



"Friends" at Shandy Hall. Katherine Brennan, 6, and Matilda, 140.

Katherine Pfister Brennan

House of treasures

Novel yields name for Shandy Hall

By Richard and Evelyn Ward

open each year from May 1 through Oct. 31.

It was Ann Harper, the daughter of Robert and Polly Harper, who named the Harper home which was built in 1815 on a tract of land in the Western Reserve. She had a favorite English novel, "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman," written by Laurence Sterne. "Shandy Hall" was named after the English manor house in this novel. Now, 165 years later, visitors to Shandy Hall take a historic step back in time.

According to Katherine Pfister Brennan, curator-caretaker, "What is really special about Shandy Hall is that just about everything in the museum was owned by the Harpers. For example, in Robert Harper's law office there is a Windsor rocking chair that was made particularly high as he developed arthritis and rheumatism in his knees as he grew older. The added height enabled him to get in and out of the chair without assistance. Another "treasure" is a glass George Washington used when he visited the family when they were in residence at Harpersfield, N.Y.

The most stunning and highly unexpected room at Shandy Hall, particularly in view of its simple exterior, is the 15- by 30-foot banquet hall with coved ceiling and French block-printed wallpaper. The paper, in remarkable condition considering it dates from about 1815, depicts what appears to be classical Italian architecture, including the Roman Coliseum, but with the added twist of French people in Napoleonic dress strolling amidst the scenery. Robert Harper managed to acquire the paper when a Philadelphia hotel for which it was meant ran into financial difficulties.

Among the toys at Shandy Hall are several dolls. One is a beautiful brown-eyed china head doll, probably ordered specially for one of the brown-eyed daughters. Another is a huggable rag doll whose stained face hints of all the love showered upon her.

The large cellar at Shandy Hall contains the early kitchen, a buttry and a slaughter room. With its bark-covered log-beamed ceiling and brick hearth, it is impressive in a very primitive way and provides an excellent contrast to the luxury of the banquet hall.

On the National Register of Historic Places, Shandy Hall is fascinating for those interested in 19th century family life, early Western Reserve history and antiques. Drop-in visitors are welcome any time during museum hours. However, groups are requested to make advance arrangements by writing Shandy Hall, 6333 South Ridge West Geneva, O 44041 or by call-