

The restoration committee formed to plan, coordinate and implement the restoration of the historic farmhouse was faced with many challenges. A preservation architect was hired and \$16,000 in Revenue Sharing funds was quickly exhausted securing the structure. Fundraising events and grants provided the means to continue work while hands on volunteer efforts scraped and painted in accordance with recommendations from the Miami Purchase Association. Work began on National Register status to secure funding and recognition.

Continuing questions as to the cost of the project led to a re-examination of the restoration. The answer came in November 1980 when City Council approved the plan to use the building as a nucleus for historical activities in Montgomery. In 1981, the Wilder Swaim House was listed on the National Register and in 1983, Montgomery established a Historic Trust to ensure the continuing protection of the house.

The City of Montgomery continues its commitment to preservation through maintenance of the house and the surrounding property and has recently completed restoration of the second floor. The heritage gardens behind the house are lovingly planted and maintained by the Lazy Daisy Garden Club of the Montgomery Woman's Club. The Wilder Swaim House is open to the public during various City events and by arrangement.

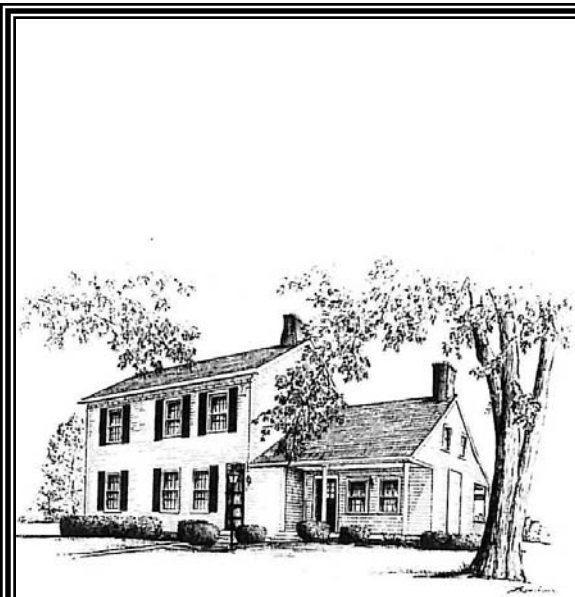
The downstairs rooms include the original portion of the house furnished in its primitive style, a bedroom with mid 19<sup>th</sup> century furnishings, a meeting room for displays, a resource room of preservation research and an office for historic files. Upstairs rooms are dedicated to genealogy records and old photos.



*This historic bicycle and sewing machine are two of the artifacts in the Wilder Swaim House.*

Today the old farmhouse serves as home to the Montgomery Historic Preservation Association. A 501 (C) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1997, MHPA builds on the work of the Montgomery Historical Society protecting our historic buildings and collecting and sharing materials that document our history. If you have items or materials or are willing to donate your time or resources to this effort, or if you have any questions, please contact the current Swaim House Curator, Janet Korach at 984-1465.

*This brochure printed courtesy of*



The Wilder Swaim House is a Montgomery landmark owned by the City of Montgomery through the Historical Properties and Preservation Trust. It serves as home to the Montgomery Historic Preservation Association.

The Wilder Swaim House represents one of the earliest frame structures in Montgomery Ohio. Located on the corner of Cooper and Zig Zag Roads, the early history of the property and the building is not a precise record. Our story begins with the sale of the property from Stephen Wilder to his brother James in 1832. James, his wife Susan and their six children travelled here from Rhode Island by way of steamboats and the newly opened Erie Canal. They lived in the house through 1879.



*James Wilder*

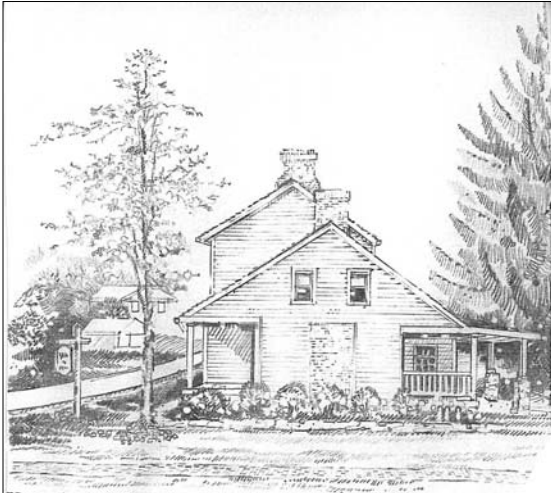


*Susan Wilder*



*Eldest daughter Olive, her husband Ira Brown, and their daughters; Elizabeth, Susan and Harriet in 1862.*

The original house is the easternmost simple structure with a gable roof, which serves as a locally distinctive example of Federal Vernacular architecture constructed before 1832. The brick chimney was used for both heating and cooking. The original entrance door and eight-glass light windows on the front contain small wavy panels and thin wood muntins. A steep enclosed stairway leads to a finished room upstairs.

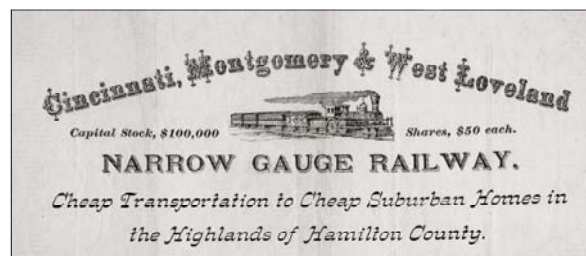


The large post and beam rectangular addition with the asymmetrical façade was added around 1840 with a rock basement under this portion. An artistic design was carved in the fascia board at the top of the two-story wing that houses a large room and two smaller rooms on each floor. The large rooms feature fireplaces with carved wood Federal style mantels while the smaller rooms were unheated. The main stairs were built onto the porch of the original home.



The Civil War crossed over to the Wilder Home in 1863 when Rebel General John Hunt Morgan led his troops into Ohio stealing horses and supplies during an unauthorized raid. James Wilder joined many local residents in making a \$125 claim for the horse taken from him. James died in 1870 and Susan's will left the farm to her children in 1874.

The land was divided and in 1875 a small portion was sold to the Cincinnati Northern Railroad and trains ran through the property. By 1882 the 1.4-mile spur to Blue Ash took four trains of commuters to Cincinnati before 7:30 AM every day. Two trains backed through the property to spend the night at the train station downtown on West Street. With the growth of cars and the service of three bus companies to Montgomery, passenger rail service was abandoned in 1926 and freight discontinued in 1932 and the tracks were torn out.



In 1933, William T. Swaim, Montgomery's long time schoolmaster, owned the 224-acre property. Swaim added the shed addition on the rear of the house with modern indoor plumbing. The cleverly designed addition did not disturb the original fabric of the house and even covered over the original outside access to the basement. He called the property Swaim Fields, although the family did not occupy the farmhouse. They lived diagonally across from the Universalist Church where William Swaim enjoyed telling stories of our history.



*Harriet Swaim*

William and his wife Sarah Bonnell had two daughters. Harriet organized the first historical society to restore the Universalist Church. Bertha married Delbert "Doc" Todd. During the Depression, they joined forces and developed a golf course on the property.

Indianapolis golf course architect Bill Diddle designed the course and residential lots were added along the course to pay for construction. The course was altered in 1965 when I-71 was built but the public course and popular 19<sup>th</sup> Hole Snack Bar continued operations for many years.

In 1975, with concern growing over recreational needs, the Park and Recreation Land Acquisition Committee recommended a \$2 million purchase of the entire 118- acre golf course for a city park. With strong feelings on both sides, the issue reached the ballot in June and the voters narrowly said "no" to the large purchase.

The Todd family then closed the golf course and sold the property to the Paul Brothers for residential development. City officials immediately expressed interest in acquiring 13 acres at the southern end of the property including the historic farmhouse. This smaller \$300,000 project gained public approval and the sale was completed in 1977. While planning began for ball fields and picnic shelters, the farmhouse future was less certain.

A request to sell the house to the tenant occupants was unanimously rejected and quickly followed by a request from Montgomery Historical Society to use the house for historic storage and make the house a Montgomery Landmark. Landmark status was approved in August 1978.