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# ◆ Boone Co. Historical Society ◆

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Editor: Betsy R. Conrad

March—April 2005

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## Boone County Historical Society Programs for 2005:

Mark your 2005 calendar for these fascinating programs!

**May 19:** Frank Milburn, Inventor presented by Matt Becher.

**July 21:** Travel to Big Bone presented by The Honorable Bruce Ferguson.

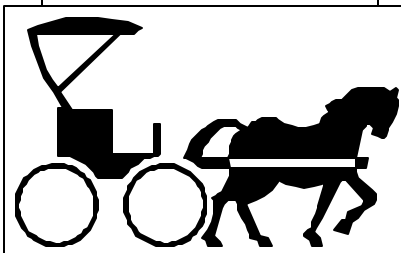
**September 15:** Latter Day Saints presented by Pam Durstock.

**November 17:** Farming on the banks of the Ohio River with the Hempflings.

Click on **Boone County Heritage Tourism Council's** website, [www.boonecountyheritage.org](http://www.boonecountyheritage.org). You'll be able to view old photos, learn about the County's rich history, find out about special events, and link to Dinsmore Homestead, Boone Cliffs, Nature Conservancy and other local organizations' websites.



The mission statement of the Boone County Historical Society will be to develop awareness and promote appreciation of the history of Boone County.



Copies of **BOONE COUNTY: FROM MASTODONS TO THE MILLENNIUM**, the library-quality hard-bound volume full of fascinating stories and pictures of Boone County's history, are available during business hours at Florence Government Center for \$30. All proceeds go to the Boone County Historical Society.

## Michael Rouse Presents Old Time Funeral Customs

If you've ever wondered about how funerals were conducted in the years gone by, here is your chance to discover the fascinating details. Our very own Michael Rouse (author of ) will present his well-researched program at our March 17 meeting. You won't want to miss this opportunity to gain insight into the lives of Boone Countians in the old days. The program begins at 7 p.m. in Community Room C of the Florence Government Center.

The following officers were elected at the last meeting:

President — Anne Leake  
Vice President — Laurie Wilcox  
Secretary — Pat Yannarella  
Treasurer — Steve Conrad



Subscribe to the **Northern Kentucky Heritage Magazine** — only \$15 / year for this wonderful semi-annual publication. Visit [www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc](http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc) or call 859/431-2666.

## Transcription from the Boone County Recorder . . .

Compiled by Laurie Wilcox, Reference Associate, Boone Co. Public Library

*The following is the continuation of a transcription of a series of articles from the **Boone County Recorder**. It is an interview with John Norris, who was a resident of Petersburg, telling of his experiences in the Battle of Lake Erie where he served under Perry in the war of 1812. The series started on October 17, 1878 page 2: 3 and continued through November 7, 1878.*

(Continued from last newsletter)

As soon as the enemy was discovered, the signal to weigh anchor was seen to float from the flag ship, sails were set, flags unfurled, and each vessel of the little fleet was making what headway it could straight for the hostile ships. The wind, however, was light and the progress slow. Although the British commander had undoubtedly been cruising in search of the American fleet, he no sooner saw them standing cut to meet him with such evident eagerness to accept his challenge than, either his courage failed him or else he hoped by strategy to draw Perry into persuading him into the harbor of Malden, where the British land batteries could render efficient aid. He therefore made all sail as if to avoid the conflict; but about the middle of the forenoon the wind having freshened, and finding escape impracticable he rapidly formed in line of battle and gallantly awaited the onset.

At the beginning of the engagement the British had the advantage of the wind; but Perry, having also formed as close a line of battle as the unequal sailing qualities of his vessels would permit, sailed bravely into action, the Lawrence, his flag ship, being slightly in advance and the rest of the fleet coming up as rapidly as possible. Two broadsides were delivered by the British as the American s advanced. To these our ships made no reply, but sailed serenely on, and not until each had gained her position did they respond to the hurtling storm of shot and shell. The Caledonia, of three guns on thirty and ??? twenty ies, being the second vessel in the American line engaged the brig Hunter, of ten guns of somewhat smaller caliber; and during the entire action, which lasted two hours and three-quarters, she found no later a fog worthy of her prowess.

It is not the purpose of this papers to give a succinct account of the battle of Lake Erie; all readers of the

Recorder are already sufficiently familiar the varying fortunes of the day. With its glorious termination – or may become easily become so my consulting any of the numerous history of the United States. .... Tell some incidents that happened in notice of the John Norris.

After the battle had fairly begun. The sanguinary duel between the Caledonia and the Hunter was of so exciting a nature, and so fully occupied the efforts and attentions of the participants therein, that they had little leisure to bestow upon the deeds of sister crafts. In the hottest of the engagement, Mr. Norris was ordered by Lieut. Turner to take his rifle (he having a reputation of being the best shot), go aloft into the rigging and pick off every officer of the Hunter that he could see. During the brief absence below required to procure his trusty weapon, a ball from the enemy crashed through the mainmast, bringing in with all the rigging, down to the deck. This fortunate shot intervened to prevent the execution of a barbarous order. On asking Mr. Norris if he would literally have obeyed that command he replied “I was there sir to obey orders, not to question their propriety.”

Thenceforth until the surrender of the Hunter, which was just at the close of the engagement, Mr. Norris with the rest of his comrades, assisted in working the guns; nor did any of them use their rifles until near the end of the action, when some of the wounded crawled up from below and fired a few rounds upon the deck of the Hunter.

Early in the action one of the Caledonias guns recoiled with such force as to break from its lashings, tear up the deck around it, knock over the caboose, and upset a large quantity of boiling water, by which some of the men were badly scalded. One of the soldiers screamed in pain, but he was instantly hauled out when an officer said to him “Why, you aren’t scalded worth a da-m; come to your post, sir!”

This accident, which killed two men and wounded several others, extinguished the row of matches which are used to set off the guns. Mr. Norris was ordered to relight them; but as they were numerous and he and never send the operation performed, he was at a loss how to proceed. But the quick instinct of a true soldier came to his aid in this delemma. Taking his powder horn, he rapidly poured a train of powder in close proximity to the wicks and a flash from the pan of his rifle and every match was instantly ablaze. Soon after another of the guns was disabled, leaving

only the thirty-pounder with which to continue to fight.

About this time in the action which had now been in progress about 2 hours, happening to look toward the Lawrence, which had been all this time gallantly maintaining an equal with two powerful antagonists Mr. Norris saw that her flag was hauled down and that she floated a complete wreck, unable to reply or the yet vigorous pounding of her adversary.

“How did that scene affect you?” “I felt anxious sir, I never felt so bad in all my life I thought we were whipped.” Said Norris

While gazing on this great disaster with feelings that language would be impotent to describe, he saw a yawl, containing Commodore Perry, his son (a boy of ten years, over whom with the flag in one hand the brave commander leaned with great anxiety depicted on his countenance) and a handful of bleeding sailors, leave the ill fated vessel and proceed slowly on her way down the American line. Passing close alongside the Caledonia, she soon drew up in comparative safety to the windward of the Niagara, the third vessel in the line, after having run through so fierce a tempest of shot and shell that the water was constantly beaten into foam by those terrible missiles.

The Niagara lay so near her consort, the Caladonia, that Mr. Norris could hear distinctly the words that passed between the Commodore and Captain Elliot. Said Perry as he sprang on deck and pointing off in the distance to that portion of his fleet which had not yet come into action:

“These infernal gunboats have caused me to lose the battle.”

“It is not lost sir, “ said Elliot. “The boats might yet be made to do good service.”

“Then go bring them into action immediately sir.”

Elliot soon brought them up and ranging them under the sterns of the British vessels, inflamed their decks with such fearful energy and activity that the battle was soon over.

When the Commodore reached the Niagara and hoisted anew his pennant, the sight was greeted with tumultuous cheer from the whole fleet, the echoes of which, resounding over the din of conflict, pressed a glorious victory.

“Then,” said Mr. Norris, “I felt like a new man. I knew we were going to whip them.”

(to be continued...)



**During 2005, the City of Florence is celebrating the 175th anniversary of its official establishment. The year-long series of special events will begin with Youth in Government Night at 6 p.m. Tuesday, January 25 at Florence Government Center. Youth of all ages are invited to see Police and Fire/EMS equipment and demonstrations from 6 to 7, then to partake of an enormous birthday cake at 7 p.m.**



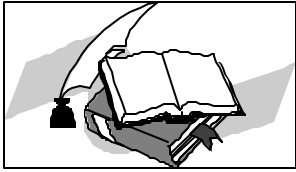
**The annual Dinsmore Homestead Foundation gala is being planned for Friday evening, June 24, at the Homestead. Everyone is encouraged to attend this event which includes a dinner on the grounds, silent and oral auctions, special music and much more. Watch for more details as the date draws nearer.**

**Northern Kentucky History Day will be held at NKU on Saturday, February 26. This annual event features a variety of presentations and displays. Everyone on the BCHS mailing list will receive a special invitation in the mail.**



To view this newsletter online, visit

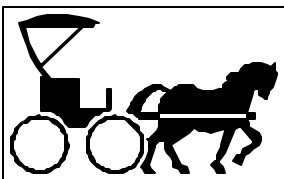
**[www.BooneCountyKy.org](http://www.BooneCountyKy.org)**. We appreciate the County providing us a place on their website.



Boone Co. Historical Society  
P.O. Box 23  
Florence, KY 41022-0023

## March 17: Old Time Funeral Customs with Michael Rouse

The Boone County Historical Society provides program meetings on the third Thursday evenings of January, March, May, July, September and November. Unless otherwise announced, the meetings will be held at the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Boulevard.



## BCHS Membership Privileges

**Annual Membership Fee** is only \$15 per household, **due every January**. This modest fee covers the cost of our newsletter mailings. We appreciate all who have joined the Boone County Historical Society to help us preserve and make known some of the history of our County. Encourage your friends and neighbors to join and attend our meetings. Membership fees can be sent to:

**BOONE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P. O. BOX 23  
FLORENCE, KY 41022-0023**

The Boone County Historical Society has received **tax-exempt status**. This means that all gifts to the Society are tax deductible.