

Far Left—Front view of Shandy Hall, now owned by the Norton family of Cleveland. The center part was built in 1815, the additions at each end and in the rear in 1826. It is one of the oldest houses in the Western Reserve. Above—Children's toys, some of which are more than 100 years old. Note the old toy train on the upper shelf, a replica of the choo-choos of a century ago



Mrs. Ernest Cox, who, with her husband, looks after Shandy Hall, is shown here with the blue and white Staffordshire china which once graced the tables

## Ohio's TREASURE HOUSE OF ANTIQUES

Shandy Hall at Unionville Exhibits Everything Owners Have Used There for the Past 120 Years

By Edwin T. Randall

**B**EHIND stately locust trees along Johnny Cake Ridge, just over the line in Ashtabula County, stands Shandy Hall, one of the oldest houses in the Western Reserve. It was occupied continuously for 120 years by the builder's family.

They were rich people for the frontier, and over the century and quarter that they dwelt there they brought into the house some of the finest furnishings money could buy. They destroyed nothing. When cherry furniture went out of style and walnut came in, the cherry was carefully put away in the attic.

Hoop skirts and men's stovepipe hats were laid away, too. The spinning wheels were merely put aside in the attic when the sewing machine heralded a new era. So, too, were dishes and children's toys.

Now the attic door has been opened and the trappings of pioneer years have been dusted off. Furniture, clothes, huge ornamental combs for the ladies' hair, articles born of the Revolution, of the War of 1812 and of Civil War times have been brought out of hiding.

Shandy Hall is hailed as the repository of one of the finest collections of American antiques in an original setting that can be found outside New England. No lover of the past searched the countryside far and wide for these treasures. They were all new things when they came to Shandy Hall. An enterprising family with a love of beautiful things used them in search of such enjoyments and comforts as the times afforded. That is the importance of Shandy Hall—it is filled with the breath of American pioneers. Unexpected delights await you behind these locust trees. Let us tell you briefly the story.

Capt. Alexander Harper was the founder of this family. His ancestors were Scotch-Irish who came to the New World in 1720 and settled in Connecticut. Alexander was born at Middletown, Conn., Feb. 22, 1744,

the ninth child of John Harper. John's father was James, the first Harper to come to America. In 1734, when Alexander was 10, his family moved to Cherry Valley, N. Y. Fourteen years later he and three brothers, William, John and Joseph, obtained a patent of 22,000 acres some distance south of what is now Cooperstown, N. Y. In 1770 the Harpers founded the town of Harpersfield on their land.

The next year Alexander married Elizabeth Bartholomew. Eight chil-



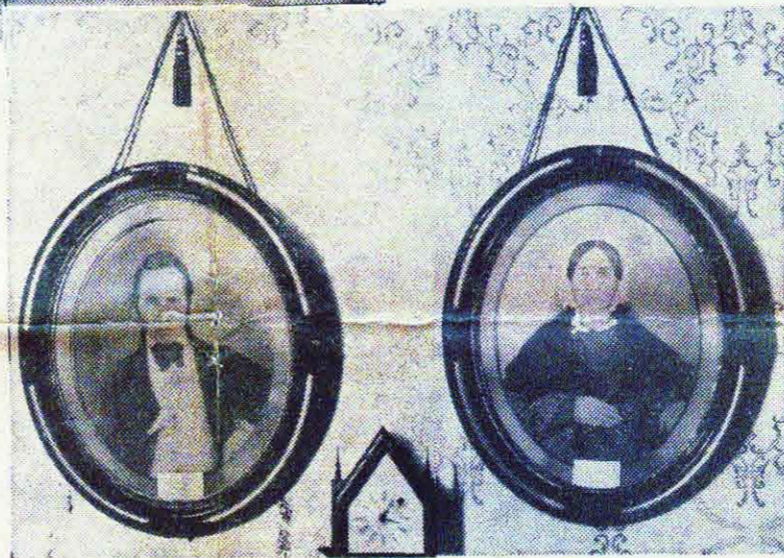
A side view of the banquet room. The French scenic wall paper was put on in 1835 and is remarkably well preserved. On the small table is an exquisite French sea captain's grog set



Spinning wheels, flax, an old baby buggy and chair and some of the dresses worn by members of the Harper family over the past 125 years

dren were born to them, and before they came to the Ohio country they played important roles in the Revolution.

Harpersfield was sacked and burned by Tories and Indians. In 1773 the family fled to Schoharie, and that year Alexander was appointed first lieutenant and served under his brother, Col. John Harper, who commanded one of the forts in Schoharie. Two years they spent with scouting parties, then, in 1780,



Portraits of Col. Robert Harper, who built Shandy Hall, and Polly Hendry Harper, his wife, daughter of a Revolutionary army officer

Alexander received his captain's commission.

"In the month of April, in 1780, it was the intention of Chief Brant, the Indian chief, to make a descent upon the upper, fort of Schoharie, but was stopped by an unexpected circumstance," writes Jane Cowles Ford, historian of the Harper family. "Col. Vrooman had sent out a party of scouts to pass over the headwaters of the Charlotte River, to observe certain groups of people. It was maple sugar season, and the men were instructed to prepare some for the garrison.

"They set to work on the sugar on April 2 under command of Alexander Harper. There was no fear of the enemy, for three feet of snow had fallen and would prevent the movement of any large body of men. Further, they knew of no armed foe nearer than Niagara.

"But on April 7, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by a party of 40 Indians and Tories, and

in the first excitement three members of Capt. Harper's party were killed. The leader was seen to be a Mohawk chief, who ran up to Capt. Harper, tomahawk in hand, and said: 'Harper, I am sorry to find you here.'

"Why are you sorry," Chief Brant? Harper asked the chief.

"Because I must kill you although we were schoolmates in our youth," Brant said, raising the tomahawk.

"But the Indian chief dropped his arm. 'Are there any regular troops in the fort at Schoharie?' he asked. Harper caught the idea. To answer truly and admit there were none, as was the fact, would but hasten Brant and his warriors forward to fall upon the settlement at once and their destruction would have been swift and sure. He, therefore, informed Brant that a reinforcement of 300 continental troops had arrived to garrison the fort only two or three days be-

fore. This information appeared very much to disconcert the chief-tain. He ordered that there should be no fighting and held a conference with his subordinates.

"As night was coming on, the prisoners were crowded into a pen of logs and guarded by Tories, while among the Indians controversy ran high as to whether the prisoners should be put to death or taken back to Niagara. Harper lay bound hand and foot listening to the dispute. He understood the Indian tongue and could hear Chief Brant holding out against a massacre.

"In the morning Capt. Harper was brought before the Indians, who felt he was not telling the truth about troops. He repeated his assertion of the day before. The Indians and Tories decided to retrace their steps to Niagara, and it was with difficulty that Brant restrained the other Indians from killing the prisoners.

"The march was forthwith commenced and was filled with pain,

peril and adventure. On the second day they met two loyalists who asserted that Harper was not telling the truth. But again Harper faced his accusers and talked so convincingly that the tomahawk was stilled. On the same day an old man named Brown was taken prisoner with his two grandsons. Brown was unable to keep step with the march and was put to death."

One more narrow escape marked the journey to the British garrison at Niagara. On leaving the latter place, Brant had sent eleven Indians to fall upon the Minisink settlement. Five white men were captured and bound for the night. One got his hands free, unbound his companions while the Indians slept and the prisoners murdered ten of the eleven Indians.

On the way back with Harper, Brant came upon the lone Indian survivor. He at once was determined to kill Harper and the party in revenge, but the surviving Indian had known them at Harpersfield and pleaded for their lives. Harper was finally handed over to the British, who held him prisoner on a ship at Quebec for two years and eight months. At Shandy Hall you may see a cane he whittled while suffering long idle months on the prison ship. The knob is carved from bone, probably from a soup bone. In 1783 the captive was released and returned to his family in New York.

Harper thus owed his life in the first place to his acquaintanceship with Chief Joseph Brant, as you have read above. Sir William Johnson, a British Crown agent in charge of Indian affairs, had married Brant's sister, Molly Brant. Sir William sent her brother to school at Lebanon, Conn., where Alexander was also enrolled. This school, by the way, was conducted by Dr. Eleazar Wheelock, founder and first president of Dartmouth College.

The Revolution over, Alexander and Joseph Harper, with three relatives, formed the old Harpersfield Land Co., which bought six townships in the Western Reserve from the Connecticut Land Co. In June, 1798, Alexander, with his wife and six children and sixteen other persons, all relatives, landed on the Ohio shore of Lake Erie at a creek approximately at the foot of the road which now marks the line between Lake and Ashtabula Counties.

Alexander moved inland to Johnny Cake Ridge (Route 84) and first selected a burial ground. He chose the plot that is used as a cemetery to this day at the southeast corner of Johnny Cake and County Line Road in Unionville. This seemed to be the highest point and for that reason was chosen.

Alexander and his sons settled the land. They arrived in June, and in September Alexander was the first person to be buried in the sandy knoll he had set aside as a graveyard. He contracted a fever and died in his 55th year. His tombstone still stands and his may be the oldest marked grave in the Western Reserve. The inscription reads:

Around this monumental stone, Let friendship drop a sacred tear. A husband kind, a parent fond, An upright man lies buried here. Alexander's widow, Elizabeth Bar-

tholomew Harper, lived on in this wilderness for 35 years after the death of her husband.

We come now to Shandy Hall. The youngest son of Alexander was Col. Robert Harper and he built this house for his bride in 1815. Robert had four daughters.

Ellen was born in 1816 and died in 1895. Stella married Fitch Miner and lived at Sandusky. Ann married Dr. Aaron Austin of the Austinburg family and lived at Sandusky until the death of her husband, then returned to the family home. The fourth daughter, Jane, married a first cousin, Alexander Harper.

Jane had four children, Stella and Ann, and two sons who went out west.

Ann, daughter of Jane, was the last in direct line and she died at Shandy Hall in 1935, leaving this property to the children of a cousin, David Z. Norton, Cleveland industrialist and philanthropist, who died in 1923. His mother was Caroline Harper, who was a sister of Alexander J. Harper, who married Jane Harper.

David Z. Norton's children who now own Shandy Hall are: Miriam Norton White, widow of Fred R. White; Robert Castle Norton, treasurer of Oglebay, Norton & Co., and former member of the Cleveland Library Board, and Laurence Harper Norton, until recently a member of the Cleveland Board of Education.

Laurence Norton is also president of the Western Reserve Historical Society and it is through his interest in the Western Reserve and his ancestors that Shandy Hall has been preserved as a museum open to the public.

The old homestead lies about a mile east of Unionville on the north side of the road. Pull up in front. You will gaze upon what seems to be a small one-story two-room cabin that has long been in need of paint. But the view from the road, or from the locust trees on the front lawn, is the most deceptive you have ever experienced.

The house really needs paint, for so far as can be determined it has never had a drop in its life. It would drink it by the gallons now, so dry and porous are the clapboards, but artists who have visited the house plead with Norton not to paint it. The Sherwin-Williams Co. has suggested a stain which would preserve the wood without changing the appearance.

As you see in the photographs on this page, the old place is as plain as a Puritan face on Sunday. The

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