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### Ruffner Roots and Ramblings, Vol. 7, Issue 1

Ruffner Family Association

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# RUFFNER ROOTS & RAMBLINGS

Volume 7, Issue #1

March 2004

## *The Colonel and the Taft House*

**Colonel Ernest Howard Ruffner** was born July 24, 1845, in Louisville, Kentucky. His parents were General Lewis & Viola (Knapp) Ruffner. Ernest attended Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. He was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on July 1, 1863. He graduated from the Academy on June 17, 1867, number one in his class. He was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the U.S. Corps of Engineers and began a long distinguished career.

He conducted surveys on the Great Lakes, built roads in the Rocky Mountains and on the Staked Plains of Texas, surveyed state boundaries in the West, was a project engineer at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and participated in engineering work on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and their tributaries. He was also assigned as lighthouse inspector and engineer in charge of the Charleston, South Carolina, Engineer District. While at that post, he supervised construction of Batteries Huger and Jasper, massive Endicott reinforced concrete emplacements. Battery Huger, mounting 15-inch guns, was incorporated into historic Fort Sumter. From the Atlantic seaboard, in 1902, he was ordered to Cincinnati as district engineer. While in that position, he supervised construction of the Fernbank Dam and other Ohio River projects.

Ernest married Mary Watson on December 7, 1869, by whom he had four children. His sons, Ernest Lewis Ruffner, born in 1870, was a Colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps; Henry Watson Ruffner, born in 1872, was an Episcopalian Clergyman, artist and gifted musical composer, and Arthur Ruffner, born in 1875, was a farmer at Williamsburg, Clermont County, Ohio. His daughter, Violet, born in 1883, married Louis K. DeBus, a Cincinnati businessman.

Ernest retired as a Colonel from the Corps on June 24, 1909, at the age of 64. In 1912, he purchased the birthplace home of William Howard Taft, 27<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, at 2038 Auburn Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The original section of the house (a two-story brick) was built in the 1840s by the Bowen family. In 1851, the house was purchased by Alphonso Taft (father of William Howard Taft). Alphonso made changes to the house including a brick ell to the rear which rose three stories and incorporated an entrance to the ground floor.

Alphonso Taft had a distinguished public service career beginning in 1865, when he was appointed to the Ohio Supreme Court. After ten years on the court, he became a candidate for governor of Ohio, losing the Republican nomination to Rutherford B. Hayes. In 1876, he was named Secretary of War and later Attorney General in President Ulysses S. Grant's cabinet. In 1882, he was appointed U.S. Minister to Austria-Hungary and in 1884, to Russia during Chester A. Arthur's presidency.

As his father's public career spiraled, William Howard Taft, born on September 15, 1857, grew up in the Auburn Avenue home. After graduating from high school in 1874, he entered Yale University. When he graduated from Yale, he attended Cincinnati Law School and lived with his parents. Upon admission to the Ohio bar, he was appointed Assistant Prosecutor of Hamilton County. In 1886, he married Helen "Nellie" Herron and built a house on McMillan Street in Walnut Hills. Thereafter, he experienced a rapid rise in his



*William Howard Taft birthplace home in 1867 (National Park Service Photo)*

career of public service including Judge of Cincinnati's Superior Court, Solicitor General of the United States, Federal Circuit Court service, Dean of the Cincinnati Law School, Governor General of the Philippines and Secretary of War under President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908, he won the Republican nomination for U.S. presidency and election in 1909, as the country's 27<sup>th</sup> president. After his term ended in 1913, Taft returned to Yale as a professor and in 1921, President Warren G. Harding appointed him as Chief Justice of the United States. Thus, William Howard Taft became the only person in United States history to serve as head of both the Executive and Judicial branches of the government. In 1930, he retired from the court due to ill health and he died in Washington on March 8<sup>th</sup>. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Back in 1889, with Alphonso's health declining, William Howard Taft's parents headed for a warmer climate in San Diego. Alphonso  
(continued on page 2)



**The Colonel and the Taft House** (from page 1)

died there in 1891, and his body was brought back to Cincinnati for burial. Louise Taft, William Howard's mother, spent her remaining years in her hometown of Millbury, Massachusetts.

By late 1889, the house on Auburn was no longer occupied by a Taft. It was rented by a succession of families until 1899, when it was sold to Judge Albert C. Thompson. The Judge was a former U.S. Congressman. When he left Congress on March 3, 1891, he never actively re-entered politics. On September 13, 1898, he was appointed Judge for the United States District Court for Southern Ohio by President McKinley and he moved his family from Portsmouth to Cincinnati, Ohio. The Judge and his family lived in the Taft house from July 1899 until 1910, when the Judge, after a short illness, died on January 26 at the residence. Mrs. Thompson lived at the Taft house after her husband's death, but the following November, she placed it on the market and moved back to Portsmouth. Between 1899 and 1904, the Thompsons made a number of improvements to the house including a single-story front porch and a single-story conservatory.

The next owner of the Taft house was Colonel Ruffner, who bought it from the Mrs. Thompson in 1912. When the Ruffners moved into their new home, the DeBus family (their daughter Violet) joined them. Mary (Watson) Ruffner, Ernest's wife, died in 1921. When the Colonel remarried in the mid-1920s, the now widowed Mrs. DeBus and her children moved to a new address. Ernest's second wife was Dorothy Grey. By 1935, Mrs. DeBus, her daughter Martha and son Louis were again living with the Colonel.

In the *Cincinnati Times-Star* on April 24, 1935, in a feature article, the columnist wrote, "on the colonel's wall is the head of a mountain sheep with strange horn formation." Ruffner told the newsman he had killed the trophy while doing an "engineering project in the Colorado Rockies in 1878." His present hobbies, he continued, were reading and raising exotic plants. "I raised that grape vine from a seed," he remarked, as he pointed "to a long vine climbing up his library window."

Two years later, on May 24, 1937, Colonel Ernest Howard Ruffner died at the Auburn Avenue home. In his obituary, it said ~ "the deceased was of studious mind, and read Spanish, Italian, French and German, and after his seventieth birthday in 1915 he had taken up the study of Russian. He was a student of the Bible, wrote poetry, and had done a number of paintings, many of which had been accepted for exhibitions." (See *RR&R*, September 2002 and December 2002.)

When the Colonel's will was probated, he left the house and lot to his daughter, Mrs. DeBus. Later on that year, she placed the house in the hands of a real estate agent. A "For Sale" sign on the front lawn came to the attention of the William Howard Taft Memorial Association and a campaign was launched to preserve the house as a historic site. When Mrs. DeBus was advised of the Association's plan, she stated... "I would be glad to have the property used as a Taft Memorial and would...temporarily not consider other propositions for its purchase." Among those she received was from a purchaser who wished to "remodel the house into small apartments." Mrs. Rule, the realtor, told the Association the property was valued at \$12,500 and it could be purchased for that amount. However, the Association was unable through many attempts to raise sufficient funds to purchase the property. Finally, Mrs. DeBus, who was anxious to sell the house, advised the Association, through her realtor, that it had until April 4, 1940, to produce the necessary funds.

The Association turned to the sons of President Taft for help. Charles Taft wrote to his brother Senator Robert A. Taft and although a plan was formulated to purchase the property if adequate funds could be raised, it was killed by James E. Almond, President of the American City Bureau and a Taft admirer. He said that with Senator Taft "a very strong contender for the Republican presidential nomination, it would be very foolish, at this time, to launch any fund-raising program with which he would be even remotely connected." Thus, the Chairman of the Campaign Committee announced that the Association was suspending its fund-raising efforts to avoid embarrassing Senator Taft. Mrs. DeBus, after being notified of this situation, authorized her agent to find another buyer.

After listening to a prospective buyer's plans to remodel the house into four apartments, the realtor contacted Elbert R. Bellinger, who owned and occupied the adjoining Burkhardt home. Bellinger was interested in old houses and appreciated the significance of the Taft home as a presidential birthplace. Before agreeing on a purchase price, he promised to stabilize the house and if he ever sold the property to give the Association first opportunity to buy. On April 15, 1940, the sale was finalized when Mrs. DeBus sold the house to Bellinger.

In 1969, the Federal Government designated the Taft house a national historic site, honoring the life and work of William Howard Taft. The house has been restored to its 19<sup>th</sup> Century appearance. It is operated by the National Park Service, open daily to the public and all year, with the exception of three major holidays.



*The William Howard Taft Historical Site,  
2004 (National Park Service Photo)*

**We hope many Ruffner descendants will attend the Annual Meeting of the Ruffner Family Association and its Board of Directors when they meet in Cincinnati, June 18-19, 2004, and visit the William Howard Taft Historic Site ~ where a Ruffner once dwelled.**

(Editor's Note: Our thanks to **Kevin D. McMurry**, Superintendent of the William Howard Taft Historical Site for photographs and literature; to **Ernest Howard Ruffner, III** for the remembrances of his great-grandfather; **Robert Sheets** for his historic input, and "**Peter Ruffner and His Descendants**," our faithful guidebook, compiled and written by Olive Taylor Ruffner and Doris Laver Ruffner, 1966.)



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*Words from the Past*

from the column  
 "The Window Peeper"  
 ~ By Hy C. Ruffner ~  
 Lancaster Eagle Gazette  
 March 17, 1934

## ERIN GO BRAGH

Fifteen hundred and seventy-one years ago on March 17 in the year of our Lord 363, one St. Patrick was born somewhere on the Emerald Isle and became a most beloved character and patron Saint among the Irish people.

Biographical records are somewhat obscure relative to the childhood and early life of this remarkable man, but in his later years he seems to have become Ireland's leading citizen and was hailed as a national savior because of his reputed activities in driving the snakes out of the Emerald Isle. In this, he takes a parallel place among heroes with the Pied Piper of Hamelin who seems to have been the champion rat exterminator of all time.

History fails to make exactly clear whether March 17 is the birthday of Ireland's snake hunter or whether that was the day of the great charge and offensive against the reptiles of the Emerald Isle. But that matters little and is none the more confusing than Jackson Day banquets which are held both in honor of the birthday of the combative Democrat and that time he and his trusty squirrel hunters licked the pride of the British army at New Orleans.

None can deny the influence of this man St. Patrick on the Irish people. To them he is an idol and an ideal and his influence has become a national force in America. Descendants of all nations wear a shamrock on March 17 and while not recognized as a national holiday, St. Patrick's Day is recognized by a majority of the people of these United States of America.

This is the day of days among the children of the Emerald Isle. It awakens memories of the progress of a great race in a new nation. It reminds us of a people who have had a powerful influence in America. This is the day when we all can say, "Erin Go Bragh."

*A Message from the President*

I am writing to you from the cold and snowy corner of Southwest Ohio. It should be warm by the time we meet again in Cincinnati, Ohio for the RFA Annual Meeting and the meeting of its Board of Directors on June 18-19, 2004.

It seems that not a week goes by that I am not e-mailed or contacted in some way by someone with an interest in the Ruffner heritage. One item that has generated much interest is the DNA project we currently have set up with familytreedna.com. This project currently has 6 participants in various stages of testing, but we are in need of additional participants. One mystery we hope to resolve is whether the different Ruffner family branches in the United States are related. This has been the subject of speculation, but no hard evidence has ever been uncovered. We currently have members of the Simon Ruffner line, a participant from the Christian Ruffner line, and a participant (me) from the Peter Ruffner line. In order to get conclusive results, we are in need of a broader group of participants from all lines. Eventually we hope to be able to include Ruffners in Europe in this study.

Who can participate? If you are a male descendant and carry the last name of Ruffner, Rufner, or some other variation of our name, you are eligible. The cost is \$99 plus \$2 for shipping. The test is easy. You will receive a kit with some swabs to scrape along the inside of your cheek. You place the swab into the included vials and ship your sample back to the lab in the return envelope provided. Within about 6 weeks, your results should be ready. To participate, you can contact me at [ruffnerfamily@cinci.rr.com](mailto:ruffnerfamily@cinci.rr.com), or you can order directly from the familytreedna.com site by pulling up the Ruffner surname project. We have a group discount so make sure you are ordering the \$99 test. Also, the cost of this study has been prohibitive for some eligible Ruffners who wish to participate. If you would like to financially contribute to this study or sponsor someone, please let me know.

The first six months I have served as your president have been a wonderful experience. I am really getting in touch with quite an extended family. 2004 looks to be quite a year for our organization. Although this is not the year of our official reunion, much work is going on. Please look through this issue of the Ruffner Roots & Ramblings for more information on the Booker T. Washington Reunion at the Hampton University campus in Hampton, Virginia, and the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in July for Virginia "Ginny" Rigg. In the meantime, work will be continuing on our updated publication of the Ruffner genealogy books, and planning will get into full swing for the 2005 Ruffner Reunion in Lancaster County, PA.

As always, if any of these events or items are of interest and you have questions or would like to participate, please feel free to contact me directly.

**Dan Ruffner**

7534 Fallsridge Lane

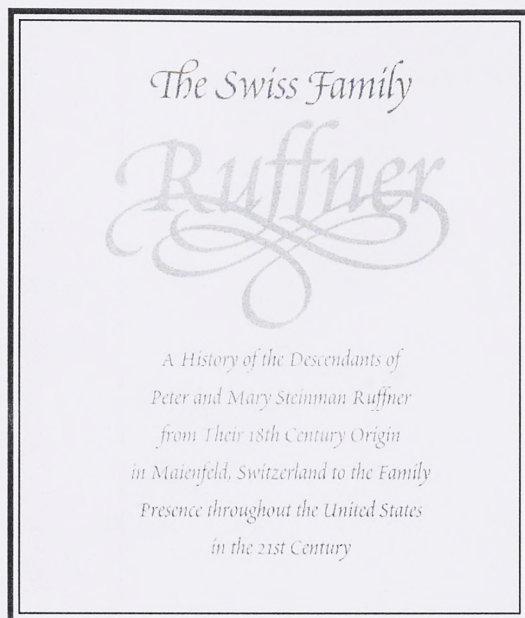
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## Update to Peter Ruffner and His Descendants is Moving Forward



The publication of an updated version of the Doris Laver Ruffner and Olive Taylor Ruffner books, "*Peter Ruffner and His Descendants*," has proved to be quite an undertaking for our organization. When the idea was presented back in 1999, there was a lot of interest and resources available to pull the project together. The questionnaires were distributed through the branch coordinators and returned by many of those in our organization - some from outside the group. When we started taking orders for the book, some of you sent money with the expectation the book would be in its completed form by the end of 2002 or 2003. The purpose of this column is to communicate the status of this project to the Ruffner Family Association membership and those who have placed orders for the book.

I understand there may be frustration among members of the Association and those who ordered books with how long the process has taken (myself included as one who had many of those same feelings). After I had the chance to take a look at the project close up and get lost in the details, it was immediately obvious that the complexity of pulling all this wonderful data into an accurate and logical publication was quite a hurdle to clear.

With all that said, we are in a very good situation at the present time. As I mentioned in the last edition of *Ruffner Roots & Ramblings*, much work has already been done and we are actually able to think about the project in its final terms. Most of the forms which were returned have been entered into a consolidated database. Some branches of the Peter

Ruffner lineage have had some very extensive research which will be included and others have loose ends which need some additional investigation. Our volunteers still need some time to reach the end, but the end is coming into focus. Over the coming months, an **action plan** will be put together on how this overwhelming amount of data will appear in its final form.

The group who will work on this **action plan** will be those most closely associated with the publication project, as well as some consultation with those who understand the logistics and cost of publications. One thing in our favor is that technology has actually broadened our options of what the final form of this publication may look like. That is important, especially since the genealogical data which can be included this time is so extensive that the final results will probably fall into multiple volumes.

The **action plan** will be formally presented to the Ruffner Family Board of Directors when they meet in Cincinnati this June. Our goal in this **action plan** is to answer the questions concerning possible publication options, the costs involved, and the expected date for final publication.

Updates will continue to be published in *Ruffner Roots & Ramblings*, as well as on the Ruffner Family Association website. I appreciate your patience as we work to conclude this process.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you received a draft copy of "*Swiss Family Ruffner*" at the Ruffner Family Reunion in Prescott last June and have finished proofing and/or perusing - **PLEASE RETURN IT TO MARK & PAM FLASCH** so they can distribute them to Page County descendants of Peter Ruffner for further proof reading.

**PLEASE MAIL YOUR COPY TO:**  
19 AMISS AVENUE  
LURAY, VA 22835

**Thank you!**

*K. Daniel "Dan" Ruffner, President*

*There is no point in our Ancestors speaking to us  
unless we know how to listen.*

*~ Mortimer Adler*



## Letters from the Past



This is the second letter from Catherine Ann Ruffner [1799-1849], the daughter of Daniel & Elizabeth (Painter) Ruffner, who resided in Fairfield County, Ohio, to her first cousin, Martha Jane Ruffner [1813-?], daughter of Joseph Ruffner, II, who resided in Cincinnati, Ohio. Since the publication of the first letter in the December 2003 issue, we have learned that the original letters are the property of Bill Myers and he has very kindly sent us an accurate transcription of the first letter and of the letter which appears below. Bill is a descendant of Joseph Ruffner I and he maintains a very interesting website of "Joseph" history ~ <http://members.cox.net/joseph-ruffner-2/index.htm>.

Postmarked: Baltimore July 17, 1841

Addressed to Ms. Martha Ruffner, Cincinnati, Ohio

Ashland July 16 1841

Dearest Cousin

I seat myself with feelings not of shame but anger. My husband has just returned from Lancaster holding out a letter at the same time exclaiming this unravels the whole mystery why don't they come. Often have we repeated those words and as often have I wondered why you did not write. A few evenings since, a gentleman from Lancaster was out and was so polite as to bring papers of the latest date. In looking over the list of letters, [I] saw my name. We have made it an invariable rule to enquire for letters; "nothing here" [the postmaster replied] - But thanks we have routed the careless dog and got a new postmaster and if he does not attend to his business he will share the fate of his predecessor or - - Cousin M[artha] be assured that you and your Mother will meet with the most cordial welcome and feel almost afraid you have turned your course elsewhere and will neglecting us not come right on make a stay unless sickness should prevent. I wonder Cousin E[lizabeth] did not tell you where to direct. Did she think so little of us that she had forgotten our post town. We live 10 or 11 miles from Lancaster; 26 miles east of Columbus, five miles south of the National Road. Lancaster is also south of us - our post office is three miles off Baltimore Fairfield. We have one house but we do not admire the postmaster therefore we do not patronize him. Now Martha, do come soon. David and I have consulted we think if you were able to take the canal for Dayton from thence to Springfield. Then take the National road for Hebron where the great road crosses the Ohio & Erie Canal. Benjamin Ruffner will see you safe to our house. He lives near to Hebron and he will instruct the Landlord how to dispose of you when you arrive. Or if you like take the stage in Cincinnati for Columbus from Columbus to Hebron which is east 2 miles on the National Road - - I think I have told you as plain as I know how but there is still another way but that seems too far around to come by the way of Portsmouth - enough says you. Well, with your permission I will change the subject. Sometime in May I should say March or April, some of the Kenawhains wrote me that you and your Mother were coming. I laid by many little things and was on tiptoe. Looking for you making many promises to the friend to bring you to visit them Dan Keller, if you recollect, who bought the carriage for Elizabeth Ruffner - - has been sending and asking you had given up on the visit. I have been mortified fearing they would think it was a story of my own framing. Our great Uncle\* has been very ill but is in his usual health again. I feared you would never see him - but I hope if you come soon you will meet him yet. Do come if it is just to pay respect to him. I hope you will not have cause to regret visiting us. We will do all in our power to make your visit agreeable. Will you be so kind as to write very soon and tell me if you are coming or do this - - come yourself and us talk it all over. If you write, direct to Baltimore Fairfield, but I would rather see you and Aunt. My love with D[avid] to you Ma to Mrs. R[uffner] and Cousin E[lizabeth]. Ask Elizabeth and Martha if they have forgotten me. If they say no, kiss them for me. Our best love to Uncle Abrahams family. I thought we would have seen them before this. When I was last at Uncle A[brahams], he spoke as if he felt it his duty to visit his only surviving Uncle. Does he still think so? Our love to cousin David and his wife. Why does he stay at home so close. He and his wife might have paid us a visit long before this. Tell them to come along. Cousin Michael Ruffner has named a daughter after you and one for me. We are his favorites. I wonder why? For you there would be no need to wonder, but for me there would be great need of astonishment. If you will promise to excuse all errors I will promise to close my letter and send it on as fast as the mail will carry it. I left my ironing table and that makes my writing look worse than it would if my hand had been at something else. I hope this will fall in your hands very soon. And do answer me immediately or come on. Tell Cousin Elisa I have had all kinds of fresh meats waiting for her and Andrew (?). Tell her to let me know when she is coming so that I may have everything of the eatable order ready. Goodnight

As ever yours much attached

Cousin Catherine

\*Refers to Emanuel Ruffner [1757-1848], the last surviving child of Peter & Mary (Steinman) Ruffner. Unfortunately, David C. Ruffner (Catherine's husband) was killed in 1846, and Catherine would die just one year after Emanuel.



*Dr. Henry Ruffner and his famous abolition pamphlet*

## Part I of III

From "Heritage and Heraldry" column, *Page News and Courier*

by Robert H. Moore II

(Reprinted by permission of the author)

In his "Short History of Page County," author and county historian Harry M. Strickler touched briefly on the life of Dr. Henry Ruffner but did not mention much of the famous pamphlet that Ruffner released in 1847.

Born in Mundellsville (in the locale of Willow Grove Mill) in Page County, on Jan 16, 1790, Henry Ruffner was the oldest son of Col. David and Ann Brumback Ruffner. By the time young Henry was six years old, Col. David Ruffner and his family moved to the Kanawha Valley where Joseph, David's father, had already relocated a year before. Therefore, Henry's life in northern Page (then Shenandoah) County, likely had little impact, one way or the other, on his outlook on the politics of slavery later in his life.

While laboring on his father's farm and salt works just below Malden, Va. (now West Virginia), Henry Ruffner initially received a common education. However, according to one biographical sketch, "When near 20 years of age, his father observing his love for literature and fondness of books, (and) sent him to an Academy at Lewisburg, Greenbrier County." Run by Presbyterian minister the Rev. Dr. Mcelheny, the Academy was a major influence on Ruffner's life and choice for future religious practice. Joining the Presbyterian Church, Ruffner eventually expressed a desire to enter the ministry. After graduating from Washington College (now Washington & Lee) in 1814, Ruffner spent several years in the study of divinity. In 1819, he was licensed by the presbytery.

Though Ruffner headed several pastorates in Rockbridge County, he also took time to found one near his family's salt works in Kanawha Valley in 1830. Henry, however, was not limited to preaching as he also found work as a professor at his alma mater, eventually becoming president of the institution in 1837. A year later, Princeton University conferred upon Ruffner the degree of D.D.

As if his practice and profession did not keep him occupied enough, for several years Ruffner took time to author a number of works including "A Discourse upon the Duration of Future Punishment" (Richmond, 1823); "Inaugural Address" (Lexington, 1837); and "Judith Bensaddi, a Romance" (1840).

Ruffner also took interest in publishing a number of discourses against slavery, including his most famous "An Address to the People of West Virginia" (Lexington, Va.) In 1847. The publication actually came about as a result of the presentation that Ruffner had made to the Franklin Society in August 1847. In a letter to Ruffner dated Sept. 1, 1847, several notable personalities of Virginia history (among whom were included former Gov. S. McDowell Moore, future Gov. John Letcher and John Echols) had actually "petitioned" Ruffner to publish his address.

In its subtitle, the address made clear that slavery was "injurious to the public welfare, and that it may be gradually abolished without detriment to the rights and interests of slaveholders." However, if one takes time to read carefully and understand the nature of Ruffner's approach, by no means did his argument ring in tune with the nature of the more famous Northern abolitionists.



Dr. Henry Ruffner (1790-1861)

**Part II of Mr. Moore's series will be reproduced in the June issue of RR&R***(Thanks to our Virginia Reporter, Pam Flasch, for obtaining permission to reprint Mr. Moore's series.)*

Questions or comments regarding this article may be addressed to the author directly in care of the Summers-Koontz Camp, P.O. Box 684, Luray, VA 22835, or by e-mail at [cenantua@yahoo.com](mailto:cenantua@yahoo.com).





## 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Plans for Virginia Rigg

A week of memorable activities are planned to celebrate "Ginny" Rigg's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Highlight of the celebration will be a Centennial Concert at the Newman Performing Arts Center on the Campus of

the University of Denver on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Twenty-five of her former students and friends are scheduled to perform in an evening of tributes and talent. During the concert a row of seats will be dedicated in Virginia's name, thanks to the many friends and family members who have supported a fund raising effort by her former students. (See related note in this issue.) A head-liner at the concert will be David Schrader, Professor of Music at Roosevelt University in Chicago and harpsichordist/organist with the Chicago Symphony. You may remember when he surprised Virginia with a concert during our 1999 Ruffner Reunion in Lancaster, Ohio.

A number of our Ruffner cousins will be in attendance for the birthday events which also include a reception for family members at Virginia's newly remodeled home, as well as a Victorian Ice Cream Social and Garden Party at the Westminster Historical Society. This will be followed by an Antique Car Parade taking Virginia and her guests over to her childhood home for a reception. This is the home designed and built by her mother, Alma (Ruffner) Rigg and father Samuel Rhodem Rigg.

Virginia's mother Alma had celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 1960, in the same house Virginia will welcome her family and friends for this happy occasion in July. Those interested in attending the Colorado Celebrations, July 1, 2 & 3<sup>rd</sup>, should contact Bob Sheets by Email <[Rnsheets@aol.com](mailto:Rnsheets@aol.com)> or writing 1675 South Steele Street, Denver, CO 80210.

## Thank You

*Dear Editor and my Ruffner Cousins:*

*My family here in Denver joins me in sending my sincerest appreciation for your kind contributions to the "Seat Fund" given in my name. This project, sponsored by my former students, professional associates, family and friends has indeed made me most humble by this generous tribute. Celebrating my century birthday is a happy time for me, but can in no way match the joy I have experienced in sharing the love of my Ruffner Family Cousins. I will celebrate both in July and hope you can be with me then.*

*With great affection,  
Cousin Virginia Rigg*

## News from the Past

### SURPRISE WEDDING Birthday Party Turned into a Bridal festival



#### St Louis, Missouri, March 4, 1907

~ Friends in this city of F.V. Johnson were greatly surprised when he returned from Kansas City with a bride. It was pretty well known that he was engaged to a young lady in that town, but everybody thought that the event was not to take place until May. Sunday, March 4, was the bride's birthday, and a celebration had been arranged by her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Stall, of 2423 East Ninth Street, with whom she has been living. Mr. Johnson, of course, was to be present. During the morning the two got by themselves and in talking over their coming marriage came to the conclusion that May was a long way off and that it was altogether useless for one of them to live in Kansas City and the other in St. Louis, when it was quite easy to make immediate arrangements so that they would not have to be parted. Accordingly they decided that this, her birthday, was eminently fitting to be her wedding day, and that it would be no rash step to call a minister and have the ceremony performed.

Having reached this decision, it did not take long to prepare for the ceremony. Dr. Neal, of the Central Presbyterian Church, was called up by telephone and when he told them in answer to their question that he had no special engagement for the afternoon, he was invited to the party, to be ready to perform the ceremony, but not to say anything until they gave the word. Nothing was suspected by any of the guests when Dr. Neal arrived, as he had called before, and was well known at the house.

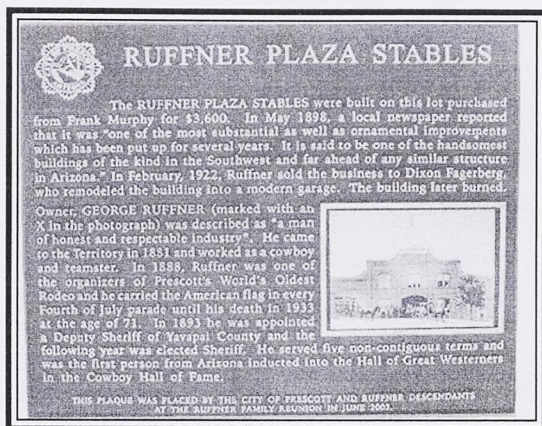
The merry-making went on until supper was announced at 5 o'clock. Dr. Neal was given the "tip" and the bride and groom joined hands and stood before him. A few minutes later, and before the looks of surprise had left the faces of the grandparents and guests, the young lady was Mrs. Johnson. The birthday supper was turned into a wedding feast. Shortly after, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, amid the congratulations of those present, hurried off to catch a train for St. Louis. They left over the Burlington and upon arriving in this city went to the home which Mr. Johnson had prepared at 1817 A Kennett Place.

The bride was Miss Harriett Ruffner, cashier at the Baltimore at Kansas City, which position she had held for the past two years. Mr. Johnson is a member of the firm of the De Lacy Chemical Company, in this city.

*Editor's Note: Thanks to Betty L. Addison for submission of this charming account of her Great Aunt Harriett's wedding. Harriett was the daughter of Frank and Anna Ruffner, whose wedding story appeared in the December 2003 issue of RR&R.*



## Historic Plaque - Ruffner Livery Stable



The above plaque was placed at the former location of the Stable by the Ruffner Family Association and the City of Prescott, AZ as part of the 2003 Ruffner Family Reunion. It commemorates both the location of the stables and their owner, Sheriff George Ruffner.

The plaque reads: "**THE RUFFNER PLAZA STABLE** was built on this lot purchased from Frank Murphy for \$3,600. In May 1896, a local newspaper reported that it was 'one of the most substantial as well as ornamental improvements which has been put up for several years. It is said to be one of the handsomest buildings of the kind in the Southwest and far ahead of any similar structure in Arizona.' In February, 1922, Ruffner sold the business to Dixon Fagerberg, who planned to remodel the building into a modern garage. The building was later burned.

Owner, **GEORGE RUFFNER**, (marked with an X) was described by the paper as a man of 'honest and respectable industry'. He came to the territory in 1881, and worked as a cowboy and teamster. In 1888, he was one of the organizers of Prescott's 'World's Oldest Rodeo' and he carried the American flag in every Fourth of July parade until his death in 1933 at the age of 71. In 1893 he was appointed a deputy **SHERIFF OF YAVAPAI COUNTY** and the following year was elected SHERIFF. He served five non-contiguous terms and was the first from Arizona inducted into the Hall of Great Westerners at the Cowboy Hall of Fame."

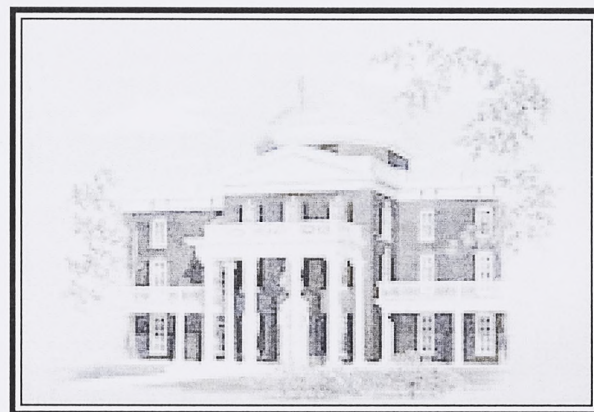
**Photos of the plaque are available for a limited period of time. The cost is \$8.00 for 8x10 and \$6.00 for 5x7, s&h included.**

**Mail your check with order to Ruffner Family Reunion, PO Box 2577, Prescott, AZ 86302-2577.**

## Ruffner Hall Rotunda being rebuilt

A major fire destroyed the Rotunda of Ruffner Hall at Longwood College on April 24, 2001 (see RR&R, Vol. 4, #3, Sept. 2001). The Ruffner Complex at the historic school was named for William Henry Ruffner, who founded and became first president of the State Female Normal School in Farmville, Virginia (now Longwood College). The school today is a coeducational, state-supported institution with an enrollment of nearly 4000 students.

Shown below is an artist's rendering of the new Rotunda at Ruffner Hall, which is scheduled for completion, December 2004, at a cost of 17.9 million.



## Howdy cousin!

That's a greeting we Ruffner's often share with each other when we meet. Imagine how surprised Phyl Hershock (RFA Secretary) was when her husband, Craig greeted her that way when he came home from work one evening in December. Sometimes Craig uses his lunch hour to do genealogy research online and he had been working on the Hershock family tree for some months. His father's family came from Europe to Lancaster County in the early 1800s. Like many before them (including our Peter the Pioneer), they moved inland and settled in that area of rich farmland. In 1859, John Hershock married Martha Martin, whose family had come to Lancaster County from Switzerland (sound familiar) around 1700. Martha's gr-gr-grandfather, John Martin Barr/Baer, had married Elizabeth Stehman/Stoneman, sister to Mary Steinman who married Peter Ruffner. Imagine Craig's surprise when he saw Elizabeth Baer's maiden name on the computer screen.

Now we know that Phyl and Craig are not only bound by marriage - they're bound by blood! No wonder Craig has always felt right at home with all the Ruffners (there are quite a few in mother-in-law, Dorothy (Ruffner) Rinker's family).

So next time you see Phyl & Craig Hershock together - throw up your hand - and say "**Howdy Cousins.**"



RR&R Serial Feature - Part 3 ~ Robert and the others missionaries set off on their long journey to India

*For the Building of a Kingdom ~ A Polygamist Family ~  
The Saga of Robert & Catherine Ann (Williams) Owens*

Compiled by Barbara (Bumble) Stoddard

(Contributed to RR&R by Andrea Lee (Hopkins) White, a direct descendant of the Owens.)

The missionaries headed south on the first leg of their journey to India. While on their way, they stopped at the Point of the Mountain to take one last look at the Great Salt Lake Valley. Leaving Provo they continued south through Springville and Spanish Fort to "Peeteetnett," or Pauson, a beautiful location of Saints in the south end of Utah Valley where the 38 missionaries called to Calcutta, Siam, the Sandwich Islands, Hong Kong, and Australia had planned to meet. They held meetings and taught the gospel at the different settlements through which they traveled. They stayed at the homes of Latter Day Saints where they were generously fed, sheltered and supplied with fodder for their horses.

At Nephi, where the elders were hospitably entertained by church members and featured at a special meeting in the schoolhouse, the traveling brethren were requested to speak their feelings, and it was glorious to listen to the power of the Spirit of the Lord that was with them. They bore mighty testimonies. They felt they had forsaken all things for the Gospel's sake, but they were not forsaken by God. Twenty-five missionaries spoke at the meeting.

As they were nearing Indian Territory they organized into an orderly Company, electing a Captain, a Sergeant of the Guard and Chaplain. Near Xavier Lake, they met heavy rainstorms for two days. They slept on the ground during the deluge, and woke in the morning with an inch of ice frozen on the water surrounding their bunks. They arrived in Fillmore about noon on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, and were royally received with grain for the animals. Next they moved on to Corn Creek, crossing several ranges of low mountains. They passed through Dog Valley; a name derived from the existence of a veritable "Prairie Dog City." (It was here that Brigham Young said the Gadianton Robbers had their stronghold.) On November 1<sup>st</sup>, they arrived at Parowan Fort. Here Apostle George Albert Smith directed personally the outfitting of the company for the trek across the desert to California. He also advised them to "refresh ourselves in dancing and preaching."

A dance was held that night in honor of the missionaries. The evening included songs, recitations and addresses. Elder George Albert Smith, in the opening talk, cautioned the Elders of the dangers they might expect from women and evil spirits and the great deep. Because of the new doctrine of plural wives, they would be considered licentious men, subject to suspicion unless their lives were very circumspect. Amply supplied with grain and food, the company resumed their journey. As they pulled away from the Fort, the American Flag was unfurled and cheers rang in their ears.

Now they crossed the desert. Traveling was monotonous so they occupied their time reading to each other and conversing about the Gospel. Several of the group had served previous missions and as they traveled along gave instructions on how to speak to an audience, which parts of the Gospel generally gained the most interest, and how best to deal with anti-Mormons. There was also much reflection about the future, the trials they would have to face without money to pay their way. They talked of their families and dear ones left behind.

Their wagons took them over a rocky and hilly road to Mountain Meadow where a few years later was to be the stage of the infamous massacre. On the eleventh of November, after a particularly hard day on the trail, the camp was visited by a small band of Piute Indians who stalked into camp and made themselves comfortable. Those red skins were dirty, shifty eyed and puny. With only a few grunts and signs they made it plain they expected some food and the warmth of the fire. After partaking liberally of the missionaries' rations, the savages calmly rolled into their blankets and slept 'til morning. There is no doubt that if there was a missionary there who had never before slept with one eye open, he learned to do so that night. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, they were joined by a few emigrants who were going to California to get gold. On the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>, they camped at the base of a mountain. Here they left the Rio Virgin River and began the treacherous ascent to the top. They traveled nineteen miles over the mountain. Three cheers were given as the last wagon reached the summit in safety.

Then on to the Muddy, a small stream about twenty feet wide and two and a half feet deep, where they camped for the night. Ahead of them was a fifty-two mile stretch of desert to Las Vegas. They reached Vegas the 18<sup>th</sup> of November. The country was infested with wolves and Indians. November 22, in the face of a heavy snowstorm, they pushed 23 miles westward.

In crossing the Mojave Desert, they found little feed for their horses. The soil was sandy and the wagon wheels sunk deeply. It was a tedious 96 miles, but on December 1<sup>st</sup>, they camped for the last time in the desert beside the feeble Mojave Creek. Then the company climbed for seventeen miles over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Two days later, a tired and dusty group of missionaries halted at Lugo Rancho in San Bernardino. This ranch has been purchased by the church as a supply depot for the LDS emigrating to Utah. Here the Elders disposed of their traveling outfits, collected means to carry them further on their journey, visited, studied and wrote letters to their families. They had encountered the usual difficulties associated with travel in those days: sickness, lack of water while crossing the desert, black-smithing when a horse lost a shoe or something broke on a wagon, etc. The trip to California took about six weeks.

(continued on page 10)

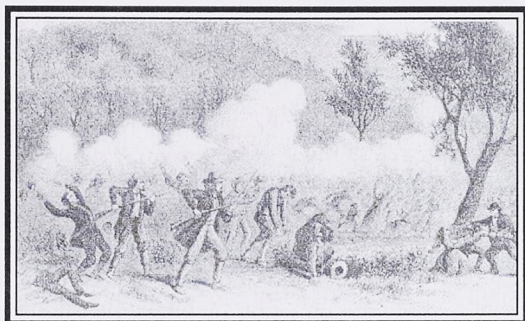


*A typical Mormon migration*



**For the Building of a Kingdom** (from page 9)

On the seventeenth of December 1852, they resumed their journey to Los Angeles, arriving there two days later, in a drenching rain, being brought hither by the San Bernardino Saints. Los Angeles was a pioneer town. Here they saw much of the human dregs of America, as well as the enterprising pioneer. After a few days there, they went to San Pedro and parted with the Saints. These good people refused pay for bringing them in their wagons.



***The Mountain Meadows Massacre, 1857***

to let go the starboard anchor. The chain jammed in the windless; at the same time the tide was running at the speed of a mill race. The sails being in a condition to render the brig no assistance, she drifted down the tide, running against a large ship laying at anchor in the bay, carrying away the ship's flying jib-boom and martingale, and her own try-sail-book and gaff. She got clear of the ship without any further damage, still drifting astern, when they let go the starboard anchor, which brought her up." Needless to say, they were grateful to the Lord for His deliverance and for sparing their lives.

San Francisco was a terrible city. Every vice imaginable was available: gambling, drinking, prostitution, brawling. No one seemed to keep the Sabbath. The city's sinful temptations were not a problem for the missionaries. Their problem was to raise enough money to sail to India. Their wagons and horses had been sold in southern California, and most of them sent the proceeds home to their needy families. As missionaries, they intended to serve without purse or script. They did not believe they could prove the nations without providing them with the opportunity to serve the Lord's servants.

Now the matter of raising money to pay passage to the Orient was faced. January 14<sup>th</sup>, a meeting with the Saints of that region was held to discuss it and the suggestion was made that the funds be solicited from outsiders. Although skeptical of the results, the Elders decided to try it. They divided San Francisco into districts and went door to door asking for donations. Some of the brethren even went to Sacramento and many gold mining towns. But after three weeks, the 13 missionaries had raised only about six hundred dollars. (The missionaries going to Siam remained with the nine.) Only \$650 was collected through the combined efforts of all solicitors, and \$3000, or about \$200 per person was necessary. At that point, John M. Horner, a Church member along with his non-member brother, contributed the remainder of the needed funds.

The next problem was suitable transportation to the various destinations. The missionaries finally arranged cabin passage with Captain Zenos Windsor, Master of the *Clipper Monsoon*, which was almost ready for sail to India. Captain Windsor had sailed from Boston the same day they received their calls, August 28, 1852. He had arrived at San Francisco the same day they did. They felt strongly that he had been guided their way by the hand of God. The *Monsoon* was an exceptional ship. Brother Carter said it was "the finest ship I ever saw and with the best accommodations in the cabin of any ship that I have ever seen. We were assigned to suitable cabins when we boarded on January 27, 1853."

Life on shipboard fell into a routine with morning and evening prayer. They held frequent meetings for preaching and teaching each other, for there was much to learn. From the first night on board, Captain Windsor gave them the privilege of meeting in his cabin every evening to sing hymns, speak, and offer prayers and frequently met with them.

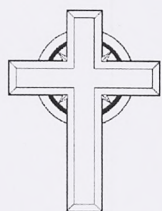
Richard Ballantyne and Levi Savage contracted smallpox while in San Francisco. On board ship, they were placed in a vacant stateroom and nursed by Elder Skelton. Through faith and prayers and the blessing of God, they both completely recovered without spreading to any others. Most of their clothes and bedding were thrown overboard.



~ To be continued ~

In the June 2004 issue of RR&R, we find out how Catherine and Martha are faring during Robert's absence. Robert and the missionaries arrive in Calcutta and begin the difficult task of setting up a mission to teach the Gospel.





## In Memoriam

**Louise F. Ruffner**, age 88, 1506 Kibler Hill Road, Luray, Virginia, died Thursday, January 1, 2004, at Winchester Medical Center.

Mrs. Ruffner was born February 27, 1915, in Shenandoah and was the daughter of the late Martin Luther & Ollie Mae Kite Comer. She was a homemaker.

On July 5, 1934, she married William Daniel Ruffner (*Peter/Peter, Jr./John/Philip/John D.F./Philip H.*), who died January 20, 1987.

Surviving are a daughter, Barbara Ann Kibler of Luray; a son, William Jennings "Bill" Ruffner of Luray; two brothers, Donald Comer of Shenandoah and Oliver Comer of Stanley; a sister, Agnes (Comer) Gray; three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The Rev. D. Paul Mishler conducted the graveside funeral on Sunday, January 4, 2004, at Beahms Chapel Cemetery in Luray.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Heart Association, PO Box 5216, Glen Allen, VA 23058-5216.

**Paul Dean "P.D." Ruffner** (*Peter/Benjamin/Benjamin, Jr./Andrew/Harrison/Edward/Clare*), age 66, of Mason, Illinois, died Wednesday, December 17, 2003, at Memorial Medical Center in Springfield, Illinois.

He was born January 14, 1937, in Mason, Illinois, the son of Clare A. & Geneva B. (Bailey) Ruffner.

On November 13, 1954, he married Shirley Lucas and to this union were born 4 children: Paul Stephen, Michael, JoAnn and Tammy.

P.D. worked for Howell Asphalt of Mattoon for 24 years and was a teamster for 42 years. He liked to talk to his C.B. Buddies. He went by "Jimmie Diesel." P.D. was a member of the Mason Christian Church.

He was preceded in death by his son, Michael Ruffner in 1977; his parents; brother, Urban Ruffner; sister, Sarah Jane Ruffner; grandparents, E.W. & Macy Ruffner and Logen & Jesse Bailey.

Surviving are his wife, Shirley of Mason; son, Paul Stephen "Steve" of Mason; daughters, JoAnn (husband, Rick) York of Edgewood and Tammy (husband, Carl) Lorenz of Tuscola; brothers, Clare (wife, Betty) and Jerry (wife, Carol), both of Mason; grandchildren, Macci (husband, Daniel) Doty of Beecher City, Brandy (husband, Michael) Henderson of Dade City, FL, Michael & Joey Ruffner both of Hettick, Barbara Ruffner of Mason, Michele York of Edgewood, and Madelyn Lorenz of Tuscola; great-grandchild, Brianna Henderson of Dade City, FL.

P.D. was laid to rest on Saturday, December 20, 2003, at Mason Cemetery.

Deadline for the next issue is May 1, 2004.  
Please send your news, articles and/or photos to:

Ruffner Roots & Ramblings  
120 Rita Court, Columbus, OH 43213  
or E-mail to Joan Reid ~ [Jokereid@aol.com](mailto:Jokereid@aol.com)  
Or Kim Fulcher ~ [Kimmiefulcher@aol.com](mailto:Kimmiefulcher@aol.com)

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Chartered and incorporated in 1999, to support an association of members who will research and preserve their common heritage through the collection of artifacts and documents which form the basis for knowledge and appreciation of the historic role played by the Ruffner Descendants and their collateral lines in the settlement and development of the American Frontier.

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## Births



**Gabriel Alan Beach** (*Peter/Emanuel/Jacob/Isaac/William/Hiram/Everett/Norman/Norma Zink/Jennifer Zink*) was born November 14, 2003, at just 4 lbs. 1 oz. (weighs 10 lbs. now).

He is the son of Jennifer Zink and Khary Beach, grandson of Norma Zink and great-grandson of Norman & Marilyn Ruffner, all of Tacoma, Washington.

## SIGN OF THE TIMES

Bob Sheets reports there is a sign on the wall of a room named for "Ollie Ruffner White" in a B&B in McMinnville, Oregon that reads:

### OLLIE WHITE ~

A petite woman from Pennsylvania, Ollie Ruffner married her childhood sweetheart, Tom White in 1890 and the couple headed west to Oregon, landing in McMinnville in 1892. There they raised three children, Cleo, Harris and Walter. When the Whites opened the hotel in 1905, the family of five moved into rooms on the second floor.

**Query:** Does anyone know if Ollie (Ruffner) White is descended from Peter & Mary (Steinman) Ruffner?

In case you missed it in the last issue ~  
**THE BOOKER T. WASHINGTON  
 FAMILY REUNION**  
 is scheduled for **JUNE 25-27, 2004**  
 on the  
**HAMPTON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**  
**HAMPTON, VIRGINIA**  
 Contact: **EDITH CHARLES**  
 at [EWC1113@aol.com](mailto:EWC1113@aol.com)  
 for registration information.

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## Editor's Desk

### Going to Cincinnati!

Looking forward to the meeting in Cincinnati this coming June 18-19 also caused me to look back. Although I've made many trips down there over the years, my fondest memories are those made when I was a child. Growing up, it was a custom in my family to make an annual summer trip to the Queen City. Our family of six would meet up with our Cincinnati cousins, the Sauerweins (a family of 9) and board the *Island Queen* at the Cincinnati landing. Our great destination was Coney Island. That was our Disney World in those days. A whole day of fun and excitement was the rule. The trip on the majestic *Island Queen* was "icing on the cake." It was aptly named for it was a "queen" among the old paddle wheelers. She was 291 feet long, could carry more than 4,000 passengers and had the world's greatest caliope.

The photo below, taken in 1939, shows [left to right], cousins Shirley, Billy & Delores Sauerwein, your editor and big sister, Barbara Ruffner sitting on the deck railing.



There is **Ruffner history** connected to Coney Island. **Brothers, Jesse Abram & Julius Ruffner (Joseph/ Abraham/ Henry) built the lake at Coney Island.** I didn't know it at the time - but I do remember the lake.

Coney Island dates back to 1870. It covered 148 acres and was supposed to be the first Amusement Park in the United States. The last time I visited there was in the 1950s. Coney Island closed in 1971, and some of the rides and attractions were moved to King's Island off I-71 South. The old park was prohibited from reopening until 1999, when again the gates were opened. Today, the park features over 50 rides. It is located off I-275, Exit 72 on Kellogg Avenue.

But sadly, there is no more *Island Queen* to take you there. She ran four trips a day from 1925 until 1947, when her fuel tanks exploded in Pittsburgh, with the loss of 19 lives.

Looking forward to seeing you in Cincinnati,  
**Cousin Joan**

If you have early memories & pictures of your childhood or your Ruffner relatives, share with us in future issues of your newsletter.