125 Years of Tradition, Leaps of Faith, and Transformation

1884 – 2009
Dear Friends,

Not many organizations can survive, let alone thrive, for 125 years. To do so takes a strong and clear mission as well as a lot of hard work by many people. As you will read in this wonderful brief history, Maumee Valley has been at once responsive to the changing times and true to its mission—both essential ingredients for a long and fruitful existence.

Ann Stranahan, former Maumee Valley parent, current grandparent, and both former and current Board member, has added to our written history with this eloquent and colorful retelling of our school’s story. From the Smead School for Girls, a 19th-century girls finishing school, to a preeminent pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade coeducational, 21st-century college-preparatory school, Maumee Valley has grown into a success story in American independent education.

The story of a school is a story of individuals. While those remembered here all made significant contributions, so too have so many others whose stories we have not been able to tell in this short version of our history. Our debt to them is no less, and they should all know that their stories continue to be traded whenever and wherever alumni gather to remember their times here.

Whether this story evokes happy memories of your Maumee Valley or Smead School experiences, or it simply opens our past to you, I’m sure you will enjoy reading it as much as I have.

Happy quasquicentennial!

Best wishes,

Gary Boehm
Head of School
The early history of Maumee Valley Country Day School is a saga of five strong women whose intellect, persistence and leaps of faith transformed a small girls’ finishing school in Batavia, New York, into an academically rigorous, innovative, child-centered college preparatory school in Northwest Ohio. These were women with translucent complexions, tender eyes, andprecious little dogs who had an absolutely clear idea of what they wanted and, apparently, the organizational skills, charm, and powers of persuasion to make that idea a reality.

Our School began as Mrs. Bryan’s Seminary in Batavia, New York. The Seminary was established as a day school in 1848, and then grew into a traditional finishing school, highly regarded throughout the country. Boarding students attended from the South, Northwest, New England, and the Midwest, including Toledo, and as far away as Colorado. Our School began as Mrs. Bryan’s Seminary in Batavia, New York. The Seminary was established as a day school in 1848, and then grew into a traditional finishing school, highly regarded throughout the country. Boarding students attended from the South, Northwest, New England, and the Midwest, including Toledo, and as far away as Colorado.

Finishing school it might have been; yet even in its earliest days we can detect a certain freedom from convention, a willingness to take risks, that would characterize the School for the next 125 years. Consider the rise of the Smead sisters, the daughters of a Batavia farmer, students at the Bryan Seminary. Mrs. Bryan’s experienced eyes saw promise in these sisters: Miss Marian Smead was sent to France, alone, to master the language. Miss Mary Smead went similarly to Germany. Thusly trained – their horizons broadened by travel – the sisters came home and took up teaching for Mrs. Bryan; when she retired in 1879, they assumed ownership of the Seminary. Clearly, they maintained Mrs. Bryan’s high standards and sterling reputation – so much so that a delegation of Toledoans, parents of Smead School boarding students as well as city fathers, paid a formal visit to Batavia in 1884. Would the Misses Smead consider moving the school to Toledo, that bustling new city on the western edge of Lake Erie? The sisters found the offer agreeable, and prepared for their migration to Toledo in July, 1884.

“Certificate right” From the prominent women’s colleges of Smith and Vassar, which

Natural phenomena often herald events of great magnitude: is anyone surprised that the whole entourage – the three Misses Smead, now joined by their sister, Caroline – the faculty, their pupils, their servants – arrived in Toledo at midnight in the middle of a cracking Midwestern lightening storm? This school was a force: it could not have been expected to make a gentle entrance into its new community, despite the gentility of its proprietors. Listen to Olive Colton’s often-quoted description of the sisters:

“The three sisters were of a vanishing type of womanhood. Their complexions were shell-like, their hands transparent, their collars and handkerchiefs always exquisitely white. And yet: each student was a debutante they personally tried to bring out into the world of letters.”

With loving, ladylike determination, the sisters somehow nudged these debutantes towards the world of letters, until:

“their persistence was rewarded in 1893 with the enrollment of a student, by examination, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and with gaining the ‘certificate right’ from the prominent women’s colleges of Smith and Vassar, which thereby offered immediate acceptance to Smead graduates. After 1903 Wells, Wellesley, and Holyoke Colleges granted this ‘right’ as well. …A new science laboratory in 1908 undoubtedly had an impact on the academic standing of the school. In April of 1909 the Smead School was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The coveted accreditation ensured that Smead School graduates would be allowed entrance to many universities. The North Central accreditation was the first offered to any school in Toledo.”

In 1916, upon the retirement of the Misses Smead, the School was taken over by another pair of gifted, forward-thinking sisters and educators. Miss Rose and Miss Elsie Grace Anderson were both Smead alumnae, and both graduates of the University of Michigan. The Misses Anderson divided the school into four divisions, the first of which was a Montessori pre-school, reputedly the first Montessori program in an American school.

In 1928, the Smead School Board of Trustees carried out a nation-wide search for a principal to replace the Misses Anderson, who had announced their desire to retire. The Trustees’ choice was consistent with the School’s spirited history: they brought in Miss Leslie Leland, whose training, educational philosophy, and resolve would forever change the course of The Smead School.

Leslie Leland had a BA from Smith College and an MA from Columbia. She was an intellectual and a visionary. She had been principal since 1923 of the Park School of Buffalo, an early leader in the progressive school movement.” In 1930, Miss Leland proposed to her board that Smead School become a Country Day School, incorporating all of the new teaching theories associated with the term: a natural setting in which the outdoors could be a classroom; holistic attention to both the mental and physical well-being of each child; textbook studies augmented by field trips; and sharing of experiences among eighteenth-century women. In 1930, Miss Leland proposed to her board that Smead School become a Country Day School, incorporating all of the new teaching theories associated with the term: a natural setting in which the outdoors could be a classroom; holistic attention to both the mental and physical well-being of each child; textbook studies augmented by field trips; and sharing of experiences among...
students, families, and teachers. Her board agreed to this radical plan; and, that same year, the School was offered 27 acres on Reynolds Road: out in the country. Four years later, the School moved from its grand Old West End mansion to a simple white clapboard building standing in an open field, next to a deep, woodland ravine.

In this new home, Maumee Valley Country Day School officially opened its doors on September 17th, 1934: fifty years to the day after the Smead School first opened its doors in Toledo's North End. Thirteen grades, boys and girls, all together in the little schoolhouse, opened the next era in the School’s history.

In 1938, Leland’s Maumee Valley Country Day School prospered, despite being launched in the midst of the Great Depression. In 1938, she handed the reins to Willis Stork, fresh from teaching and administrative roles in Nebraska and Harvard University graduate school. Mr. Stork was eminently practical, capable, and respected. He took the School through the dramatic early days of World War II, went off to combat himself, leaving the Reverend Malcolm Ward in charge as Interim Headmaster, and returned after his tour of duty.

Maumee Valley, like the rest of the nation, flourished and grew in the Post-War years. Headmaster James Henderson succeeded Willis Stork in 1955; by 1957, the School, designed for 150 students, had doubled in size. In 1957 Henderson and his board approved a capital building plan to construct a new Upper School, a contemporary concrete and glass structure that opened its doors in 1962. The shape of the School was changing; soon its culture began to change as well.

America shook and trembled in the 1960’s. The South was ideologically torn apart in the struggle for Civil Rights; youth rose up in protest against the war in Vietnam; three of our country’s leaders were assassinated; the most hallowed institutional traditions, societal mores, and academic curriculums were challenged. Maumee Valley did not escape this turmoil.

Gordon Schofield arrived as Headmaster in 1969 from the St. Paul Academy in St. Paul, Minnesota. He was a man of his time, and like his time there was nothing predictable or comfortable about his tenure as Head. His goals were admirable: to encourage debate about the pressing political and social issues wracking the nation; to integrate the School through such national programs as A Better Chance; to take the School’s progressive education tradition one step further by radically opening up the whole learning process - which meant, for example, opening up the learning space itself. In 1970, the School launched a $3.4 million dollar capital campaign. The result was our present Lower School, an extraordinary open space modeled on the Integrated Open Schools developed by progressive education reformers in England in the 1940’s. One hundred ten by one hundred twenty feet, with no interior walls, the space is ringed by learning areas for grades one through six. The central space is the Resource Center, dedicated in 1992 to much loved librarian, Kathy Blakey. The energy generated by the dynamic between children, teachers, and resource materials is palpable: thrilling to some – occasionally overwhelming to first time visitors.

The cultural, curricular, and spatial changes at the School were so sweeping and came so swiftly that many parents were less than successful. Loyalties – a new science – between the board, the administration, and the concerned parents were less than successful. Loyalties were strained. Long-time Maumee Valley families withdrew their children and their support. It was a hard time. Important, a turning point in the history of tradition and innovation. He was committed to reestablishing and deepening communication between parents and the School. Healing and recovery began at Maumee Valley, as the nation struggled to hold its center. The clamor of the ‘60s was followed by the Watergate scandal, the oil crisis of 1974, and a sometimes disconnecting new popular culture.

True to form, Maumee Valley coped with the local gas shortage of 1978 with ingenuity and pluck. Unable to heat its buildings, the School moved downtown: classes were held in the unused rooms on the fourth floor of the Secor Hotel, owned by alumnus Hensson Jones. For six weeks, the academic curriculum was enriched by the street life of Superior and Jefferson Streets and students’ digests were challenged by old Civil Defense candy found in remote, abandoned storerooms. Still, by the mid-1970’s it was evident that the School’s financial base had badly eroded. As they wrestled with Maumee Valley’s deficits and conflicted recent history, Jerry Millhon and Georgia Welles became specialists, both locally and nationally, in the emerging field of independent school Long Range Planning. They were joined in their planning effort by new administrative assistant Charles P. Lord, and members of the board.

The first and most draconian action of this Long Range Planning squadron was necessary to rescue Maumee Valley from financial collapse. The School sold four acres of land that fronted Reynolds Road, acreage that had become highly valuable as our rural countryside was overtaken by commercial development. Although shocking at the outset, the land sale led to an immensely successful remodeling of the campus landscape, masterfully supervised by new Board and Grounds Superintendent Larry Amming. High earth mounding shelters the western edge of the campus from the noise and traffic of the busy road. The School’s entrance drive, now bordered by fully-grown trees, is a gracious, welcoming introduction to Maumee Valley.

Other key components of this strategic planning led a wrought of financial stability that has been an invaluable bulwark against the ebbs and flow of income and capital needs over the past thirty-five years. Chief among these safeguards was the annual discipline of funding PPRSM, a mandatory setting aside of funds to cover ongoing maintenance and small capital obligations as they occurred. Faithful adherence to this obligation has enabled the School to take care of many of its bricks and mortar maintenance or replacement needs without raising capital funds. PPRSM has proved a godsend, much envied by fellow schools and non-profit entities.

In the 1970’s, the Medical College of Ohio brought a new wave of highly educated professionals from the Mid-East and Asia who immediately recognized Maumee Valley as the school to prepare their children for success in their new country. This influx of color, culture, religion, and language brought us the diversity that is one of our most distinguishing aspects – and one of our greatest blessings.

“Although memories like the Secor Hotel and rebuilding the Smead School and the new entrance are important, one other still seems to take center stage. Over the years, our administrative staff and board had always cited racial diversity and multicultural environment as goals. The world was changing, MV was growing and we knew the Toledo community was a melting pot of unique cultures. As I looked over the assembled group and thought about the last graduation ceremony I knew that Maumee Valley was meeting those goals we had long planned on attaining. The faces in that crowd expressed many cultures and many races in ways that I had only dreamed.”

Jerry Millhon

Jerry Millhon retired from Maumee Valley in 1982, having steered the School through stormy waters to a relatively peaceful harbor. His personal warmth and perceptible concern for each member of the community proved calming. His strategic planning skills were essential to the School’s survival. He was an enthusiastic participant in planning
Study projects both within and outside of Complimentary Schools, and independent select from offerings that include classes Maumee Valley’s most distinctive programs: son. The Winterim Program, which he mile Batavia – Toledo Marathon with his 1984 Smead/Maumee Valley 100th stride and thought, brusque, practical, far- Twenty years later, this pioneering emphasis that at the time was far from common. place in the world. Its newly adopted far-reaching vision of the School and its a new Long Range Plan that reflected a new Long Range Plan was developed with 115 action steps centered around 21 goals - almost all of them completed by 1998. From this plan, a facilities master plan was created - the first since 1972. To build the proposed new facilities, as well as increase the endowment for financial aid, technology and faculty/staff enrichment needs, a capital campaign was launched. The goal of the campaign, given both talent and treasure by alumnus David (Deke) Welles Jr., was $7.5 million; the School raised $9.4 million. The Maumee Valley campus was transformed by the new plan, designed and executed by The Collaborative architectural firm after extensive focus group discussions with representatives from each of the School’s population. A 300-seat Millennium Theatre was built, with complete theatre support and music classrooms below, anchored outside by a clock tower that established a strong central presence in a campus that had grown somewhat haphazardly. The PreSchool and Lower Schools were completely updated. The Middle School was redesigned with new entrances, classrooms, science facility and a commons area, so that it now functions as a separate unit - appropriate to the unique age and culture of its students. The Upper School was re-carpeted and painted; the new Johnson-Bayer athletic and fitness center, a parking lot, and new entrance way off Glendale Avenue were built. The endowment grew from $3,308,000 to $7,522,000, thanks to additional gifts and increases in the stock market. Faculty salaries were raised substantially. And throughout all this high-level administrative activity, its countless meetings and strategic planning sessions, Phineas kept his promise to make each child and each part of the school feel a part of the MV community. Lower School Coordinator Karen Lundholm shares this delightful memory: “I have several personal goals this year. In no particular order, I hope to increase enrollment, enhance salaries, insure that the increase in tuition is maintained at a reasonable rate, double parent participation and increase alumni giving in the Annual Fund Campaign, establish a formal deferred giving program, administer an effective teacher/staff evaluation system, place greater emphasis on technology and systems thinking, provide clearer definitions of board, arts, facilities, faculty, administration, and parent roles in the operation of the school, aid in the development of a creative and sound long range plan, encourage everyone to be good listeners and enhance communications between school groups, help the segments of the school think of themselves and ensure that each and every child feels supported and cared for at Maumee Valley.” Those modest goals ushered in eleven of Maumee Valley’s most productive years. Five years later, Phineas was able to make an astonishing report to the School. Enrollment had grown from 412 to 475. A Long Range Plan was developed with 115 action steps centered around 21 goals - almost all of them completed by 1998. From this plan, a facilities master plan was created - the first since 1972. To build the proposed new facilities, as well as increase the endowment for financial aid, technology and faculty/staff enrichment needs, a capital campaign was launched. The goal of the campaign, given both talent and treasure by alumnus David (Deke) Welles Jr., was $7.5 million; the School raised $9.4 million. The Maumee Valley campus was transformed by the new plan, designed and executed by The Collaborative architectural firm after extensive focus group discussions with representatives from each of the School’s population. A 300-seat Millennium Theatre was built, with complete theatre support and music classrooms below, anchored outside by a clock tower that established a strong central presence in a campus that had grown somewhat haphazardly. 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Although lots of words have been used to try to explain why the creative arts are essential to our healthy human growth, words can never work as well as immersion in the creative process itself. We feel the huge surprise, a happy sigh inside, when our hands or voice or feet work together to create the image or the sound or the movement that we have grown for. We are amazed: not just proud of the sound or the image we have made, but astonished that we are the ones who made it.

Learning to make art requires intense discipline - at the same time, it will take a mind in as many directions as the imagination can roam. The Arts have been an integral part of a Maumee Valley since its earliest days. At The Smead School, “Art education and music appreciation blossomed under the Misses Anderson with the hiring of trained specialists. The art education program included architectural appreciation, which was based on the “study of the beautiful architectural details of the school residence.” The nearby Toledo Museum of Art was frequently used for “museum research.” The Smead chorus participated in presenting Handel’s “The Messiah” with the Toledo Choral Society and on Founder’s Day in May 1927, the chorus performed Haydn’s Choral Symphony; his “Joy Symphony” was played on toy instruments. The famed out-of-doors plays were begun on Founder’s Day in May 1914.

Encouraging expression through art is an essential component of progressive education and Maumee Valley is no exception. In the 1970’s, the new Lower School provided the venue and the scale to bring the arts into the front and center of our children’s education. Martin Nagy’s classroom was a pirate’s cave of treasures: paper, paint, brushes, glue, sticks, stones, branches, cloth, ... any material that a child could assemble into his or her own unique creation. The energy from that Art Room and the adjacent Music Room, lined with enticing Orff instruments, filled not just those classrooms but the whole vast Lower School - from the learning areas to the Resource Area, up onto the walls and ceiling. The Sarah Weiss Art Deck, built in memory of a student who died in 1982, extends the joy of making art to our lovely out of doors.

In the Upper School, first Cathy Hunter, then David Burkett set a standard of art instruction still unequalled at many colleges. In the classroom, David was a conservative, demanding instructor, grounding his students in traditional color theory and craftsmanship. Outside the classroom, his unfettered curiosity, originality, and commitment to visual perfection spread into every corner of the school, and gave life to a number of memorable Winterim experiences. The Wolfe Gallery epitomizes David’s celebration of our student artists and artists everywhere.

The School’s thespian tradition, begun so benignly on the shaded lawns of the Smead School, has never faltered; but for the first 100 years, the School’s actors had no space worthy of their talents. After years of staging challenging performances in the awkward, wingless Million Auditorium, the Drama Department and the entire School family gave deep breaths of wonder and gratitude at the unveiling of the Millennium Theatre. The Theatre, the capstone of the 1997 Capital Campaign, gives the school, finally, a professional performance hall, a convention space for various rites of passage, and a lecture hall for such community offerings as the Global Education Speakers Series. The Alda Ashley Amphitheater, given in honor of a legendary parent and teacher, links outdoor theatricals to their classical past. The three school choirs hark back to those splendid Handel choruses floating up from the Old West End. Playing in the Maumee Valley String Ensemble is a fiercely sought-after honor; our young musicians extend their talents into the community, and successfully audition for places in the Toledo Youth Orchestra. Alumni hurry back to campus to join their former colleagues as the String Orchestra gives its stirring accompaniment to School celebrations.

Art

“Making Art”

Congresswoman Barbara Jordan

Earl VanderZee Gordon

MAUVE VALLEY COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

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“Plays and Games!” An alumna remembers …

“I remember Mr. Nelson, our math teacher, bewailing our enthusiasm for and commitment to athletics and theater. We’d present our excuses for work undone, and he’d play an imaginary violin and chant, ‘Plays and games! Plays and games!’ I’m glad that he wanted us to spend more time on our math assignments, but I know that long after we forgot what we learned in class, even in Mr. Nelson’s math class, we remembered what we learned on the stage.

We learned to work together, and to take direction. We learned to share the spotlight.

We learned to work toward a long-term goal, prepare for an important event that seemed for a long time safely in the future and then suddenly was upon us! We learned to wholeheartedly throw ourselves into an enterprise for a sustained period of time and to deal with the extra stress and pressure added to the stress and pressure of our normal academic, athletic and social lives.

Without realizing it, we learned something about aesthetics: there was always a moment, maybe during a rehearsal, when a few things came together, or an actor or singer connected with the material, and we realized that this was how it was supposed to be. We suddenly got it — oh, so this is drama or music! Or we realized in a flash of insight that some people have talent! Someone we thought we knew did something wonderful, and we were just amazed.

We learned that God really is in the details, that the small stuff matters—a missed cue or a misspoken line could ruin a whole scene. One word, spoken with a different intonation, could get a laugh.

The hours and hours during rehearsal when we waited for our scenes, watching the director work with others, watching others get it right, were not wasted hours at all. And the social aspect, hanging out with friends, especially new friends, was fun and important.

We were shocked to discover that our teacher/director was human and could get discouraged or elated. Maybe we even realized, just for a second, that he was putting in all those late hours so that we would look good.

We learned how to be too busy, how to get homework done anyway, or sort of done, or just enough done.

And after the performance, our minutes on stage were over and we didn’t mess up too badly. There was a rush of relief and victory as we rubbed the greasy cold cream of time and to deal with the extra stress and pressure added to the stress and pressure of our normal academic, athletic and social lives.

practices. And there was that English paper we got an extension on.

The week ahead looked empty and flat. School. The usual classes. The usual sports. We learned how to recover from these letdowns, how to tidy up our routine lives and important.

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Art

Jenny Rheinfrank Barthold, Alumna, Teacher

Our Natural World: Our Gift

n the eve of Founders’ Day, in 1908, Miss Mary Smead gathered her students and staff around her, and once again held them enthralled as she recounted the coming of the School from Batavia to Toledo, and described the untamed beauty that surrounded the School’s first home on the northern edge of its new city:

“Nature still held sway on the Maumee,” she said. “Wild rice grew profusely in the shallows, attracting duck and gull; a native turkey shot in the woods across the stream, furnished forth our first Thanksgiving dinner; a brood of quail were hatched and reared under the far end of a side porch the next spring; even a deer was seen quietly drinking one early morning at an opposite point. The honey locust and white crab grew then in a picturesque disorder along the banks of our end of Summit Street.

The pavement ceased at our line, a country road, bending between two orchards, our own and that of a farm neighbor over the way, skirted alongside a continuous strip of prairie oak forested river. A cloud of snowbirds, a favorite ramble in spring time. This same riverbank was common ground, shared with one or two families, wading juveniles, armies of frogs, and the collective city milk cows. Below Bush Street, herds of these useful creatures browsed and ruminated with their boy guardians as far as Manhattan Boulevard and back for the evening milking. …Cross streets and alleys were given over to the sticky depths of the native clay; vacant lots grew rampant with sweet clover, stramonium, and butterfly weed.”

Twenty-six years later, Miss Leslie Leland and her friends walked the grounds of her new school, a small white building set by a ravine in the farmland out on Reynolds Road. Formerly The Smead School for Girls, her school was now Maumee Valley Country Day School.

“You know”, she said: “Easy access to the woods and ravines gives even the younger children intimate knowledge of hazelnuts, woodchucks, trillium and field mice. Already the bays have had the thrill of identifying on one spring morning a great blue heron, the marsh hawk, the cerulean warbler, the chewink, the scarlet tanager, the cedar waxwing, the goldfinch, and same twenty other varieties of birds. Collecting — and how boys of ten and twelve love to collect things — minerals, insects, specimens of flowers, and leaves and crafts of all sorts including woodworking, weaving and photography will be encouraged. The children will have all outdoors at their threshold on fair days, and a spacious workshop, rain or shine. … and each classroom has its own door opening to the outdoors…”

Thirty-five years later, in 1971, the siting of the New Lower School continued Miss Leland’s idyllic vision. The huge building sits at the edge of a density wooded and flowered ravine. But today we are open to the outside from each learning area. It is a space wrapped in natural beauty.

Now, in 2009, as the School expands once again, the design of its new Upper School is inspired by our long history of recognizing and cherishing the natural beauty in which we find ourselves. When construction is complete, the new Upper School, essentially a glass structure, will be itself a door opening from the whole campus onto a great lawn and the wild loveliness of the ravine.

Our Responsibility:

However, we can no longer just enjoy the mystery and beauty of our surroundings. To be true members of a global community today’s students must understand the urgency of protecting our natural resources. This responsibility - “concern for the Earth’s Resources and Physical Wellness” - is one of the values most prized by the School.

Over the past several years the school has received four different grants to support environmental education, resulting in a new recycling center for the entire school and a new greenhouse for the Middle School. The student-led recycling program not only saves the school money on trash removal, but the dining room composting program helps the student- created gardens grow.

The engineering and design of the new Upper School incorporates every environmentally progressive system and material within reason and reach, and is slated to achieve a Gold Level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. From concrete to glass to steel, materials from the existing school have been recycled and, where appropriate, recycled materials will be used in the new construction.

Flooded by natural light, even in its center, the building’s demand for electricity will be minimal. Cooking will be aided by natural airflow with two story roof-to-floor openings creating updrafts that will be vented through the clerestory windows. High efficiency heating and cooling systems are designed to accept a geothermal system when budget permits. In the fluid, light-filled spaces of this new learning space we will demonstrate our commitment to the earth that sustains us. We will walk our talk.

Maumee Valley Country Day School

Our Natural World: Our Gift

Jenny Rheinfrank Barthold, Alumna, Teacher

n the eve of Founders’ Day, in 1908, Miss Mary Smead gathered her students and staff around her, and once again held them enthralled as she recounted the coming of the School from Batavia to Toledo, and described the untamed beauty that surrounded the School’s first home on the northern edge of its new city:

“Nature still held sway on the Maumee,” she said. “Wild rice grew profusely in the shallows, attracting duck and gull; a native turkey shot in the woods across the stream, furnished forth our first Thanksgiving dinner; a brood of quail were hatched and reared under the far end of a side porch the next spring; even a deer was seen quietly drinking one early morning at an opposite point. The honey locust and white crab grew then in a picturesque disorder along the banks of our end of Summit Street.

The pavement ceased at our line, a country road, bending between two orchards, our own and that of a farm neighbor over the way, skirted alongside a continuous strip of prairie oak forested river. A cloud of snowbirds, a favorite ramble in spring time. This same riverbank was common ground, shared with one or two families, wading juveniles, armies of frogs, and the collective city milk cows. Below Bush Street, herds of these useful creatures browsed and ruminated with their boy guardians as far as Manhattan Boulevard and back for the evening milking. …Cross streets and alleys were given over to the sticky depths of the native clay; vacant lots grew rampant with sweet clover, stramonium, and butterfly weed.”

Twenty-six years later, Miss Leslie Leland and her friends walked the grounds of her new school, a small white building set by a ravine in the farmland out on Reynolds Road. Formerly The Smead School for Girls, her school was now Maumee Valley Country Day School.

“You know”, she said: “Easy access to the woods and ravines gives even the younger children intimate knowledge of hazelnuts, woodchucks, trillium and field mice. Already the bays have had the thrill of identifying on one spring morning a great blue heron, the marsh hawk, the cerulean warbler, the chewink, the scarlet tanager, the cedar waxwing, the goldfinch, and same twenty other varieties of birds. Collecting — and how boys of ten and twelve love to collect things — minerals, insects, specimens of flowers, and leaves and crafts of all sorts including woodworking, weaving and photography will be encouraged. The children will have all outdoors at their threshold on fair days, and a spacious workshop, rain or shine. … and each classroom has its own door opening to the outdoors…”

Thirty-five years later, in 1971, the siting of the New Lower School continued Miss Leland’s idyllic vision. The huge building sits at the edge of a density wooded and flowered ravine. But today we are open to the outside from each learning area. It is a space wrapped in natural beauty.

Now, in 2009, as the School expands once again, the design of its new Upper School is inspired by our long history of recognizing and cherishing the natural beauty in which we find ourselves. When construction is complete, the new Upper School, essentially a glass structure, will be itself a door opening from the whole campus onto a great lawn and the wild loveliness of the ravine.

Our Responsibility:

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Maumee Valley Country Day School
“In independent schools, students are known, teachers are supported, and parents are involved. While I mention these as three discrete items, it is actually the confluence of all three that distinguishes independent education...

Independent school faculties are made up of individuals who are passionate about their subjects and also about children. Independent schools value and nurture teachers by providing them with the support and freedom they need to creatively engage with their teaching. The result is teachers who are personally invested in what they teach and in how they teach it. As creative people, they engage in ongoing cycles of innovation and self-assessment. Their creative engagement energizes the entire enterprise and results in curious and motivated students.”

Gary Boehm, Head of School

“Maumee Valley is the first independent school in which I’ve taught and there are still times in which I still can’t believe that I’ve been given such a marvelous opportunity. As an educator, it’s wonderful being part of a faculty as hard working and highly esteemed as this. Students who attend also have tremendous opportunity. They learn from everyone in this learning community: teachers, administrators, maintenance staff, and from one another.”

Tomeka Shum, Middle School Teacher

“My mother was a Smead graduate; so I was a daughter, then a student, then a mother and a teacher, then a grandmother. I believe that says that once a part of it, it became a part of me, where it will be forever. I guess the best of all these ‘parts’ was my time as a teacher (maybe because it was the longest). There was never a time when I wasn’t learning from my colleagues as well as my students and their parents.”

Geraldine Terpel Ashely, Alumna, Parent, Grandparent, Teacher

“Helping students discover and understand how they learn best is a wonderful gift that will serve them well after they leave us. Most teachers at Maumee Valley are willing to work at determining a student’s unique learning style and will accommodate those different styles while not compromising the standard of excellence that is one of our hallmarks. From my years in the classroom, I can call to mind many students who surprised me with remarkable insight when given a chance to show what they knew in the format that best suited their areas of strength. It happened more than once that we teachers were left with our jaws hanging open when a rather shy, reserved student would come up with the most clever skit for The Twelve Days of Christmas, or a student who struggled with writing would recite a poem at town meeting she had ‘written’ in her head. The side benefit is learning more about these students and their talents—often hidden and precariously close to not being noticed at all. I think that sometimes the kids surprised themselves with what they could do, and this played a huge part in developing self confidence.”

Karen Lundholm, Teacher, former Head of Lower School

“I had the opportunity to teach for seven years in a public school before coming to Maumee Valley twenty-eight years ago. For me the biggest difference between independent schools and public schools is the teamwork that exists in independent education. At Maumee Valley the teachers, administrators and parents all work together to provide the best educational experience for the students. When I encounter a problem in the classroom the first place I go is to talk with my division administrator for help in solving it. I keep parents informed about the relevant issues and provide them with suggestions of how they can support my efforts.

The day I interviewed at Maumee Valley in March of 1981 still stands out as a remarkable experience for me. In six hours I met teachers, administrators and students who challenged me to think about who I was as a person and a teacher. I wrote in my journal that the students and faculty had created a setting that reflects what education is all about and I still hold that same impression today.”

Ken Meineke, Upper School Teacher

“I touch the future. I teach.”

~Christa McAuliffe

“Toco el futuro. Enseño.”

GREGG ROTHMAN and SARA CARD

Lower School Teachers on a one-room school house field trip at The Zimmerman School

Maumee Valley Country Day School - 2009

“The best thing about teaching at Maumee Valley is that teachers are required to design their own curricula. Every year we decide, after discussion and debate with other teachers in our departments, what we will teach and how we will teach it. Is Hamlet still a good book for seniors? Would Othello be better? Do we still believe that a Shakespeare play every year is a good idea? How and when should we make sure students can write a good paragraph? Is a long research paper still appropriate for college-bound seniors?

Maumee Valley has had a long tradition of teacher autonomy, and I remember only one time that a Head of School, brand new, tried to tell us what to teach: after an astonished silence, we told him gently that we didn’t do it that way at Maumee Valley.

Teacher power leads to student power. When teachers invest in, create, and own their curricula, students tend to be similarly invested. Autonomous teachers model for their students free and responsible behavior and accountability. They also encourage students to voice their opinions, to stand up for what they believe, to monitor their own behavior and practice self-discipline — in short to have power over themselves.”

Jenny Rheinfark Barthold, Alumna, Teacher

Maumee Valley Country Day School - 1980s
When I arrived on the Maumee Valley Campus in spring, 1979, to take up my position as Superintendent of Building and Grounds, I found many plans underway: facilities renovation was driven by a Master Plan developed in the mid-seventies that called for expanded square footage in many areas to allow for enrollment growth, the sale of frontage property on Reynolds Road to pay down debt, the installation of a new Reynolds Road entrance aligned with Brownstone Boulevard, new water and sewer lines, redesigned campus traffic flow, a much needed traffic light, enhanced campus landscaping along the interior drives and frontages, and the renovation of the decaying Smead Building.

As the next few years went by, athletic facilities lost to the land sale were re-installed on the former farmland between Glendale Avenue and the gymnasium. The track was put back into use and re-graveled. The farmland at the Swan Creek floodplain was returned to natural progression to support a nature study program.

Next, the needs and goals of the Fine Arts and Athletic facilities were focused on, and once more, capital funds were sought. In 1988, the school opened the state-of-the-art, polyurethane Knight - McCoy running track. The Fine Arts master plan resulted in the building of the Wolfe Art Gallery, a lighted bluestone plaza, and effective, beautiful art studios in and around the lower level of the Smead Building. This support of two highly regarded programs was a fitting end to the eighties and a wonderful transition into the nineties.

As the nineties moved in, the School’s programs were reassessed and long range educational and safety goals were identified. The Trading Post was re-fitted to be the location of the Three’s program and the school undertook another Master Planning effort in 1995, which led the school into the largest and most successful Capital Campaign in its history. As a result, a remodeled and enlarged Middle School, a new school entrance, traffic light, beautifully landscaped drive off Glendale Avenue, additional campus parking, upgraded infrastructure, and safer traffic flow became a reality in 1997. Athletic fields were again relocated, improved, and irrigated for safety and aesthetic gains.

In 1998, the school opened the Johnson-Bayer Physical Education Complex, the Upper and Lower School study alcoves and project areas were upgraded, and the new Millennium Theatre became the crown jewel of the Fine Arts Program. The campus was centered by a clock tower, a pedestrian plaza and an outdoor amphitheatre.

2005 saw construction of a new baseball facility near Glendale Avenue, and in 2007, a leadership challenge course was built, utilizing the nature study areas.

Now thirty years after my arrival, we see the school at the beginning of remaking its facilities to support the newest strategic planning goals. The School’s historical threads of community support, commitment to excellence in education, constant assessment of future needs, and vision are leading to the construction of a new, sustainable, and efficient Upper School, a revamped campus with all buildings under one roof, and facilities that will support the educational efforts for years to come.
the leadership of coach Terri Hermann, has been a regular contender for the state title and has featured many outstanding all-Ohio performances in the last decade. The bonds that the field hockey players form during their season remain strong long after graduation.

Sam McCoy, one of the most beloved coaches in Maumee Valley history, was the driving force behind the track team for decades. Under his tutelage, strong relay teams and individual athletes made the 1980's and 1990's a golden time for this sport. As a new century dawned, Maumee Valley track teams continued this legacy, consistently taking honors at local and state levels. Many of these athletes started their training in the fall on the Maumee Valley cross-country team under coach Margaret Blackburn. Laurels for Maumee Valley boys' and girls' tennis teams. Starting in 1997 the program found much success as Maumee Valley's first-ever state champions, Jon Hui and Roopak Chakravarty, won the doubles title in 1997. Maumee Valley tennis players have continued to qualify for the state tournament every year since, including team Final Four appearances for the girls in 2003 and for the boys in 2006, 2008, and 2009. Because of low numbers, baseball was eliminated from the sports program in the 1980’s, but it returned to Maumee Valley with a brand new field in the early 00’s (at the same time that girls’ lacrosse entered the scene). Basketball fever continued to dominate the winter months at Maumee Valley, highlighted by the boys’ 2001 sectional championship, and the golf team emerged as unsung but perennial contenders for top honors, including their first-ever TAAC championship in 1996.

Maumee Valley sports teams for many years were known as the Mohawks, but after students sought counsel from Native American tribes and determined that this name was no longer suitable, a school-wide campaign began in order to select a new team nickname in the fall of 1990. The Hawks was the overwhelming winner, and the Hawks they are to this day.
Windows of the World
By: Roger Spurgeon, Director of Technology

In 2001, the school hired its first full-time Technology Administrator, in addition to both a Lower School/Middle School and Upper School Technology Coordinator, bringing the technology staff to three full-time employees.

In the 21st century, the school has maintained an installation of approximately 210 computers—including labs of twenty computers in each area (Primary, Lower Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Middle School and Upper School). The school, recognizing the explosive growth of technology, created a program in which each faculty member is assigned a laptop. Over the past five years, projectors and Smartboards have been added or installed in many classrooms. Teachers regularly use presentation software and web resources to enhance their lessons. Students in math and science classes have been using hand-held devices for years to aid in data collection and analysis. In the past several years electronic gradebooks have been employed in the Middle School and the Upper School, enabling parents and students to monitor student progress on an as-needed basis. Recent moves include adding a Middle School laptop lab of twenty mobile computers, and new for 2009, a twelve computer mini-lab of small net-books is available for the Upper School students.

To handle the technology needs for the expanded School, a fiber optic backbone has been installed and a true Ethernet connection to the Internet established via Buckeye Telesystem. Wireless access is available throughout campus, and most services (e-mail, websites, classroom services such as moodle) are available from anywhere on the Internet. Moodle, an online classroom system, supplements classroom instructions by making discussion forums, resources, and homework assignments available anytime, from anywhere.

Looking forward to the future, the school is considering a student laptop program and is further developing its use of online resources such as Google Apps, laptops, and more. The school is planning to meld the libraries and technology services into “information services,” to further allow the library spaces to become the learning centers of campus.

The Global Education Program
By: Jarin Jaffee and Josh Lavetter-Keiden, GEP Co-Directors

“Through its global education program and in-depth coursework, MV gives its students a new perspective that allows them to view the world with more empathy for people of other cultures and with a greater understanding of the problems that plague our world” - Alok Harwani, Alumnus

The First Bites
By: Phyllis Quick

Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.

Daniel J. Booettin

Maumee Valley faculty and students were aware of the coming onslaught of computer technology as early as the 1970s. Then, as now, the central question has been: how do we utilize this mighty tool in ways that are consistent with our mission? Can using technology make us better teachers? Better students? More truly educated human beings? These questions continue to guide hardware and software acquisition, technology curriculum design, and the use of technology in the learning process.

By 1976, a Computer Games club existed in the Upper School. By 1978, the Upper School was in communication with a computer: all you had to do was place the handset of a rotary phone into a cradle and through a series of tones, information could be sent across phone lines. In 1981, the school acquired its first microcomputers for both the Upper and Lower Schools, featuring an awesome 32K of memory. Dorothy Jabarin and Arlene Schwartz wrote a basic programming book for the Upper School and trained faculty during in-service days.

About 1984, the US purchased innovative Macintosh 128K computers. When Apple introduced the 2e, the Lower School (including the Advanced Group) added six of them to our lab of six PETS—what is now the Lower School music room—staffed part-time by the library assistant. The libraries began to use 2e’s as well for clerical tasks. Because of the increased memory and floppy drives, educational software and games flooded the market and students began to use the computer for learning. In the late eighties, Casio introduced the graphing calculator: math classes, particularly in the Upper School, applied the technology to problem solving. When the Geometer’s Sketchpad was introduced the math classes added this tool to help students understand and communicate ideas and concepts.

In the early 1990’s, the technology committee began investigating the Internet. Phineas Anderson, Upper School librarian Vicki Koelsch, Rob Russell and computer coordinator Gerry Davis attended a computer network class at the University of Toledo. They tried for months to get Maumee Valley online, but without success. Finally, Rob and Vicki, working meticulously with Netscape 1.0, got Maumee Valley connected for the very first time.

By the mid-nineties the Upper School had developed a Mac lab and added graphic design classes to the curriculum. The libraries purchased computers and software that allowed books to be checked in and out using a scanner; by the end of 1997, the card catalogue was a thing of the past: all books were entered into the database and the libraries were automated. The first in Northwest Ohio to be online! Computers in the Lower School had been upgraded to Macintoshes and moved from the computer room into labs in the classrooms to more thoroughly integrate technology in the daily lives of students. The Upper School offered classes in graphic design and C++.

Maumee Valley’s comprehensive Global Educational Program is the result of a 2004 strategic plan recommendation that the School develop niche programs that were then unavailable in the greater Toledo area. The program, which was launched in 2006, is a unique, innovative initiative designed to broaden awareness and understanding of international issues—both in our own School community and in northwest Ohio.

This new initiative was in fact foreshadowed in the 1987-88 mission statement which referred to Maumee Valley students as “citizens of their global community.” The Program is a logical outgrowth of the School’s long history of encouraging its students to experience other cultures: a tradition that began with the Misses Smead’s travels to France and Germany, was picked up again by Madame Ashley’s 1970-71 sijourn on Provence with eight Maumee Valley freshmen, by a 1973 delegation of our students to The Hague, and that has enthusiastically continued throughout thirty-one years of Winterim offerings abroad. It is a natural initiative in a School that has so long been distinguished by its ethnic and socio-economic diversity.

While still in its early stages, the GEP is quickly growing. The program features a three-part lecture series, the full-day student-run Issue Day, the Koltay Lecture for Maumee Valley families, a community book club, a special scholar certificate program for Upper School students particularly interested in global affairs, curriculum development, and coordination of programs already in place within the school. In May, 2007, a “sister school” relationship was forged with Yishan University Attachment School in Qinghuangdao, China and in November, 2008, a partnership was finalized with Universidad Steiner Internacional in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Additionally, Maumee Valley is in talks to initiate a Sister School relationship in Bangalore, India and is working to advance the long-time connection Maumee Valley enjoys with a school in Sala, Sweden.

The future of the Global Education Program is exciting. Maumee Valley’s current capital campaign, Under One Roof, seeks to endow the Global Education Program to support professional development opportunities for faculty and to ensure the school’s goal of giving all Upper School students, regardless of finances, the opportunity to travel abroad for Winterim.

aurum Valley Country Day School
The Board of Trustees

"...All of us who have been privileged to be part of this living school gain from those who precede us, who have loved the school, given gifts to the school and therefore to the successors. Perhaps not clear: while obviously I treasure the personal gifts, devotion, creativity, commitment, time, love, care...there you have it: care! And these qualities have, I think, outshone those in staid and established and traditional prep schools in suburban, well-heeled, “intentional”, “expected” communities...Maumee Valley is something that few other schools are. Some combination of grit and creativity and gratitude and imagination. Dreamers, we have been, eh?"

Peter Stevens, former Head of School

"...The Board of Trustees acted appropriately and decisively to solve the problem. I was impressed that the board members did not try to hide from the mistake they had made...but acted to provide sound leadership for the school. It made me feel secure to be part of an institution that had such forceful and able volunteer leadership.”

T he Maumee Valley Board of Trustees is the primary steward of the School. A board’s major responsibilities are to insure the financial health of the School, to hire a Head of School, and to establish the policies that will guide the Head in his or her administration of the School. Ideally, a board and a Head work in concert to hammer out a plan that saved the school. Boards have partnered with Administrations to hammer out six major Long Range and Facilities Plans in the past forty years: plans that set, and held, a considered, realistic course of growth and transformation.

Tuition income is never used for capital or endowment needs. Yet, a school campus must grow, a school must be available to all who would flourish there, its programs must leap and soar, its legacy must be secured and handed down. Additional income must be found. In the past sixty years, members of Maumee Valley’s boards of trustees have led campaigns that have raised over $50 million for capital and endowment needs. These dollar amounts are impressive, and the dollars are critical to the School’s operation. These dollar amounts are impressive, and the dollars are critical to the School’s operation. However, equally impressive and essential to the life of the School, is the moral support, the sense of community, the personal gifts, devotion, creativity, commitment, time, love, care...there you have it: care! And these qualities have, I think, outshone those in staid and established and traditional prep schools in suburban, well-heeled, “intentional”, “expected” communities...Maumee Valley is something that few other schools are. Some combination of grit and creativity and gratitude and imagination. Dreamers, we have been, eh?"

Ken Meineke

"Maumee Valley has always pushed the edges in many ways. Those that are sustaining, from my experience, are: Consideration for the emerging student was first and foremost in any deliberation. The Board leads the community in their planning. The “Under One Roof” campaign in spite of an economic blizzard illustrates that role. And finally we are reminded that a multicultural environment is the best teaching laboratory in this shrinking world. The mission and direction of Maumee Valley and achievements attained along the way have been recognized and deeply respected within the independent school world.”

Jerry Million

Steadfast Partners: Parents, Alumnae, Alumni

“Each independent school is built on a community of families who value education. While we put students through an admissions process, it is in effect families who are being interviewed and who are being accepted into the school community based on whether or not they are aligned with our schools’ missions. These sophisticated “buyers” of education are invested in our success and actively participate in sustaining the school culture and supporting the faculty.”

Gary Boehm, Head of School

Maumee Valley Country Day School – 2006

A non-profit independent school cannot survive without ongoing support from its alumni and parent community. In the last twenty years, the Annual Fund has grown from $140,000 to nearly $280,000. The first auction raised $100,000. Recent auctions have raised $240,000 and $300,000.

Maumee Valley’s Annual Fund most typically raises money for teacher salaries, professional development, curriculum materials and the maintenance of campus facilities. It also provides resources for scholarships and financial aid ensuring the diversity that is evident and cherished at the school. Income from other fundraising events – beautifully planned and executed by parent volunteers – such as the bi-annual auction, bazaars, carnivals, and “celebrity” dinners, has in the past been directed to a specific school need, such as playground equipment, new school buses, or student travel scholarships; currently, it is channeled into the School’s operating budget.

These dollar amounts are impressive, and the dollars are critical to the School’s operation. However, equally impressive and essential to the life of the School, is the moral support, the constant, steadfast commitment of time, intelligence, and engagement donated by the Maumee Valley community, past and present. This support comes from the parents who come out after work to parent meetings, who come to teacher conferences, who are room mothers, who drive to field trips, who bring in gifts for the Auction, who buy items from the Auction, from alumnae who send us their checks decades after their graduation, from alumnae who told us their wonderful memories of the Smead School, from the alumni who even now keep in touch on Facebook. There is a current, a live connection between all those who have been part of Smead School and Maumee Valley Country Day School and the School of today. It is a current of affection, respect, gratitude, and generosity. It is the spirit that sustains us.

Maumee Valley has turned to its support community for major expansion programs five times in the past eighty years. At every step of the way, you, our family and friends have given – and given again – more generously than we could possibly have imagined. You have built the Smead Building, the pre-school, the first Upper School, the new Lower School, the Science Wing, the Wolfe Gallery, the Commons, the Dining Room, the Millennium Theatre, the Johnson-Bayer Fitness Center and gym, the Ashley Amphitheater, the Knight-McCoy Track, the tennis courts, the playing fields, the curving driveways. You make it possible for us to spend each day surrounded by natural beauty, great trees and intriguing woodlands that protect and nourish each person who comes to our school. We thank you.
They Raised Us Up

Maumee Valley Country Day School

John of Salisbury, 1130 AD

“We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.”

Maumee Valley Country Day School has one foot in the 19th century, one foot in the 21st: we have straddled a whole century. Our 125 years have encompassed the greatest number of technological advances in human history: from carriages to cars to airplanes to space travel, from telegraphs to telephones to radio, to cinema to TV to satellites, to the World Wide Web. We are all linked: each of us in the developed world can reach the rest of the world with the touch of a finger. We learn good or terrible news in seconds. Often in this century-plus we have seen more bad news than good.

And yet: in these same 125 years – perhaps because we have grown ever more connected - concepts of human dignity and social justice have moved from the backbenches of American political life until young men began to go west to seek their fortunes, leaving towns and cities behind for the lure of the open land. The Smead sisters were very lucky to be sent to Mrs. Bryan’s Seminary; indeed, they were lucky to have gone to school at all. Education for girls was not considered necessary until young men began to go west to seek their fortunes, leaving towns without teachers. The great women’s colleges were built from the 1860’s to the 1880’s, inspired by a passion for inclusion and equity - the same passion that would lead to women’s suffrage in 1920, and to the freedoms of personal choice still being debated today.

Maumee Valley’s courage to venture into the unknown, and its extraordinary ability to balance a demanding education with a profound respect for the whole child, spring from that same pivotal time in America’s history, an era in which a few women stepped beyond the hearth, discovered their role as reformers and educators, and changed the social history of America. That idealism, toughened by persistence, ingenuity, and wits, empowered Miss Mary, Miss Marion, Miss Grace, Miss Rose and Miss Leland. Their vision and commitment to excellence informed every headmaster who followed – and the host of teachers, staff, parents, and children who supported them. We stand on their shoulders. They raised us up.

Acknowledgements

In 1984, Maumee Valley Country Day School commissioned historian and author Ted Ligibel to write a history of the School to commemorate its 100th Anniversary. This wonderful work, A Centennial History: 1884-1984, Smead/Maumee Valley Country Day School, meticulously researched and written with verve and humor, has been invaluable to me in assembling this new history, celebrating the School’s 125 years.

I have cited material taken directly from Ted’s work. However, I need to further acknowledge my huge debt to him: even when I did not quote his work directly, I used his chronology as the template on which to recast the story in my own words. His efforts saved me months of labor. Thank you, Ted!

I am deeply grateful to all those members of the Maumee Valley community whose observations and memories are quoted here.

And thank you to Fritz Byers, brilliant editor and good friend.

Ann Stranahan, September 2009

Notes


The original land acquisition was 27 acres. Additional acquisitions have increased the School’s property to its present 72 acres.


Phineas Anderson “With an Eye towards the Future” MCVDS Directions, Spring 1994


Ashley, Gerry, And So to France, 2007

Visit http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us-history.html

The New York Times Archives “In the Early Days They Had Few Opportunities.” From The Boston Transcript, August 10, 1895
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1715 S. Reynolds Road  Toledo, Ohio 43614-1499
419-381-1313  www.mvcds.org