



The Lore of Times Gone By – Remembering Gordon Honeyman

by Ed Merta

A thousand years from now, Tipp City might not stand. It might be an empty wilderness or desolation. It might be a metropolis extending to the horizon, beneath marvels of technology and power we can only imagine. Or the land where Tipp stands now could be a jewel in the kingdom that will have no end. In the latter instance, I will thank Gordon Honeyman when I see him again, for his smile and the warmth of his presence and the stories he told of times gone by. The stories were glimpses of grace. I made notes of them, as we talked.

Gordon heard some of those stories from his father, and Gordon told them to me during afternoons at the Tippecanoe Historical Museum. Gordon's dad beheld Tipp City's first automobile with his own eyes, around 1911 or so, according to Gordon. The owner allowed others to look but not touch. In the 1920s, Gordon's dad rode in a car himself, with other young men from Tippecanoe, to watch a track meet in the distant outpost of Oxford, Ohio. Except for US Route 40, none of the roads in the great expanse on the way were paved. Sometimes there were no roads at all, and the jalopy went hurtling across farm fields, churning up the soil with gusto, in places occupied today by strip malls and warehouses and asphalt.

Gordon told one of his dad's stories with a special gleam in his eyes and gales of laughter. For the 1922 football season, Tipp City High School had a football team again, for the first time in many years. Not wanting to interrupt Gordon's tale, I neglected to ask why the school had no football before. For whatever reason, the powers that be told the coach that he could resurrect the team, but only if he could recruit eleven players, who would of course have to play both offense and defense. Such feats were not unheard of, in the world that was. But the coach could find only ten young men. In desperation, the coach and his charges begged a boy named Morris Kreider, if my memory serves, to join the team as the eleventh player. Morris protested. He didn't know how to play and he was physically inept. Not to worry, the coach told him. I guarantee that you will never play. The coach presented his eleven players to the powers that be. The resurrection of Tippecanoe's football squad was formally approved. Morris remained with the team for the entire season. He played for precisely zero seconds on the clock. I think the coach found a 12th player later on, but I forgot to ask Gordon about that, too. I'll ask him when I see him again.

Besides his father's stories, Gordon wove for me the stories from his own life with his words and their way, his eyes bright and alert, his hands clasped together or punctuating his telling for emphasis, giving the table between us a soft little smack. His memories came in a stream, words flowing from childhood, a distant spring. The paper mill on First Street and its smoke settling over the town, the fumes of burning pulp a hovering stench. Rollicking parties that the adults held down by the river in summer under tents like cathedrals, such was their grandeur in recollection. The roller mill by the canal still in business, selling its flour and bread. Then there was the tremendous display in front of the Lutheran church on Main Street, which Gordon beheld in wonder around 1945, when Gordon would have been six years old.

Gordon Honeyman cont.

The display was like a great black chalkboard, erected by an organization called the Back Home Committee in the days of history's greatest war, bearing the names of those from Tipp who served in its cause. Gordon wondered what became of that display, saying, "It was fabulous! There was nothing else like it in the county."

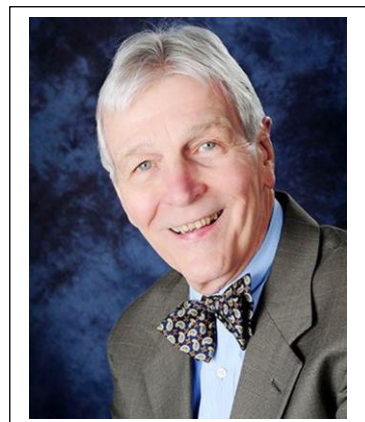
Later in his life Gordon knew a man who, as he recalled, fought in that war and was captured by the Germans. The man returned home safely and became a local celebrity of sorts. I researched the name Gordon gave me, Ned Sprecher (formally Kenneth Ned Sprecher), and the record I found made no mention of Ned being a prisoner of war. Memory is like that sometimes, as Gordon would be the first to admit. The record does tell, though, that Ned rallied American soldiers under vicious enemy fire, then led a victorious bayonet charge against a machine gun nest near the beaches of France, five days after D-Day in 1944. I know Ned and his story now, thanks to Gordon. Memory, too, works in mysterious ways.

Gordon's memories rolled on like a road, through his adulthood, to the horizon. So many were about the friends he recognized in the historical museum's old photos. He knew everyone across generations, so many. "All gone now," Gordon said. But fondness shone in his memories, candles out of time. He spoke of the legendary chicken and noodle dinners served by the senior citizens club from the 1950s until sometime in the 1970s, so popular that demand could never be met. "This thing was just mobbed!" Gordon recalled. "They couldn't get everybody in! (Gordon often spoke with exclamation points). He remembered the "mile of roses," brilliant crimson flowers lining State Route 571 from County Road 25-A into town, meant to lure travelers off the well-trodden path and into the shops of Tippecanoe, a siren of delights.

Gordon's longest tale told of defeat. He, his father, and many others had gone to school at a magnificent old building on Broadway, a grand brickhouse edifice with enormous wooden doors under stone archways, windows taller than people, distinctive onion bulb shaped minarets atop its four corners, looking down on the playground and out through the surrounding trees. Everyone called it the Castle School, and it was. Tippecanoe built this fortress of education in 1894. For decades everyone treasured it and the memories it held within its singular rampart halls, Gordon related. In 1967 it was at risk. The powers that be wanted to demolish the antiquated castle and replace it with a newer, more modern school. A bond issue was proposed to fund the castle demolition and replacement project. The community, said Gordon, was outraged. They banded together. They complained, cajoled, campaigned, they carried signs and spoke at meetings and held rallies. The bond issue failed, the first time in anyone's memory that such a thing had ever happened, according to Gordon. The Castle School would live on.

While the community celebrated, though, the powers that be regrouped. Little noticed, they proposed another bond issue almost immediately for the same purpose. Citizens who'd opposed the first measure didn't organize against the new one, despite pleas from Gordon and a friend whom he enlisted to the cause. Maybe, thought Gordon, everyone believed the war had been won. They had not. The new bond issue passed by three or four votes. Before anyone could do anything more, the wrecking ball came out. A vast circle of citizens gathered around the Castle School in disbelief, Gordon related. The wrecking ball broke the castle open like a battle axe smashing through bone. People started to cry. In that first crushing impact the machinery of progress killed the castle's body and beauty. Then the machine pulverized the castle's carcass, pounding and bashing it into a ruined pile of rock to be hauled away. Gordon didn't use those words in retelling it, the words here are mine. They're the image that formed in my mind as I listened to Gordon. He watched it happen and the memory still caused him pain as he told me the story, decades hence. "That's what happens," he said, "when you're not paying attention."

Gordon is gone now, too. He believed history and its stories should be conserved and carried on, handed down as treasure, as best we can. He told of a world that's lost but still lives. On the other side of forever it waits. But it's also here, in the tales from Gordon, conveyed to me as a gift, and now to you, reading these words. Until we see him again.



Letter from the President

March 7th, we opened our doors to the public with a display of vintage hats reminiscent of the Easter bonnets made popular in the Easter Parade song. See the photos below The Museum will be open Saturdays, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, until early December.

March also brought the passing of Gordon Honeyman, treasured within the society for his vast knowledge and storytelling. Gordon was a constant, supporting the Society and steadfast in his belief in its long-term survival. He had been working with Ed Merta, bringing narrative to a vast collection of framed pictures held at the Museum. Ed's recollections are captured on the first two pages of the newsletter.

As this is the 250th anniversary of the country, the Society is celebrating the event by theming projects around the semiquincentennial (say that several times quickly!) A rapidly approaching event is our annual banquet, scheduled for May 19th. Our special presentation will showcase Sons of the American Revolution. The event will again be held at the Tipp Monroe Senior Citizens center. Member's invitations are in the mail, so please check your mailbox. (Delightful to get something other than bills in the mail!)

Thanks to members, Dawn Kramer, Marilyn Richards and Chuck Kessler, we have increased Facebook presence. Check us out at Tippecanoe Historical Society

In Appreciation: Thank you for donations made to the Society. All donors are recognized with a personalized letter of thanks. Memorials made for Gordon Honeyman are gratefully received and placed in a special fund honoring him.

Barbara Smith



Got Space?

So many wonderful donations have been received by the Museum that we simply have run out of space to display or store them. We are looking for a climate-controlled space large enough to store items, allowing us to rotate displays while keeping stored artifacts secure. Although an ideal situation is a larger Museum; that is a goal that does not fix the current space crunch. If you have or know of a place that we could use, please contact Susie Spitler, Museum Director, at **937-698-6798**.



Any Clues?

Our next Cemetery Walk is scheduled for Sunday, June 7, 5:00 to 7:00 pm at Maple Hill Cemetery in Tipp City. As a connection to America's 250th birthday celebration, we are focusing on people with connections to our Revolution. Research is well underway on John Murray, Luther & Rebecca Chaffee, David Sheets, Abraham Favorite and John Retter. So far, a Masonic gravestone for Luther Chaffee showed up as a paver in someone's lawn in Troy, so you never know what connections might exist. If you, or someone you know, have connections to any of these folks, please contact the Society's president, Barbara Smith, at **734-845-6520**.





Zion Lutheran Church is Celebrating 200 Years

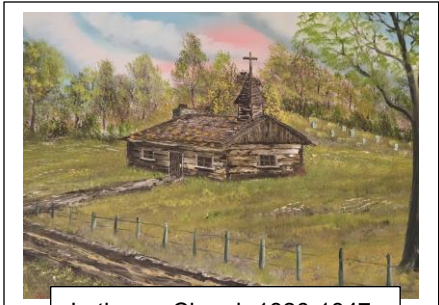
The year of founding was 1826. The village of Tippecanoe would not be in existence for another 16 years. The nearest village was the now defunct Cowlesville. Even the village of Hyattsville, later to be absorbed by Tippecanoe, was 7 years from its founding. Only some forty years had passed since General Anthony Wayne cleared the remnants of Shawnees from what is now Miami County. Though little in number, the pioneer settlers were from all the old states of the Union. Those from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia were most dominant. Included was a sprinkling of families from New York and Delaware.

The land was rich and well-timbered with large walnut, ash and cherry trees. The numerous streams ran clear and pure and wild game, including deer, elk, wild turkeys and buffalo were in abundance. Hogs were fattened in the woods and corn was raised only for human food by hoeing and digging around stumps. A man going to the mill with two bushels of corn was considered a prosperous farmer. Eggs sold for three cents a dozen, chickens at fifty cents a dozen and whiskey went for twelve cents a gallon.

Life was hard and quite often short. The average life expectancy in 1826 was a mere twenty-seven years on the frontier, due mainly to the deaths of children caught in the terrible rounds of diseases prevalent at the time. One in four children died before age five.

It was in this time and place the church was born. Several families belonging to the German Reformed and Lutheran faiths decided to construct a building for the purpose of a meeting house and school. A burying ground was to be included. To this end, Jacob Worman, a local farmer of substance, on January 21, 1826, deeded a small tract of land on what is now South Hyatt Street to the trustees of the German Reformed and Lutheran Church, namely John Ritter, Jacob Favorite and George Gump.

The first church was a small simple structure constructed of logs probably cut from the building site and the nearby hardwood forest. The floor was planked and rough-hewn benches were installed. There was no organ or piano. A congregational fiddle player probably provided music, and hymns were sung with the aid of a song leader beating time on the church floor with a "rhythm staff". A good memory for words and melody was a firm prerequisite for this position. However crudely presented, music was of prime importance in the Lutheran service then, as it is to this day.



Lutheran Church 1826-1847

The first pastor came as a result of petitioning the New York Synod of the Reformed Church. His name was John Pantz. Pastor Pantz reportedly was a man of many talents. He pastored the little flock, taught the three R's to the children and did some "doctoring". During his stay he also rode horseback to minister to folks in the surrounding area. No doubt an educated and cultured man. A rarity in western Ohio at that time. Pastor Pantz stayed with and nourished the church until 1839. His devoted leadership no doubt is majorly responsible for the survival of the church in its infancy.

Sometime about 1840 The German Reformed members and the Lutherans decided to part. The Lutherans supposedly being too "liberal" for the Reformed folks to continue their association. A Lutheran congregation was organized from the members of the original church, and they continued to worship at the little log church on south Hyatt Street under the name of the Worman Church, named in honor of the gentleman who originally deeded the land to the church. It is not known where the Reformed members finally settled.

In the formation of the new all Lutheran group a lay pastor was called. His name was A.S. Link (1839-1848). During his tenure at the Worman Church, Pastor Link also served three other congregations; the Bethel Church in Clark County, the Stillwater Church near Vandalia and the Casstown Church. He preached in both German and English.

In 1878, the church finally became a singular parish. Pastor Link was given the recognition of ordination by the Joint Ohio Synod in 1842. Pastor Link played an important role in the early history of the church in that he strengthened the doctrine of Lutheranism in this area and consolidated the congregation as Lutherans.

At the urging of Pastor Link and the lay leaders of the old Worman Church, a new building site was acquired on February 6, 1847. Namely lot number 30 of the new town plat of Tippecanoe, the same lot where the present church is located. The lot was then at the very western edge of town and still in the woods. It was deeded by John Clark, the town's founder, to the trustees of the newly named Evangelical Lutheran Church; John Ritter, Jacob Rohrer and John Sanders. John Ritter, a successful farmer, donated two thousand dollars toward the building of the new church. It is reported the total cost of the structure was slightly over thirty-two hundred dollars. The old log Worman Church was abandoned and left to ruin, but the deeded property and cemetery remained, as it does to this day, in the ownership and care of the church.

The cornerstone for the new church was laid on July 16, 1847. Dr. Ezra Keller, the first president of Wittenberg University, preached in English followed by the Reverend G.H. Reimsneider who preached in German. (Reimsneider was a brother of Pastor Link's wife.) This new church was the talk of the county! A magnificent structure for its time and place. Brick of local manufacture was used in its construction, and no cost was spared in the quality and beauty of the building. From a humble log hut to magnificent brick church in the space of only twenty-one years.



Lutheran Church 1847-1894

Upon the death of trustee John Ritter on November 11, 1862, he bequeathed a lot on the corner of Main and Third Streets and two thousand dollars for the purpose of building a parsonage. The parsonage was built and there it stood until 1920.

Sometime during the period of 1847 and 1850, the church began to be known as the English Lutheran Church. They suspect because it had become fashionable to forsake one's old country language and speak only English. However, some adhering to the custom of the "hardheaded German" formed the German Lutheran Church and were permitted to meet in the English Church. This happy and peaceful arrangement continued until 1878 when the German faction constructed their own church on the corner of Third and South streets. This congregation went out of existence in 1917. It is suspected the anti-German feelings of the First World War had something to do with their demise. The old German Church still stands in a much-remodeled condition at Third and South Streets and was utilized by several denominations through the years.

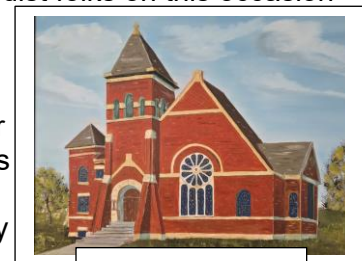


German Lutheran Church

Between 1891-94, a new church building was planned and enough money was donated and pledged to ensure this would happen. It has been reported the women of the church were mainly responsible for this new vision and would not permit their dream of a new church to go unfulfilled. It is not entirely clear what reasoning prompted the desire for a new building after only forty-seven years of use of the old, but evidently the ladies would not be denied. Hence the destruction of the old, and the laying of the cornerstone of the present building on August 5, 1894. During the construction period, services were held in the City Hall, but on the day of laying the cornerstone, the Methodist Church generously offered their facility for the special service. Dr. S.A. Ort, then president of Wittenberg University, preached as did several Lutheran pastors from surrounding parishes. Rev. Roselle of the Methodist Church also assisted. The kindness of the Methodist folks on this occasion indicates a spirit of mutual love and cooperation that exists to this day.

On May 5, 1895 the new church building was dedicated. It was a short time after this that the name of the church was changed from The English Lutheran Church to Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church. The capstone over the entrance to the church still reflects the "English Church" name as it was originally installed when the building was constructed.

T.C. Leonard and family, on Easter Sunday, 1895 gave the bell currently ringing in the belfry to the church. There is an inscription on the bell testifying to this fact. The bell was cast in bronze by a Cincinnati foundry.



1895 – Still in use

During 1906, the church was remodeled to include the upstairs Sunday school rooms. This same year the church was instrumental in establishing the Feghtly Home for Women, presenting the home to the Ohio Synod. The Feghtly Home, located on Main Street of Tippecanoe, provided sanctuary for many ladies over the years, and was disbanded by the Synod in the mid-sixties after it proved no longer viable. Also, 1906 saw the establishment of a Sunday School Library loaning books to the children of the community for many years. All the books were eventually given to the local Public Library when it was established.

The then vacant lot on the northwest corner of Third and Main was purchased in 1916 from the heirs of the John Kantz estate for five thousand dollars. At the time of purchase a fine house, the home of the Kantz family, was moved to a location on North Third Street where it still stands. The acquisition of the Kantz property proved most valuable in establishing Zion's prominence in the city. The clearing away of the Kantz house opened the corner to an unobstructed view of the church and afforded the opportunity for landscaping and the installation of the church sign.

The parsonage built in 1862 on the southwest corner of Third and Main Streets was moved in 1920 to a location just behind the Kantz lot on Third Street. The corner lot, which it occupied, was then sold to the Standard Oil Company. Standard Oil constructed a service station there, which remained until it was sold to the Methodist Church. The property now serves as their church parking lot. The parsonage, known as "The Parish House," was well utilized for church offices and meeting rooms. This fine old building was used as the parsonage until 1968.

In 1954 a "Building Council" was formed at Zion to investigate and make recommendations for updating the church building. They concluded an improved sanctuary, additional Sunday school space and improved social and recreational space were required if Zion were to continue to prosper.

All Saints Day of November 1, 1964 saw a rededication service in a new modernized sanctuary complete with new pews, altar, choir loft and a modern Allen electronic organ. The sanctuary of today remains much as it was on the day of rededication.



Zion today

The research work done in preparation for the one hundred and fiftieth year in 1976 brought to light the fact that the old cemetery on South Hyatt Street, was no longer a part of the life of the church. Sadly, this was true even though it was the final resting place of many of the founders and early members. Investigation proved the gravestones had been vandalized the property was grown up in a tangle of trees and brush. A Cemetery Restoration Committee was formed and work began to reclaim the property. In 1978, a large stainless-steel cross was installed thus permanently marking the location of the little log church where their history began. In 1990, a stone wall, eighty-five feet long, was constructed behind the cross. The many broken and vandalized head stones were incorporated in the wall as a means of preserving them

In July of 2003, two additional properties were purchased on 4th and Walnut Streets. Houses on the newly acquired properties were demolished, and the church offices were moved to 18 N. 4th Street in anticipation of the building construction and new parking lot. A ceremonial groundbreaking for the new addition was held on March 5th, 2006. Actual work began on March 6th. The dedication service for the new addition was held on December 10th. The large fellowship hall and parking lot are utilized by the community as well as Zion Lutheran Church.

Celebrations of their milestone anniversary will be held throughout 2026.

History written by William Posey in 2000. Remaining information written by Denise & Lara Jacobs. Condensed for space.



Mark Your Calendar

June 7th
5:00 – 7:00

IF TOMBSTONES COULD TALK
Maple Hill Cemetery



Upcoming Board Meetings

Tuesday, May 12th 3:00 pm – Board Meeting – Tipp Senior Center

Tuesday, June 9th 3:00 pm – Board Meeting – Tipp Senior Center

Tuesday, July 14th 3:00 pm – Board Meeting – Tipp Senior Center