

A Brief History of Licking County
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Licking County is located at the geographic center of Ohio, with its eastern part being hilly and rough and the western portion flattening out as the beginning of the mid-western plains.

The history of the county really began over 2000 years ago when an ancient people known as the Hopewell occupied the area. While they disappeared for no apparent reason, the large earthen mounds left behind give modern man clues to their type of culture. Licking County is home to countless numbers of these mounds with the Great Circle Earthworks being one of the largest.

Next to inhabit the area were the American Indians, likely the Wyandotte, Shawnee and Delaware. Prior to 1800, small villages were located below the junction of the north and south forks of the river running through the county that the Indian tribes called the Lick-Licking. The name is supposed to have come from the "salt licks" that lay upon or near the banks that brought deer and buffalo and later domestic animals. The north fork of the river was called "Pataskala".

In 1751, Christopher Gist, exploring in the interest of the Ohio Company of Virginia, a company whose members listed some prominent Virginia gentlemen and two brothers of General George Washington, crossed the Licking River at or near the mouth of Bowling Green Run, about four miles east of Newark.

Around 1787, John H. Phillips, and his two younger brothers, and Thomas and Eramus, sons of Thomas Phillips, a Welshman of large fortune, decided to immigrate to America. John H. was the reputed author of some seditious or treasonable literature, and left the country to avoid arrest and punishment. Along with the help of the Phillips' many of their Welsh neighbors purchased 2000 acres of land situated in what is now the northeast quarter of Granville Township.

Early in 1802, William Schenck, G.W. Bernet and John Cummins came from a settlement in New Jersey to inspect a section of Military Land they had purchased. After surveying the area and platting a town at the forks of the Licking River, they decided to call it "New Ark" after Schenck's native town in New Jersey. The plat was recorded in Lancaster, the county seat of Fairfield County, which included at that time New Ark.

However, shortly after the original plat was drawn, an alteration was made and the town's name was spelled as one word. In 1808, Licking County was established with Newark as its county seat. The village continued to grow in population and was incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio in 1833.

By the 1820s, the pioneers were living life a little easier. Their farms were partially cleared, many were living in hewn log houses, frame and even brick homes. Most had barns and innumerable outhouses; they generally had cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, and poultry.

The construction of the Ohio Canal began in 1825. Governor DeWitt Clinton of New York State, where the Erie Canal was begun in 1819, spoke at the ground-breaking ceremonies at Licking Summit, near Newark, for the Ohio and Erie Canal system. The Licking Summit site is marked by a monument and a preserved stonewall from the original canal lock along Hebron Road, in the present day City of Heath. By 1833 the Canal, or 'big dig', was completed. The canal brought a new era to Licking County and the region. Newark grew to become a beehive of activity with farmers bringing produce and meat to market for shipping to other parts of Ohio, and points east. But the arrival of the railroad era at mid century brought a faster distribution and transportation system, and the canals gradually began to lose their value. The canal system peaked around 1851, and by the 1890s, the boats were no longer passing through. In 1908, the great Ohio Canal was filled in.

In 1832, the Licking County Agricultural Society began holding fairs at the Great Circle Mound located at the "Old Fort" in what is now known as Moundbuilders Park. In the late 1800s, the

fairgrounds thrived when the Interurban was introduced. This provided a direct line from downtown to the fairgrounds. During that time the fairgrounds became known as Idlewilde Park.

October 1861 brought a new use for the Old Fort when it served as the rendezvous for the 76th Regiment of Ohio Volunteers. Renamed Camp Sherman, local son and West Point graduate, Col Charles R. Woods was put in command. On February 9, 1862, the new enlistees from the camp found themselves on the battlefield.

After the Civil War, in 1898, local banker J. F. Lingafelter brought a summertime entertainment resort to the fairgrounds site. However, legal difficulties and the popularity of the new Buckeye Lake Park led to the demise of Idlewilde Park amusement park. By 1924 the last remnants of the old fairgrounds were removed and the ancient earthworks were restored to their original condition.

Buckeye Lake Park was built in 1910. Known as the "Playground of Ohio" with its hotels, amusement rides, swimming pool, skating rink, concession booths and games. Over time the park hosted hundreds of musicians and celebrities, and thousands of fans. But alas, the park closed in 1972, a victim of aging small facilities and waning crowds.

For the past 200 years, many people have had a connection to Licking County. But these people are legendary and their names continue to keep the history of our county alive:

- Harry C Beasley, (1883-1931), was a Newark police officer that was gunned down by safe robbers on June 30, 1931. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor, in 1914, while serving with the Navy at Vera Cruz, Mexico, where President Woodrow Wilson had ordered the interception of a German ship carrying arms for Gen Victoriano Hueta. His murder remains unsolved today.

- John Chapman, (1774-1845), was known as "Johnny Appleseed". The folklore hero scattered the Licking County countryside with seeds of apples and wild herbs. Many of his original trees still stand in the county today.

- Cora Bell Clark, (1867-1939), began working at the First National Bank in Utica at the age of 15 yrs. She became the first woman cashier of a national bank in the United States and went on to become the first woman to hold the title of bank president. Her bank remained open during the Great Depression.

- Major Gen John Lincoln Clem, (1851-1937), ran away from his Newark home at the age of 10 yrs and joined the Union Army. On April 6, 1862, the boy of 11 marched into battle at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee. He died in San Antonio, Texas at age 86.

- Beman Gates Dawes, (1870-1953), was the founder of the Pure Oil Company. With his wife, Bertie, he established the Dawes Arboretum in 1929.

- Woody English, (1907-1997), began his professional career in baseball in 1925, playing shortstop for the Toledo Mud Hens. He continued his renowned profession with the Chicago Cubs before being traded to Brooklyn. He retired in 1938 as a player, but managed Grand Rapids in the popular women's baseball league during World War II. English lived the remainder of his life in Newark and the Route 16 Expressway through the City was named the "Woody English Parkway" in his honor.

- Edward Hamlin Everett, (1851-1929), was known as the "Bottle King". He began his realm in 1880, when he purchased the Newark Star Glass Works. He later founded the Ohio Bottle Company. His other businesses included gas exploration and fruit orchards. The millionaire died in Boston from complications following a surgery for prostate cancer.

- Howard LeFevre, (Born 1907), is the founder of what was originally known as the B & L Trucking Company. LeFevre, who celebrated his 100th birthday of May 2007, is a philanthropist, community benefactor, creator of The Works in downtown Newark, and OSU fan extraordinaire.

- Amzi Godden, (1815–1855), was a noted artist that lived in Newark after 1820. His genre was portraits. He died of tuberculosis or “white plague”, and is buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, Newark.

- William Welles Hollister, (Born 1818). In 1854, William Hollister left Hanover, with the first large trans-continental sheep drive, bringing 6,000 merino sheep from Licking County to California during the gold rush. He arrived with only about 1,000. Hollister founded Hollister, California and made his fortune in wool and profits from his more than twenty thousand fruit trees.

- Elias Hughes, (born sometime before 1755-1844), was considered to be the first permanent white settler of Licking County in 1798. He was a hunter in a surveying party when he first set eyes on the area. Later in life he was known as an Indian scout and is thought to have been over ninety when he died and was buried with military honors in the Utica Cemetery.

- Leonidas H. Inscho, (1840–1907). Born in the small community of Chatam, Inscho received the Congressional Metal of Honor. His citation dated 31 January 1894, reads: “Alone and unaided and with his left hand disabled, captured a Confederate captain and four men”. Corporal, Company E, 12th Ohio Infantry, at South Mountain, MD, 14 September 1862.

- Mary Sherwood Wright Jones, (1892–1985), was a noted muralist and illustrator for children’s books including the renowned national publication of Weekly Reader.

- Thomas D. Jones, (1812–1881), a stone cutter that began his career cutting stone blocks on the Ohio canal before turning to the fine arts of sculpture. He was the only sculptor that Abraham Lincoln would sit for and one bust of Lincoln now adorns the State House rotunda in Columbus.

- Geraldine “Jerrie” Fredritz Mock – (Born 1925), is a world-renowned aviatrix. Breaking many world aviation records, she received the Federal Aviation Agency’s highest award as the first woman to fly solo around the world.

- Lee Ann Parsley, (Born 1969), was an Olympian Silver Medal Winner in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2002 in the winter sport of Skeleton.

- Joseph Rider, (1817-1901), was a Newark gunsmith that held over 100 patents for his gun designs. The Remington Company sold thousands of Remington Rider breech-loading muskets and the patent royalties from his other gun designs made him one of Newark’s wealthiest citizens. It was rumored that he received as much as \$400. per day from these royalties.

- Bishop Sylvester Horton Rosecrans, (1827–1878), was born in Homer. He converted to Catholicism in 1845, was ordained as a bishop in 1862, and became the first bishop of Columbus, Ohio in March of 1868. His brother was Major General William Starke Rosecrans.

- Edward James Roye, (1815-1872), was a Newark black man elected the fifth President of the Republic of Liberia in Africa in 1870.

- Alexander Samuelson, (1862-1934), was born in Sweden, lived and worked in Newark and has been credited with inventing the original “hobble skirt” Coca-Cola bottle in 1915.

- John Sparks, (1758-1846), was a guide, scout and hunter for the two expeditions of Zebulon Pike. These efforts helped open largely unknown areas in the headwaters of the Mississippi River, and also in the far Southwest to the increasing westward expansion of the United States. Sparks spent his later years living on the north bank of the Licking River, and was often seen walking barefoot around Newark. He is memorialized and buried in Hollar Cemetery in north Newark.

- John H. Swisher and his brother Harry purchased a cigar business from their father, David, in Newark in 1888. The two brothers took what had been a one-room operation capable of making a few hundred cigars and turning it into a very successful business. By 1895, the cigar company had grown to three factories that employed more than 1,000 workers, rolling out as many as 300,000 cigars each day.

- La Marcus Adna Thompson, (1848–1919), was born in the community of Jersey. Sometimes known as the “Father of Gravity” Thompson is best known for his early work developing roller coasters. His ‘Switchback Railway’ opened at Coney Island, NY, in 1884, and was the first gravity-powered roller coaster built in the United States.

- Clarence Hudson White, (1871-1925), was a prominent amateur photographer that lived in Newark. He was a self-taught photographer that took his photography to an art form. White organized the Newark Camera Club and by the turn of the century the club had achieved world-renowned status. He was the founder of the Clarence H. White School of Photography in New York.

- Victoria Claflin Woodhull, (1838-1927), was a feminist pioneer from Homer. She rose from poverty to become the first woman to sit on Wall Street at the New York Stock Exchange as a broker, the first woman to testify before Congress and the first woman to run for president of the United States.

- Brevet Major General William Burnham Woods, (1824–1887), was nominated as a US circuit judge by President Grant in 1869. Ten years later President Hayes nominated him as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.