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August 26, 2016

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board Regrant Award INTERIM REPORT

Submitted by email to fprevits@ohiohistory.org

INSTITUTION: Anderson Township Historical Society, Cincinnati, Ohio

PROJECT: Preservation, Organization and Storage of Families Histories Collection

PROJECT MANAGER: Janet Heywood, ATHS Research Chair

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PROJECT SUMMARY The Anderson Township Historical Society proposed this project to preserve and organize a significant collection of materials relating to the family histories of those who settled the area and those who have lived here over the last two centuries. These materials include originals and copies of documents such as diaries; wills; letters; photographs; newspapers and clippings; maps; cemetery records and plats; church records; schools, social organizations and business materials; and research documents and books. We need financial assistance in purchasing suitable archival storage for this collection. We want to preserve the materials while facilitating their use in response to inquiries and to inform our interpretation and public outreach.

PROGRESS Since we received the OHRAB grant in April 2016 we have carried out the following steps.

1. Selected, ordered and received archival storage materials proposed in our original budget from Gaylord Archival. We were pleased to find that Gaylord offers discounts off the catalogue list prices for bulk orders; the discounts offset the cost of shipping, not anticipated when preparing the original budget. We have spent the \$1,478 of the OHRAB grant award and additional funds from ATHS.
2. Transferred the contents of 35 large binders into archival file folders that are now organized and stored in labeled archival document cases. The items are stored upright in the document cases supported by internal box dividers. These materials were collected over the last four decades by volunteers focused on acquiring materials relevant to the families who settled Anderson Township in the late 1700s and early 1800s and to the families who have lived in this area as it developed over last two centuries. Original documents, fragile items and photographs were placed in polyester sleeves and polypropylene and polyethylene envelopes. Newsprint clippings were photocopied onto Permalite 20# paper. Many paper clips were removed.

Comment: every guide to collections care cautions against the use of metal paper clips. Removing the paper clips from this collection reinforced the importance of this rule. Even though these papers had been stored in dry conditions, paper clips used as recently as 2003 had already produced rusty imprints. Working with this collection amassed over the last 40 years has also been a lesson in the drawbacks using 3-ring binders for long-term storage. Some of the papers had developed curled edges from being in the notebooks. Even though the notebooks had been stored on bookshelves in a clean room, I was also surprised by the amount of dust that had to be removed from the contents.

3. Created first-round finding guides to the collections. We have made Excel spreadsheets for the items moved into the new archival storage. We have tallied 8,648 items (where "an item" refers to single sheets as well as bound booklets).

Many of the items had been stored in the notebooks alphabetically by surnames. Over the years it appears the filing became somewhat erratic. During the transfer into archival file folders, we had the opportunity to group the items as originally planned. Our spreadsheet for the family history papers reveals 977 primary surnames used for filing. There are, of course, multiple surnames involved in even the simplest family history. For example on the many Family Group Sheets in this collection there is a primary surname used for filing -- generally the husband's last name of the core family being described -- and then there are maiden names of mothers and wives as well as the surnames of the spouses of children. Creating electronic finding files that facilitate locating materials related to a broader spectrum of names will be a future project for genealogy volunteers. We have scanned some 107 items including samples of letters, cards, wills, land records, tax receipts, and such brochures as 1870s seed catalogues and 1860s broadsides from Ohio firms advertising state-of-art farming equipment. We have also scanned some 99 photographs. There are hundreds of items that warrant scanning as both a means of preserving the contents as well as making the information accessible. One of our future projects will be to scan more many items and link the images and records in our Past Perfect database.

TIME SPENT ON THE PROJECT As of August 25, we have spent 181.6 hours specifically on this project work. This is all volunteer time since ATHS has no paid staff. Our budget submitted for the grant designated 125 hours of volunteer time. Fortunately for organizations such as ATHS operated by volunteers, using more time than budgeted is easier to do than for organizations with paid staff whose work hours may not be flexible.

PROJECT COMPLETION The specific targets of this project are on track to be completed by December 31. Some of the delightful surprises of the work are that we are finding it very easy to design future projects involving the many fascinating items and stories we are discovering tucked away in these materials.

PUBLICITY We have included publicity about the grant award in the *Surveyor*, the ATHS newsletter, and had an article about the OHRAB grant award and ATHS project in the April issue of *Anderson Insights: the Voice of Anderson Township*, a quarterly newsletter sent to every household in Anderson Township. (A PDF file of April *Insights* is attached. See PDF "page 6" or print page 11 -- lower right-hand side for the story.)

INCREASED INTEREST IN COLLECTIONS ATHS members who have heard reports of the items with which we are working are very excited about the possibility of creating a special exhibit at the History Room at Anderson Center.

We have a contract with Arcadia Publishing to produce a book *Anderson Township, Ohio* as part of their Images of America series. The materials we are finding as we process this family history collection will be very helpful as we solidify the text and images for the book.

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