

Welsh-American Heritage Museum Timeline

412 East Main Street

Oak Hill, Ohio 45656

1841 Welsh Congregational Church organized in Oak Hill village. The first structure was wooden with double doors built on a knoll (site of the current Congregational Cemetery). Rev. John A. Davis came to the area to help organize Congregational Churches. He served as pastor until 1859, followed by Rev. William Thomas who served when the new church was built. The one other Welsh Congregational church was Bryn Hyfryd, organized in 1900 and located outside of Oak Hill.

1868 Original Welsh Congregational Church replaced with a brick structure. The bricks were made locally at the Aetna Brickyard. The new church had a tall, pointed steeple, along with a double walk-way and doors for men and women. One of the early ministers of the church was Rev. Evan Evans (Nant-y-Glo), being blind in one eye, was accused of praying with one eye open to keep an eye on his flock.

1871 The Church was founded and there were 175 members around 1890. After that a decline hit the church, the Welsh language was dying out in the area and membership declined.

1941 Although the Church has only 24 members, a three-day Centennial celebration is held in late September. A huge crowd arrived and a loudspeaker was used so the crowds outside the church could hear speakers the Hon. Thomas A. Jenkins of Ironton and Johnny Jones of Columbus.

1962 The Welsh Congregational Church was closed and the building sold to the First Baptist Church.

1971 As the First Baptist Church planned a new building in the eastern part of Oak Hill, a group of Welsh-Americans were planning a venture of their own, to purchase the church for the purpose of establishing a Welsh Museum. The core group consisted of Rev. James A. M. Hanna, Mildred Jenkins Bangert, D. Paul Morgan, Ben R. Evans and Evan E. Davis along with a host of interested citizens. The cost of purchasing the old Welsh Church was \$10,000.

May 8, 1972 The Welsh American Heritage Museum, Inc. was chartered by Ted Brown, Ohio Secretary of State. At that time it was the only Welsh Museum in the U.S. Mildred Bangert was the first and only curator the Welsh-American Museum has had. The group set about collecting all items pertaining to the preservation of Welsh heritage and culture. Objectives of the corporation were:

To foster Welsh family ties throughout the world

To collect and preserve records, relics, heirlooms of Welsh families in a museum setting

To preserve for all time as a heritage museum possession of the old Welsh Congregational Church in Oak Hill, Ohio

To keep the Welsh culture and traditions alive in the area

To permit civic-minded organizations use of edifice

June 1995 The first North American Conference for the Study of Welsh Culture and History is held on the campus of the University of Rio Grande.

May 1996 The second NAASWCH conference is held at URG.

June 29, 1996 Due to the response to the previous NAASWCH conferences and the support of the Welsh Museum's board of trustees, the local Welsh-American community and Dr. Barry Dorsey, a Welsh Studies Center was established on the campus of URG.

Oct. 19, 1996 The Board of Trustees of the Welsh-American Heritage Museum celebrates the silver anniversary of the Museum by holding a concert featuring tenor Dafydd Edwards, from Dyfred, Wales. During the June 6th meeting of Museum trustees during the Silver anniversary celebration planning, it was the "consensus of the Board that the use of the resources of the Welsh-American Heritage Museum for a Branch Studies Center could not but enhance the Museum's objectives to introduce the wealth of historical materials and their supporting artifacts held in the Museum's collections to all who could benefit from them."

The Welsh Museum is open Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1-4PM and has a telephone answering machine at 740-682-6515 for appointments. Curator Mildred lives directly across the street from the Museum and is always willing to open the doors for those who stop by outside those posted times.

The Museum served as a meeting place for the Cardigan Club, a Welsh women's group initially. Due to low membership, the Cardigan Club was combined with the Welsh-American Heritage Museum group officially in the spring of 2012. Other events held at the Museum include a gymanfa every three years, the Annual Advent Carol Sing in November and a learning lab for groups of local school children where volunteers brought the exhibits to life. The Museum trustees were active in planning the local St. David's banquet in March of each year. The Museum was also designated as a stop on the Welsh Byway in 1997.

May 1, 2012 Mildred Bangert announces her retirement as curator after a career of nearly 40 years. Mildred passed away in October 2012.

Summer 2013 The Madog Center for Welsh Studies at the University of Rio Grant has assumed more of an active role in organizing the WAHM for public use. We just received a grant in the amount of \$1967 from the *Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board* for cataloging and preserving important primary source records that are held there. \$1200 of the grant was used to employ Rachel Lyles as an intern and \$767 was used to purchase supplies. We consider this to be the first phase of our work there, and will continue working and seeking funds to bring the museum up to standards where the public can access materials as well as enjoy the artifacts that are housed there. This grant was the starting point of a 3 year project to clean, paint, organize, catalog and digitize materials in the museum.

2014 The museum received a \$700 grant from the National Welsh American Foundation (NAAF) to purchase a printer, copier, scanner and acid-free storage materials. We received a donation from the Davis' to employ the same intern as 2013 2 days (10hours/week) to continue the work of phase one and enable the museum to be open to the public. Volunteers from the board of trustees and the Madog Center worked 1-2 days per week during the summer to achieve the goals of phase one.

The WAHM page on Facebook was utilized and press releases in local papers to market the museum.

Summer 2015 URG graduate Carol Armstrong was hired as summer intern and funds donated by the Elizabeth Davis. She only worked a few weeks and was hired at the university. The Madog Center staff continued to keep open days during the summer.

Summer 2016 Donated funding from Elizabeth Davis were utilized to hire Jennifer Blake as intern.

Summer 2017 Jennifer Blake worked again as summer intern.

Summer 2018 URG Fine Arts student Anna King worked as summer intern, completing the labeling updates.

Sept. 29, 2018 Dedication of the installation of the Ohio Historical Marker at the site. Following was a presentation on Jefferson Furnace by museum trustee David W. Jones.

May 2020 The museum does not open on schedule due to COVID-19.

June 2020 The museum is awarded a \$3000 Oh Cares grant through the Ohio Humanities Council and the national endowment for the Humanities.

Intern Logan Boggs opens from 11-3pm on Mondays and Thursdays, however we request visits by appointment only. Logan is developing a website through WordPress.