

5 QUESTIONS WITH ...

SUNDAY PLUS

Meet Cynthia Guest, Plain Township Historical Society archivist

Patricia Faulhaber

Special to the Canton Repository

Cynthia J. Guest, vice president and archivist for the Plain Township Historical Society, started in her role filing newspaper articles and donated items. Over the years, her role expanded into that of archivist.

Guest, who also volunteers for the Ramsayer Research Center at the McKinley Presidential Library and Museum, graduated GlenOak High School and from Bowling Green State University with a bachelor's degree in computer science. She went on to earn a Master of Business Administration from The Ohio State University.

She believes in order to understand why we are where we are today, we need to understand how we got there.

"What may seem like a simple question, can have a complex answer," Guest said. "If we do not preserve the answers to those questions, how can we continue to move forward and grow?"

The Plain Township Historical Society does community events to share the township's history and collaborates with entities in the community to provide displays. The group has also written several booklets on local history that are available for purchase.

"We have a new release coming out soon on the 'Historic Ridgewood Neighborhood,'" she said. "This publication was a collaborative effort between the Historic Ridgewood Neighborhood, Plain Township Historical Society and the McKinley Presidential Museum and Library."

The society is always looking for people to get involved and holds free monthly meetings on the third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Plain Township Hall, 2600 Easton St NE.

Share what an archivist is and does

My role as the archivist at the Plain Township Historical Society is to organize, manage and maintain the physical and digital items that are donated to us.

It is not simply taking donations and filing them away, but more the job of putting the pieces of a 3D puzzle back together for the items donated. Each piece of paper or item helps to tell a story about our history.

It is our job to figure out what story those items are trying to tell and share that with the community.

Why did you decide to become an archivist?

Our archives were originally just file folders with information in them and my



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Cynthia J. Guest

job was to do the filing and keep the file folders organized.

Once the Plain Township Historical Society committed to the vision of being researchers and writers, it was obvious we needed a different structure for our archives and more information.

That is when my role switched more to an archivist role. I became a storyteller and puzzle solver. That meant reorganizing our physical files and developing a digital archive so we could gather and share information more effectively to help tell stories and put the puzzle together — two things I like to do.

What kind of items have been archived for Plain Township?

We have a variety of items related to schools (yearbooks, play programs, band and choir programs, club pro-

grams, dances, spirit ribbons, clothing and trophies); businesses (advertising and items); historical documents (books, property abstracts, maps); people (photos and stories); properties (photos and deeds); clubs; genealogy; quilts; coverlets; family bibles and more.

How do you go about finding the historical information that is important to the Plain Township Historical Society?

One of our biggest resources is the community and people who share their family stories, photos and memorabilia.

Other sources are the Stark County auditor's website, Stark County Recorder's Office, historical books and maps, other historical societies, museums, old newspapers, photos, and property abstracts.

What are some of the oldest sites in the township?

If we are talking about historic Plain Township and its original 36 square miles, then that is the Unger house on 25th Street NW near Malone University. We still have homes that date into the 1800s in other areas and most people do not recognize them because of modern updates.

The towns of Cairo, Middlebranch and Oval City are where most of the older homes are located. The St. Jacob's Church at Mt. Pleasant and Kent Avenue is over 175 years old. Also, the barn located in Diamond Park is over 110 years old.

So, if you look close enough and past the modern updates, you might just find a home that is over 100 years. Just look at the Ridgewood neighborhood, construction started in 1919 with over half of the 295 homes being built by 1930.

Editor's note: Five questions with ... is a Sunday feature that showcases a member of the Stark County community. If you'd like to recommend someone to participate, send an email to newsroom@cantonrep.com.