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BODY:

Feb. 07--Some of Summit County's founding fathers grew up in the rustic neighborhood that sprang up along the railroad tracks running along the Green and Lake Township line.

At the turn of the last century, more than 3,000 people lived in the bustling hamlet of Aultman, which was home to industries that make coal and clay products, said Staci E. Schweikert, secretary of the Green Historical Society.

The then-Valley Railroad ran from Cleveland to Canton and served the Aultman factories and mines. Today, those tracks carry passengers on the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad.

Aultman, probably named for Cornelius Aultman who founded C. Aultman & Co. in Canton in 1859, and was half brother to Lewis Miller, inventor of the Buckeye Mower and Reaper, the prototype for the modern mower, Schweikert said.

The brothers were business partners of John R. Buchtel, another of Akron's leading citizens who founded Buchtel College, the precursor to the University of Akron.

"They built Akron and they came from log cabins here in Green," Schweikert said.

The Green Historical Society's steering committee has gained local landmark status for three Green properties. It began researching the home Schweikert and her husband, James Schweikert, a patent attorney for **Hahn, Loeser & Parks LLP** of Akron, purchased in 2008. The Greek Revival home on Steese Road was built in 1849 by the Rev. Henry Heiss, a prominent member of the Evangelical Church, and garnered historic landmark status last year.

Since then, Staci Schweikert, also a patent attorney, has taken on a role as one of the researchers for the 64-member society, wading through plat maps, geographic information and topographical atlases while delving into the history of old Green homesteads.

The landmark designation is a way for the city to preserve its rich history, said Sarah Haring, community development administrator.

"A historic landmark is designated because the property has a special character, history or aesthetic interest," Haring said.

Renovated schoolhouse

Recently, the Aultman hamlet became the focus of the group's attention when Green Historical Society President B.J. Hutchison stopped at the Greensburg Road home of Glenn and Becky Witsaman and discovered the 1923 cottage-style bungalow is a renovated one-room schoolhouse.

Glenn Witsaman is the third generation of his family to live in the building purchased by his grandparents from the Green Township Board of Education in 1923.

"It's the only wood-frame schoolhouse in Green," Witsaman said.

Researchers believe the schoolhouse was built between 1880 and 1890, but the county recorder's office dates construction even earlier, at about 1870.

Wilbur Witsaman and Anna Marie Yenny were classmates at the school, said Glenn Witsaman. The couple purchased the school in 1923 and began renovations to convert the schoolhouse to an authentic cottage bungalow. The work included reducing the size of large windows to add a second floor, rebuilding the foundation and adding a hipped-roof front porch.

Remnants of the patch added after a cupola was removed from the roof are visible. The school bell that hung in the cupola was stolen from the home's backyard after it was taken down, Witsaman said.

He recalls playing at the house as a child after his parents, Glenn Homer and Carolyn Witsaman, built a home nearby in 1953. He actually lived in the converted schoolhouse while his family's home was being built, he said.

In 1983, the couple purchased the home from Wilbur and Anna Witsaman's estate.

The original 1923 deed to the house that conveyed title of the property to the Witsamans is framed and hanging in the living area of the home.

In January, the Green Historic Preservation Commission voted to designate the Aultman Schoolhouse a local historic landmark. A plaque will note 1885 as the date the building was constructed, based on records provided by the family.

"That's the date that has been passed down by the family. That's probably pretty accurate," Haring said.

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