat dinner at Burger King, use the restroom there (since there was no functioning one at the Brown Street property), and head over to Brown Street to work on the apartment.

Marlis said that she had to sandblast the paint off the apartment door, because it had crystallized, and it took her thirty-two hours of sandblasting. The only injury in the entire project happened in the apartment right at the beginning, when Marlis stepped on a rusty nail.

One of the first things the Southworths did was to strip the "white elephant" of its white paint. The work was done by a man named King, from Cincinnati, who stripped a number of Oregon District houses using muriatic acid. For years, Marlis said, she couldn't plant anything around the house because of the residual acid in the soil.

After nine months, they moved into the apartment in 1978 and devoted their energies for the next three years to rehabbing the rest of the house. The bay on the north side had sunk two inches, so they had to have a new concrete and brick footer created to support it. The cherry mantelpiece was already present in the north side dining room when the Southworths got the house, and all the fireplaces were already bricked up (perhaps by a cost-conscious landlord during the rental phase, trying to control utility bills).

Much of the flooring was buckled and water-damaged, and a hole had been cut through it in the dining room to create the new basement entry just inside the side door that had been cut through. The Southworths closed up the door and recreated the original window (as they had done in the apartment on the other side), and used flooring salvaged from the living room to complete the hardwood flooring in the dining room and front parlor (current library). Leaving the old ceilings in place, they created new ceilings eighteen inches down, thus making space for insulation and new furnace and A/C ductwork.

Marlis recalled that a woman named Esther, "a typical Kentuckian," lived next door at the time in the frame house on lot 499 (125 Brown St.). "She made the best beef stew," Marlis said, "and she used to bring it over all the time."

Rodger and Marlis moved from the apartment at 123 into the master suite at 121 in 1981, and their son Jonathan was born in November of that year. The family continued to live at 121 until moving to Beaver Creek in August of 1988, just before Jonathan started first grade.

The stained glass inserts in the transom areas above the kitchen door and master bathroom door in the 121 side were made by Marlis herself. Marlis said that she began doing the stained glass work after Jonathan was born, because she had nothing to do and she was getting bored. She also admitted that it was therapeutic: she found the work very calming, and it helped her not to be so nervous about Jonathan.

The front window of the master bathroom on the 121 side was completely filled by a stained glass depiction of a swan swimming past some reeds, created by neighbor Dick Carter and presented to Marlis by Rodger to cheer her up after surgery. Dick and Rosalie Carter still lived in the neighborhood when we bought the house, as did their daughter Lee Stone and her son. Marlis told Carter what design she liked, and he made the window to order.

In addition, the Southworths added the large two-car garage (with even larger attic above it) that stands in the northwest corner of the property. They built the garage themselves in 1986.

While the Southworths lived in the 121 side of the house from 1981 until 1988, they rented out the apartment at 123. After moving to Beaver Creek, they rented out both sides. The restored fortunes of the Oregon Historic District are revealed in the occupations of their tenants: while they lived in the house, a government worker in the apartment, and later law students on the big side and an elementary school teacher and her roommate, a server at Jay's Seafood Restaurant, in the apartment.

When we bought the house, the woodwork was stripped and bare, and some pieces of the interior woodwork trim were missing. The fireplace mentioned in the Heller article was still incomplete, with parts of the cherry mantelpiece missing. The mantel is not original. Almost certainly, Lehman installed one of his marble mantelpieces (the marble surround can still be seen around the edge of the coal grate), but it was likely looted from the house during the years when the house stood abandoned and condemned before the Southworths bought it.

We had all the woodwork finished, including creating replacements for missing parts (which sometimes had to be handcarved). We added the stained glass piece in the transom above the upstairs study door in 121, a 50th birthday gift to Michael. We replaced the tile in the master bathroom (the tile installed by the Southworths was failing) and reconfigured the swan window, leaving the swan in the front window and installing the top half, with the reeds, into the bottom half of the side window, adding a row of beveled glass above the stained glass in both windows. And we replaced the stained glass in the tops of both front doors of 121 (the old panes were cracked, missing, or slopped with paint in a way impossible to remove). Later, we installed the matching stained glass panels in the transoms above the guest bedroom and guest bath doors in the 121 unit, as well as matching stained glass transom pieces above the master bedroom and master bathroom doors (replacing at that time the bathroom-door piece Marlis had made).

We also had the iron fencing repaired, sandblasted, and painted, and a second gate made to match the existing one. Finally, we created the present landscaping and constructed the dry stone wall along the back portion of the south property line out of broken limestone slabs unearthed when the garden beds were being dug up for planting. But all in all, what we did and contracted to have done pales by comparison with what the Southworths accomplished.

For the first ten years or so of our owning the house, we rented out the apartment while living in the larger portion. In 2005 we decided to stop renting it out and convert it into a small retreat center for use by day and overnight retreatants, small faith-sharing groups, and as a locus for individual spiritual direction. This is how the apartment space is still being used as of this writing.

Our owning and living in this house feels providential to us (both our purchase of it and the sale of our old home seemed preternaturally swift and easy), and we experience it as a great blessing. May all who come to share this roof with us feel similarly blessed.

*“...town children have...this compensation  
for the freedom and all the delights of growing up on a farm:  
when they look down from a height and see, one after another,  
the many houses that are familiar,  
there is stored away in their minds a knowledge  
of the inexhaustible richness and complication of ordinary daily life.  
They may be unaware of this knowledge,  
but it will be of value to them  
in the day when they awaken from the assumption  
that their own lives are to be brilliantly out of the ordinary.”*

*--Helen Hooven Santmyer, Ohio Town*

### Acknowledgments

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Ben Kline, the best of neighbors, for sharing the fruits of his own delvings into local history, for calling the Santmyer passages to my attention, for suggesting promising avenues of research, and for reading through numerous drafts and offering helpful comments, critiques, and corrections.

I would also like to thank Marlis Southworth for sharing her memories and photos.

Helen Hooven Santmyer's Ohio Town is copyrighted in 1962 by the Ohio State University Press. It was published by Harper and Row, New York, in 1984.

## TIMELINE

(adapted from the one compiled by Ben Kline)

- 1789 U.S. Constitution adopted.
- Maj. Benjamin Stites, John Stites Gano, and William Goforth agree to purchase the site of Dayton from John Cleves Symmes for 83 cents an acre; they plan to name the Mad River the Tiber, and the settlement Venice. The plans fall through.
- 1795 Treaty of Greenville follows a series of military victories over Indians by Gen. "Mad" Anthony Wayne; provides for an end to Indian hostilities, a prisoner exchange, and the opening of the Ohio Valley to white settlers.
- 1796 Dayton founded on south bank of Great Miami, opposite mouth of Mad River.
- 1802 Dayton plat recorded by Daniel Cooper, Israel Ludlow.
- 1803 Ohio became a state and Montgomery a county.
- 1804 Post office established at Dayton; Benjamin Van Cleve, postmaster.
- 1805 Dayton incorporated.
- 1808 First brick house in Dayton built by Henry Brown.
- 1811 Troops under William Henry Harrison defeat Indians at Tippecanoe.
- Earthquake felt at Dayton, Dec 16-17; more Jan. 23, 1812.
- 1817 Dayton's first bridge built across Mad River for \$1,400.
- 1818 First stagecoach service Dayton to Cincinnati.
- 1820 Dayton population 1,139; Ohio population 581,434.
- 1829 Miami-Erie Canal opened to within 4 miles of Cincinnati; first canal boats reached Dayton.
- 1829 First Oregon District plat (Brainard Smith): E. Fifth St., 27 lots.
- 1830 Dayton population 2,954.
- 1833 Cisterns built under streets.
- Cholera epidemic; 33 dead.
- Peter Augenbaugh plat in Oregon District.
- 1835 The National Road (present U.S. Rte. 40) into Ohio.

- 1836 Covered bridge built over Great Miami at Main St.; washed away, 1867.
- 1840 Dayton population 6,067; Ohio population 1,519,467.  
Oregon Fire Company organized; headquartered at 6th and Tecumseh Sts.  
William Henry Harrison "Log Cabin" (Whig) convention in Dayton.
- 1841 Dayton became a city.
- 1842 Ex-president Martin Van Buren visited Dayton Democrats.
- 1843 John Quincy Adams visited Dayton.
- 1845 William Roth buys lot 497 from Cooper Cotton Co.**  
Dayton population 9,792.  
First canal boat from Toledo.  
R.S. Hart plat uses "Oregon" name.
- 1846 Surviving Miami Indians removed to Kansas.
- 1847 Flood, Jan. 2.
- 1848 City had 962 brick, 925 frame buildings.  
First daguerreotype taken in Dayton.
- 1849 Crutchett's natural gas lighting, Feb. 5.  
Summer cholera epidemic, 216 dead.
- 1850 Dayton population 10,976.  
Central High School established.  
Courthouse at corner of Third & Main dedicated.
- 1856 Railroad station built off Sixth St.
- 1858 First city jail, between 5th & 6th Sts.
- 1859 George Lehman buys lot 497 from Catherine and Orison Dudley.**  
Abraham Lincoln visits Dayton, 4 1/2 hours, Phillips House.
- 1860 George Lehman builds Greek Revival-style double brick house, with frame kitchen and brick stable behind, on lots 497 and 499.**  
Dayton population 20,081.



- Dayton Public Library established.
- 1861-65 Civil War.
- 1861 Oregon Guards formed (Civil War unit).
- ca. 1862-70 George Lehman served on Dayton City Council, representing Fifth Ward.**
- 1863 Dayton Journal building burned by Vallandigham supporters (opponents of the war) after his arrest in Dayton and removal to Cincinnati.
- 1864 Paid city fire department established, through leadership of George Lehman, Ezra Bimm, and James Turner.**
- 1866 Flood in Dayton.
- 1867 early March: George and Amelia Lehman sell Brown Street double to Judge Samuel Boltin.**
- late March: Judge Boltin sells the south half of the house, plus the stable and the rest of lot 499, to Thomas Cramer.**
- April: Judge Boltin sells the north half of the house to Eliza King.**
- 1868 February: Eliza and J. B. King sell the north half of the house to William C. Miller.**
- March: Thomas Cramer and wife sell the south half of the property to John J. Mayers.**
- 1869 George Lehman leads in creation of city water works.**
- Turner Opera house burned.
- Dayton Street Railway chartered.
- 1870 William C. Miller and wife sell north half of house to Joseph Bigger.**
- Dayton population 30,473.
- All-iron Main St. Bridge built.
- Oregon Engine House became city jail.
- 1873 Metropolitan police force organized.
- 1875 indoor "wash-out" water closet appeared.
- 1877 John J. Mayers sued by Firemens Insurance Co. for defaulting on mortgage on Brown St. property.**

Free public night school started.

**1878 June 8: south half of Brown St. property sold at auction by the court to Firemens Insurance Co.**

June: James Ritty conceives idea for cash register while steaming to Europe.

**ca. 1879 Ritty turns to Jacob Eckert to manufacture his cash registers; Eckert does so until sometime in 1880, selling 19 machines, 4 to John H. Patterson.**

**1880 William A. Scott buys south half of property from Firemens Insurance Co.**

Dayton population 38,678.

First telephone service in Dayton.

1882 Electricity in Dayton.

1883 Flood in Dayton.

**1884 Mary M. Eckert (wife of Jacob) buys north half of house from Joseph and Sallie Bigger.**

New Courthouse built.

National Cash Register Co. founded.

Soldiers Monument dedicated.

**1885 Queen Anne-style bays and front entry-way roofs added to the Brown St. double by the Scotts and the Eckerts.**

1887 Last Oregon plat recorded.

1888 Stone, fireproof public library building opened at Cooper Park.

First electric streetcar.

1889 Natural gas for fuel available.

Decision to pave Dayton Streets (Committee of One Hundred).

1890 City sewer system begun.

Dayton population 61,220.

1892 First "skyscraper," 9-story Callahan Bank Bldg., erected.

Steele High School replaced Central.

- 1894**      **The Scotts move from south half of property to Grand Ave. in Dayton View; south half of Brown St. house becomes rental property.**
- 1895      Electric lighting in Dayton.
- 1896      Dayton population 80,000.  
City had 11 railroads and 19 district schools in 29 buildings.
- 1898      Wm. Robt. Jenkins, first black police officer, hired.
- 1900      Dayton population 85,330; Ohio population 4,157,545.
- 1902**      **Ownership of south half of Brown St. property passes from William Scott to son Frank and daughter Hannah May upon his death; they deed it back to mother Lydia.**
- 1903      Orville Wright flew his plane (first powered flight).
- 1906      Dayton population 85,333.
- 1910      Dayton population 116,577.  
Memorial Hall constructed.
- 1912**      **The Eckerts move from the north side of the Brown St. house to W. Oxford Ave. in Dayton View; their half of Brown St. house also becomes a rental property.**  
Miami and Erie canal abandoned.  
C.F. Kettering invents self-starter for cars; no more cranking.
- 1913**      **March 25-27: Great Dayton Flood; Brown St. house under 10-14 feet of water.**
- 1914-18      First World War.
- 1914      Dayton adopted city manager form of government.
- 1915      Miami Conservancy District organized to build and manage a massive flood-control system; all properties flooded in 1913 assessed a special tax to pay for it.
- 1917      Last fire horses replaced by motorized engines.  
City adopted zoning code.
- 1920      Dayton population 152,600; Ohio population 5,759,394.
- 1921**      **May: Joseph E. and Bertha E. Ingelfinger buy north half of Brown St. house from Jacob Eckert's executor.**

**June: the Inglefingers buy south half of house (but not the rest of lot 499) from Lydia Scott; the house is reunited in the hands of one owner for the first time since 1867. The Inglefingers live in 123, the south side, and rent out 121, the north side.**

**1923 Inglefingers replace old frame kitchen with one-story, flat-roofed brick addition across back of house.**

Miami Conservancy District flood-control system, including five dams, completed; at the time, the largest construction project in the United States ever.

1929-31 Construction of elevated railroad tracks.

1930 Dayton population 200,980.

**ca. 1938 The house at 121-123 Brown becomes strictly a rental property; not owner-occupied again until 1978, 40 years later.**

1939-45 Second World War.

1940 Dayton population est. 215,000.

1947 Last electric streetcar ran.

1949 City income tax inaugurated.

1950 Dayton population 243,872.

1957 East Dayton Urban Renewal Project calls for "clearance and redevelopment" of 750 acres, including all of Oregon neighborhood.

1966 Montgomery County Landmark Committee urged "moratorium on demolition of structures or any major physical changes in the area."

1968 Dayton zoning ordinance adopted providing for historic district zoning, calling Oregon "a significant grouping of structures of outstanding architectural and historical association which are of irreplaceable value to the City of Dayton."

**1970 For first time, 123 (south) side of Brown St. house listed in city directory as consisting of four apartments.**

1972 Burns-Jackson (later Oregon) Historic District created by city.

1973 "Grand Opening and Tour" of seven Oregon houses organized by realtor Gene Vincent.

**1974 Entire house at 121-123 Brown listed as vacant in city directory.**

Oregon Historic District renamed, placed on National Register of Historic Places.

1975 67 houses restored or under way with loans from City-Wide Development Corp. and Winters Bank.

- 1977** Rodger and Marlis Southworth purchase 121-123 Brown Street, begin rehabilitation.
- 1978-1988** The Southworths live in the apartment at 123 while rehabbing the rest of the house, then live in the “master unit” at 121 while renting apartment.
- 1988** The Southworths move to Beaver creek, rent out both sides of house.
- 1994** Michael and Margot Merz buy the house at 121-123 Brown from the Southworths, move into 121 from their home in Dayton View.
- 1994-95** The Merzes complete restoration/rehab work on house.
- 1994-2005** The Merzes live in 121, rent out 123.
- 2005-** The Merzes live in 121, convert 123 into mini-retreat center named Corazon.