**The Mystery on the Square, part 1**

As I begin this article I think back to the last article about those here at Forest Hill Cemetery and then realize it’s been a long winter. But this is not the only article I am behind in as the Ohio Cemetery Association has ask for an article on the cemetery six months ago, and yes I will get that done as well.

And while there are so many people to write about I am going to write this article on “who is she”. This is a story about a lady while she is not buried here her mother and father are. So let’s begin from the beginning, and while this is only a brief explanation of this young lady it would take pages to write her full story.

I found this name many years ago and have always wondered who she was and why was her name out there in the public. I began to dig deep into the mystery and after a few weeks discovered that I needed to look for additional help, so I went to Sharon Watson at the Piqua Public Library and showed her the name and said help!

All I knew was she visited Piqua from the city from Detroit Michigan but why and why did she leave a gift to the city, I am already giving too much away so I have to be careful not to give it all away before the end of the story.

You see she was born in Piqua in 1867 and grew up here; her parents were both born and raised in New York. Her mother was born in Gorten, New York and her father a prominent lawyer having been schooled at Yale College and they had just one child a girl.

The family lived in a very fine elegant home located in the downtown area. This house no longer stands and a building now stands on the site. At the age of eleven her father passed away and is buried here at Forest Hill Cemetery in Section 11 Lot 183. Her mother died at the age of 67 in 1898 and is buried alongside her husband.

In an interesting local news section of the *Piqua Miami Helmet* it stated that “there was a little frost Friday morning” now this is June 10th 1886 edition but it also stated that this young lady and her mother set off for Boston prior to sailing off to Europe.

As she grew up she was known for her outstanding voice performing for audiences throughout the world as well as studying in Europe during her school days. As a young child she would spend several years studying music and taking voice lessons in Paris.

In an 1889 edition of the *Piqua Daily Call* it stated that the young lady would be spending several weeks at their summer resort in Oconomowoc, Wis. before returning home. Today the city of Oconomowoc has over 15,000 residences and looks much like our city here.

At the age of 23 in 1890 she would marry Charles Wood Hamill. The state of that marriage remains unknown. What is known is that they did not stay together, because in August of 1903 she would marry a man by the name of Frances G. O’Hara in South Dakota and in September of the same year the two would steam to London England aboard the Minneapolis of the Atlantic Transport Line. In 1908 she would divorce Frank O’Hara.

As the years went by she continued to perform for audiences including performances in her home town here in Piqua.

In 1911 she would marry John Wynne in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, at the time John was 53 years of age and she was 40 years of age.

The next time we will find out who this is and what her name is written on. See you tomorrow.

Mystery on the Square, part 2

Today she and her husband are buried in Wayne County Michigan at the Mount Olivet Cemetery. Jennie, yes that’s her first name, died in 1923 after what the local paper said was from brain complications and that she had been an invalid for several years. At the time of her death she had been known as one of the areas prominent citizens in society. She left no brothers or sisters nor had any children.

Her husband at the time, John Wynn, passed away and was buried with Jennie in 1925.

So who was she and why the article on Jennie Wilbur Wynne. Well let me say first that the house she and her parents lived in was located at the corner of North Downing and West Water St. and as stated earlier there is a building there owned by the city and today is the fire station.

After both had died the Wilbur estate under the direction of Jennie in her will left the City of Piqua $1,000 to be used for a fountain and to be located on the public square in front of the Plaza Hotel.

The fountain in itself has a long and storied history, it took the city nearly three years to finally put out to bid for the granite fountain and was advertised for bids in both February and April of 1928 and could not exceed $1050.00, seems as if they made $50 in interest on the money over those years. Soon the city awarded a bid to purchase the nearly 8 foot tall granite with bronze handles to be placed at the west end of the public square. But it did not stop there, the fountain has never really performed to expectations and even today I have only seen it work on one occasion.

On September 10, 1928 a local paper wrote “Now that the cooling system is being installed in the beautiful memorial drinking fountain on the public square, may we reasonably expect a cool drink….”

In an article printed in the *Piqua Daily Call* on June 20, 1930 stated “Take a Drink, Get a Shock” seems as if the fountain had a mind of its own and did not want anyone around to use it. City electrician stated that every time some touched it they got a nice electrical shock.

When in 1938 an article pointed out that “that stretch from the Square proper to the Memorial Drinking Fountain (which by the way is never used)….” So for those years between 1930 and 1938 the drinking fountain never worked.

By now you may have discovered that Jennie Wilbur Wynne left us a drinking fountain that still sits on the square at the west end. Still does not work and I have only seen it work one time and personally I have never used it. The light on the top its glass broken, the drinking bowls for a lack of a better word do not work and are just hanging there.

So Jennie don’t take this the wrong way but it’s time to move on, I say let’s remove the fountain and put in a fountain that actually moves water and shoots it in the air. These fountains draw people into the downtown area and provide a nice place to sit and enjoy a warm summer evening. But the big question is what do we do with the drinking fountain, well the city moved the cannon and balls that stood on the northwest part of the square and placed in on the east end of the Shawnee bridge.

Better yet if the drinking fountain is to remain then let’s fix it up and take care of it, as it sits it looks cheap and dirty and as Walter Cronkite always ended his evening news cast “and that’s the way it is ….” Let’s not leave it the way it is. So let’s remove the drinking bowls, plug the holes repair the light, at least that way the light will work and shine a positive note about the community. A sign telling the story on how we received a gift for the drinking fountain may be nice.

All things change and change can be good and positive because when we don’t change we stay stagnant. Our city is changing and we must embrace that change or we will go nowhere.

So for that last twenty or more years of asking and questioning where the drinking fountain came from and no one could answer, well we know the answer now. Oh and by the way if you look on the west side of the drinking fountain at the bottom, written is Jennie Wilbur Wynne.