

Crabill Homestead Brief History & Rehabilitation Timeline

The following information has been taken from various sources over the years. Some from History books and some from notes, jotted down in a quick conversation. Whenever we have the home open for tours at least one person tells us of a friend or relative who lived or worked in the Crabill House.

Our hope is that we will be to organize a program where we will be able to conduct recorded interviews with many of those names we have accumulated to further the history of the home in it's later years before being acquired by the government.

David Crabill and his wife, Barbara Baer or (Bear) came to Ohio in 1808 from the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. Two of their children, Sarah (2) & Maria 1 were born in Virginia and made the trip with them. They moved to Clark County (then Champaign County) about 1812. David fought in the War Of 1812.

They were very poor when they arrived with no money to even buy a cow. They lived with and worked for brothers, Thomas and Solomon Voss for a number of years. David worked-in the fields and Barbara kept house for them. They first lived in a log cabin on 160 acres bought in 1816 in Moorefield Township for \$480. The brick house was built after 1821 but first appeared on the tax records in 1826 valued at \$411. The bricks for the house were fired on the property. The house was painted white, very possibly from the beginning, but was stripped of its paint in the 1970's. David died at the age of 57 in 1839. Barbara died in 1863. Upon her death the bachelor brothers, Joseph, Pierson, and William took over the farm. There is very little written about David & Barbara's education or political background, but there is a belief from the research of the Crabills' that they possibly practiced the Lutheran religion

The Army Corp of Engineers acquired the land in 1966 to prepare for the construction of the Clarence J. Brown Dam & Reservoir. The dam was originally planned for the where the house is located. Someone from the Corp felt that the house was a good example of an early Federal style home and plans were made to change the location of the dam to where it is presently, just south of the house. The house was originally offered to the Ohio Historical Society, but they declined feeling that they already had enough sites in the stat to maintain. It was then offered to the Clark County Historical Society.

The following excerpts are taken from CCHS newsletters written by the past director George Berkhofe. It gives a sketch of the five-year timeline in rehabilitating (restoring) the homestead by all volunteers, with a lot of backbreaking work and little to no financial means.

June 1973

- first work session June 9, 1973, 9:00 am
- rain dates planned – will meet at the Army Corp headquarters
- bring any tools, brooms, any hardware
- Wm C Smith volunteered to get plywood panels ready.

July 1973 – June 9th was the first workday.

- collapsed front porch and overgrowth clearing away
- first floor was cleared of all debris. All pieces of wood sorted & examined to find pieces to be reset or used as patterns for reproductions
- doors & windows boarded
- removed “a ton” of plaster & dumped it in an open cistern
- rained June 16th
- worked June 23rd – second floor treated same as first
- Society member who is an expert in old fireplaces has agreed to begin work on ours – he prefers anonymity.

September 1973

- great deal of time wasted arranging for electricity back to the house
 - footers for 2 fireplaces will be poured
 - cleared a concrete cistern into which an artesian springs empties & provides water to the house
 - will install electric pump which will move water uphill to the house
 - need more volunteers
 - Frank Shafer & Wm C. Smith donating many hours
 - Need services of a good bricklayer to rebuild chimney tops
- October 1973
- 2 new volunteers, Hollis & Leonard Zerkle
 - fireplace footers poured
 - brick work will start
 - missing sections of stairs to 2nd floor replaced by Wm Bader, he's not working on spindles
 - a piece of the handrail was found in the weeds, a reproduction is being made
 - still needing chimney brick layers
- November 1973
- Hollis Zerkle installed shutters on basement window for security
 - Leonard Zerkle relathing walls upstairs where plaster & lathing were torn off by vandals
 - Fireplace work continuing
 - chimney bricklayer found
 - volunteers still needed
- December 1973
- Hollis Zerkle unbricked the 2 attic windows that has been brick up
- May 1974
- Waiting for paving of main access road to house
 - Wet winter weather & road was badly torn up by construction trucks
 - June meeting scheduled at Crabill House
- June 1974
- weather & other delays
 - Corp does not want cars driving up the road
 - paving delayed
 - June meeting postponed
- July 1974
- asking for volunteers for bricklaying, carpentry, painting & landscaping
 - Mrs Louise Shawd a Crabill descendent from Texas \$150.00
 - Open house July 21st
- September 1974
- Crabill House Fund given \$200 by trustee above what it contained & with used book sale at the CC Fair, it wiped out the extra debt and left the account in the black
 - Open House attended by 55 people & \$22.00 in donations collected
 - Hollis & Leonard Zerkle did carpentry & painting work
 - our fireplace worker continues to build the fireplaces. We interviewed for 8 months for a bricklayer to do the chimneys, with many backing out after accepting the job.
 - contacted Lowell K Conley for tuck pointing
 - other 2 attic windows opened & installed the ones that Hollis Zerkle built
 - a member volunteered to do the upstairs plastering while Robert Brewer agreed to help with the parlor floor joists
 - Hollis Zerkle made and installed the front door, transom & window
 - as money allows windows will be installed on the back side of the house
 - most expensive problem life is the roof
 - must be replaced in wood shingles
 - \$50.00 from Louie Shawd for their granddaughter in memory of John & Barbara Crabill
- October 1974
- living room fireplace complete, mantel design approved & contracted by the board
 - mantel being built by Bolle Millwork Co
 - work on parlor fireplace started
 - parlor floor joists reset

- Robert Brewer, contractor poured concrete footers under joists after leveling them
 - Wm C. Smith bought 3 bundles of wood shingles at an auction at a fraction of the cost
 - Hollis Zerkle removed several layers of defective shingle from the kitchen roof down to the original scantling
 - also replaced face plates or large boards on the eaves using the originals as patterns
- November 1974
- raised \$280 in silent auction
 - will put windows in the back of house
 - will continue roofing & painting
 - work continuing on parlor fireplace & mantel
 - Melvin Kohl of S. Charleston donated a number of whole handmade bricks the same age & type of the house
 - these will finish the parlor & upstairs fireplaces instead of having to use broken fragments of the originals.
- December 1974
- open house Nov 17, 50-60 people attended
 - donation from Mrs. S.O. Nolte
 - parlor mantel l& some replacement flooring arrived
 - all totaled spent \$1000 on Crabill House
 - next spring tear off & rebuild side porch, repair 2 doorways, re-roof kitchen wing.
- January 1975
- fixing modern patching in the parlor floor
 - rebuilt enclosed cupboard in parlor
 - researched design * rebuilt
 - donation of rocking chair by Mrs. Wilmett Bailey in memory of her parents, Anna Belle & Nathan Bumgardner.
- February 1975
- pamphlet on Crabill House completed
 - first run donated by John McEnaney
 - Della Selsor fund donated \$110 before Christmas & \$500 after Christmas
 - Gale Zerkle completed construction of the cupboards in the parlor
 - Wallace Dillingham will start plastering when weather breaks
 - Wm. Hugh Smith & Ed Landwert have been repairing plaster & lathing
 - found half of the upstairs mantel in pieces
 - Mr. Zerkle working on a reproduction
 - donation of spool bed by Mr. Frank Shafer, a family heirloom
- March 1975
- Dillingham finished plastering 2 downstairs room
 - will plaster upstairs when weather warmer
 - Hollis Zerkle proceeding with interior cabinet work
 - upstairs mantel complete made new closet & attic doors from original patterns
 - Corp of Engineers put down new gravel road
 - applying for a matching grant to replace shingles on main portion of the house
 - Bird & Sons of Massachusetts offering a bicentennial grant program for exterior improving of historic homes & the Crabill House qualifies
 - we are ½ of the way through the process of having the Crabill house placed on the national record
 - summer project is the side porch.
- April 1975
- plans drawn for side porch
 - finding misc. materials
 - bricklayer doing small repair jobs
- May 1975
- Miriam Nolte donated various pieces of family China & glassware to be sold for benefit of the fund
 - \$198 was main from this sale
 - Brain Lumber prepared timber for side porch
 - somewhere pre-fab so porch can be assembled in 1 day

- Wally Dillingham plastering gaps & broken pieces on second floor
- bricklayer working on front porch
- strengthening gaps & broken pieces on second floor
- bricklayers working on front porch
- strengthening foundation below door, putting in footer & retaining wall
- interior filled with mortared brick "cap"

June 1975

- matching grant for bird & son chosen for final round
- upstairs fireplace finished
- putting last level on parlor hearth
- dining room will wait until secondary flooring is removed to reveal original flooring
- porch finished & old original stone step in front of it
- washing walls to remove old paint
- Hollis Zerkle completed mantel for the parlor designed by fireplace rebuilder
- removed old paint
- installed handrail & spindles for the staircase
- Dillingham & Sons working on plaster on 2nd floor
- Mr. & Mrs. Edward Landwert are making security visits
- \$25 donated by Mrs. P. R. Crabill of Urbana

July 1975

- picnic
- open house successful
- back porch not finished
- lumber company has trouble getting the lumber needed
- grant from Bird & Sons to reroof approved & money \$500 received
- CCHS \$600 for total of \$1000 to reroof main house
- Thomas Brink doing the work for below cost
- Paul Filed Field Assoc. donated all of copper flashings around chimneys
- Mrs. S. O. Nolte and Louise Shawd of San Antonio each donated \$50

September 1975

- Crabill House book sale at fair made \$360
- planning fall festival at Crabill House
- Louise Crabill Shawd donated another \$50
- new shingle roof completed
- back & front porches almost done

October 1975

- completed box cornice for front porch
- duplicated from a small piece found of the original
- estimated cost of reroofing kitchen & porch roof, not including materials
- project must wait until money available
- received \$50 from Mrs. R.N. Lupfer & \$25 from Rolling Hills Garden Club
- Leonard Zerkle working on interior painting
- working on a series of slides to illustrate the story of the Crabill House
- Mrs. Mary Miller helping

November 1975

- Crabill House now on National Register of Historic Places
- Donations:
 - o Mrs. S.O. Nolte \$50
 - o Selsor Trust \$100
 - o Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Detrick, furniture donations of rope bed for south bedroom, woven coverlet & patchwork quilt
 - o Mrs. Mary Miller, leather bound books, 2 19th century lithographs & brass candle holder
 - o Mrs. Preston Crabill, large framed portrait of one of the sons of David Crabill

December 1975

- now open Saturdays 1-4 & the 3rd Sunday 2-4
- now sign on the road

- Gale Zerkle completed & installed doors on the cupboard in south bedroom
 - Wm Hugh Smith took up modern floor in dining room
 - will rebuild the cupboard in the dining room & the "great unknown fireplace builder" will finish the last level of the hearth
 - the "great unknown" strung all of the rope beds
 - \$150 donated from 5 service clubs to replace one door in the house
 - bronze plaque commemorating restoration work done from Bird & Sons Co
- January 1976
- Selsor Trust gave \$500 donation
 - purchased all shingles for the kitchen wing roof
 - \$50 from Mrs. S.O. Nolte
 - Hugh Smith finished removing all old floor boards & pulling nails (dining room?)
 - replacement boards ordered from millhouse
 - have a bit of \$200 to reshingle kitchen wing
- February 1976
- new pamphlets on Crabill House available
- March 1976
- Junior Service League donated \$200 to complete work in dining room
 - Mr. Joseph Shafer donated contemporary ash flooring to do the entire dining room floor
 - Gale Zerkle will lay the floor
- April 1976
- flooring complete in dining room
 - Wm Hugh Smith will sand all of old brown paint off of the floor
 - parlor & dining room doors completed
 - duplicates of originals from the house
 - Investigating ways of removing paint from east side of the house
- May 1976
- Found table for dining room from local antique dealer
 - pay as you can deal
 - kitchen shingles done
 - porches finished
 - Leonard Zerkle*JVS painted stairwell & dining room
 - Crabill Fund balance \$0
 - annual picnic at Crabill house in June
 - unknown fireplace builder finished hearth in dining room
- June 1976
- 13 reply's for request of \$1 quarterly from each of the membership which would = \$200/year for the house
 - \$50 from Mrs. S.O. Nolte
 - 'unknown fireplace builder' finished hearth in dining room
- July 1976
- Mrs. Nolte donated \$100 toward restoration of kitchen wing
 - mason working on tuck pointing & rebuilding brick walls of the kitchen & basement
 - special order large timber to support fireplace hearth
 - Mrs. Louise Crabill Shawd \$100 & 4 matching chairs for dining room table
 - early child's rocker from Mrs. Jacob Barnett
- September 1976
- log in place for kitchen hearth
 - area on basement will opened and a basement window found
 - reproduction wood work received
 - made from the like pieces found in the house
 - kitchen floor being re-laid from remnants from the dining room
 - need more to complete 1" thick by 5-7" wide
 - need to cut down some small trees
- October 1976
- goal is to finish major restoration by year end

- kitchen floor almost done
 - exterior brickwork complete
 - kitchen fireplace will be done this month
 - new woodwork in place
 - plasterer will begin dressing the walls
 - one workman had to be hired which cut into the funds
- November 1976
- Festival postpone to weekend after Oct 24
 - It was cold & rainy, 200 people attended
 - \$66 in donations toward restoration
 - \$3.18 toward payoff of table
 - house will close Dec 31 to visitors
 - Crabill House finish up day
 - small trees need to be cut & stacked for firewood
 - old fence wire rolled & discarded
 - old hen coup below the house is a pile of rotten wood & is overgrown with weeds
 - eaves need painting
 - cement base of old privy needs to be demolished
- December 1976
- restoration going on for 3 years
 - in old pictures house looked like it has been through the "Battle of Berlin"
 - only now needs finishing touches to make it complete
 - kitchen wing most difficult
 - needs 2 cabinets that will be completed next spring
 - credit for Crabill House rests with the public & membership who have supported the restoration & 3 men, Gale Zerkle, Wallace Dillingham, "the great fireplace builder"
 - Corp is hoping for money next year to create a parking lot & Paul Ankermann of Hollandia Gardens has promised to help with landscaping in the spring
 - Selsor Trust \$500, Mrs. Nolte \$40, Memory of Louise Shawd by cousins \$30
 - balance of dining room table down to \$56
- January 1977
- Committees being formed to devise & implement ways of completing the interior furnishings & to work with various garden groups to work on landscaping
- February 1977
- Society made application for Federal Grant to help with the expenses of drilling a well & for proper chemical removal of the paint residue from the exterior of the house
- March 1977
- still owe \$56 on table
 - need someone to take care of grounds on a regular basis; cutting grass & clearing undergrowth
 - need to cut up small trees felled last fall
- April 1977
- have no volunteers to man the house during open hours
 - house insurance came due
 - borrowed money from the Society
 - they allow only a \$500 debt for the Crabill Fund
 - heard nothing on grant for well & paint removal
- May 1977
- donations April & May have put some moneys in Crabill Fund
 - Roger Borchers Clark, County Engineer & Dick Groeber loaned men & equipment to scrape & grade road & tailgate the stone to build a small parking area
 - Crabill fund will buy crushed stone
 - Frank Shafer & Ed Atley removing bush & Wm Hugh Smith doing mowing
- June 1977
- Spring Festival scheduled in June
 - kitchen cupboards now being built by Gale Zerkle

July 1977

- 400-500 visitors to house for the Spring Festival
- Camp Wittenberg Division of the Youth Conservation Corp worked 4 days cleaning debris, shrubs, weeds, trees & disassembled a decaying chicken house
- View was opened to the lake on all three sides on the front of the house
- Old paint was chemically removed by Neer Enterprises of Urbana, OH
- Labor & supplies \$6500 was donated by Neer; He will return periodically to tuck point & repair a few areas
- Hollandia Gardens brought a truckload of shrubs & trees & re-landscaped the front & south side of the house
- Mr. & Mrs. James Copeland cleaned the house & made strawberry preserves over the fire
- David Sheeley did Pennsylvania/German calligraphy & donated proceeds to the Crabill Fund
- \$700 on donation this month

October 1977

- Fall Festival success; 500 attended
- north bedroom now has antique cherry dresser & 2 chairs bought with a gift from Mrs. S. O. Nolte
- acquired an Ohio quilt from Mrs. Robert Whitlaw of S. Carolina, granddaughter of John Foos
- Program committee decided to hold a Christmas Open House in November

November 1977

- Christmas Bake & Decoration sale
- volunteers will bake
- David Sheeley will make small Christmas cards

December 1977

- Snow & wind for festival; 200 attended

THIS IS THE END OF THE MONTHLY REPORTS IN THE NEWSLETTERS. THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF TIMELINE OF MAJOR PROJECTS SINCE THAT TIME.

1978

- Request made to Army Corp for gravel for the road & to cut grass
- Requested lease of additional 5 acres granted
- Created top parking area

1979

- Misc upkeep
- Barn footer
- Brush removal & planting of sorghum
- Double pen style log barn donated to the Society by Mr. Glen Skinner
- Construction started by YACC & continued into winter
- Fall Sorghum Festival drew 2000 people

1980

- Plans for orchard submitted
- Repairs & reconstruction on frame shed
- Completed new tongue & groove floor
- Double doors put on side for large equipment
- Door originally at the east end & window at the north end
- Resided in board batten
- Painted California Rustic & shingles repaired

1984

- Road graded
- Work done on brick walkway in front of house

1988

- Major foundation & floor repairs in dining room
- Front door sill repaired
- Replaced joist & back porch floor
- Repaired dining room sill
- Installed gutters & downspouts

- Trench & install drain tiles around foundation
 - Repair chimney flashings
 - Electricity run underground from pole to basement
 - One outlet hidden in each room
 - New locks on all doors
- 1990
- Made curtains for all windows
 - Plastered & painted dining room walls
 - Made one new bedsack
 - Constructed trestle tables & benches
 - Removed outhouse
 - Moved herb garden to front of house
- 1991-1995
- Attempted to maintain status quo with no money for any major repairs
 - Started Crabill Homestead Rehabilitation Restricted Fund.
- 1995
- Met in the fall with the Army Corp & explained our immediate plans for the house
 - Archeology done by Corp archeologists a prerequisite for any major changes
 - Corp is actively interested in preserving the site
 - Glen Harper from Ohio Preservation Office came for a site visit to tell us the most important things to be done for the house (this meeting attended by Charlie Crabill)
 - Papers & requests for approval of heating system submitted & approved
- January 1996
- Installation began on heating system; completed in March
 - Insulation forms made for windows & fireplaces
 - Ducts in north bedroom enclosed but wall work incomplete
- March/April 1996
- Archeology by the Corp from Louisville completed on future well site
- June 1996
- Well dug & trenching & spigot installed; this made possible by a \$3500 donation from Charles P Crabill, Jr.
 - The Masada Security System was also installed
- In 1996 we accomplished the 3 major projects that were our goal:
1. Heat to preserve the structure itself
 2. A well to preserve the backs of our volunteers to allow us running water for programming and for the yard & gardens
 3. A professionally installed & monitored security system
- September 1996
- Received an exceptionally generous donation fro Charles P Crabill, Jr. of \$25,000. Charlie has requested that his donation be spent on what is needed for the rehabilitation of the house. This will allow us to begin some of the immediate preservation measures that we suggested by Glen Harper, from the Preservation Office, when he was here last fall
- December 2000
- Received \$10,000 from the Turner Foundation for continued upkeep & repair to be used at our discretion
- Spring 2001
- High winds took their toll on our 20 year old roof. We were fortunate to be able to replace the roof with wood shingles. The money \$21,000 came from 2 private donations and the balance from the CCHS
- December 2001
- Received a \$12,000 grant from the Turner Foundation for re-tuckpointing the house and construction of the outdoor bake oven. This work when was done in Spring of 2002 when the weather allowed.
- Fall 2004
- A grant was applied to the Turner Foundation in the fall of 2004. Instead of granting money, the chose to do the needed repairs with their own preservation crews

Spring 2005

- The Turner crews repaired all of the interior walls, repaired rotting window & door sills and painted all of the exterior windows, porches & wood trims. Cornices boards were removed & replaced with ones reflecting the period of the house. The Foundation also installed all new copper spouting on the house & kitchen.
- The Army Corps of Engineers have been strong supporters over the years, but their budget is also limited. In 2003 they requested that we tear down the one pen of the barn that has fallen to disrepair. This is not been done due to lack of funds.
- Heirs of the Glenn Skinner family, who donated the double pen barn visited in the fall of 2006. They were saddened to see the barn in such bad condition and would like to see it salvaged.

Prepared by Vicki Matthies for Charles Crabill Family Reunion 1996—Updated with newest rehabilitation information in 2005

Vicki L Matthies
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