DESTINATION LODI

A HISTORICAL JOURNEY

THE PANCOAST FAMILY

Circa 1900

Many months ago, I received a call from Dennis and Judith Shell that lives in the Pancoast house at 8273 Garman Road. We had a lovely visit, talked about their extraordinary family history and the M.L. Pancoast family of Harrisville Twp. Garman Road was once the driveway to the Pancoast farm.

According to the History of Medina Co and Ohio: Sketches and Biographical, M.L. Pancoast was the son of William and Vashti (Cooper). M.L. was the fifth of seven children born 3/26/1810. The family settled on 160 acres near Wooster. In the beginning, with no house to live in, the family lived in four wagons. His father, William was a farmer and mechanic, manufacturing angers and gimlets (tools for boring holes). M.L. would follow in his father’s example.

In 1847, M.L. married Mary Cook and after 8 years, they moved to Harrisville Twp. They had seven children that includes one who was quite famous.

M.L. Pancoast was a republican and attended the Presbyterian Church. The Old Lodi Cemetery holds members of the family.

His son William was a graduate of Lodi Academy and University of Michigan Law School. William, a cashier of the Commerce Bank and respected figure in Medina would cause the Pancoast name known in Medina Co. and across the county. It was in 1874 William Pancoast suddenly skipped town. Long story short….wife died, missing money and William not heard from until September 15, 1894.

William was a respected figure in Medina County. He married the daughter of W.L. Terrill former owner of the American House Hotel and prosperous Cleveland resident. His wife died two years after marriage of a heart attack. The Commercial Bank, which he founded was doing find until the economic panic of 1874. Pancoast skipped town with 50% of banks holdings.

It was not until 1894, the community of Medina once again heard from William Pancoast. William Wildy Pancoast with aliases Myron R. Kent and Jud C. Lane was on trial for forgery, embezzlement and murder of his wife Julie Laird Kent, the daughter of a wealthy lumberman in Minnesota. The Wayne Co. Crime News: August 12, 1896, stated the life insurance on his wife was worth $30,000.

During his trial to help pay for his defense he received funds from “the Family Friends of Mr. Pancoast in Medina County”. Amazing! His trial ended with punishment by death, he was sentence to hang on October 25, 1895. After two trials, the governor of South Dakota commuted his sentence to life imprisonment.

It was said from 1874-1882; he traveled to Canada, England, Australia, Texas, Chicago, Minnesota and South Dakota cheating individuals along the way. William W. Pancoast was not one of Lodi’s finest.

We are looking for new members and volunteers to help organize, catalog and help with displays. Our website lodiharrisvillehistorical.org for membership forms. Give me a call if you want to help. 330-635-7294. Donations please send to Box 179 Lodi, Ohio 44254. Thank you!