



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

Anna's Original "Dutch Uncle," Lewis Kah

Written by Carol Wentz



Lewis Kah, prominent Anna resident until his death in 1909

While there are various meanings for "Dutch uncle," the one that seems to fit Lewis Kah best is someone from the old country who freely gives benevolent yet firm advice and is considered an "uncle" by many who know and love him.

Lewis was born Ludwig Kah on September 20, 1819, in Lichtenau, Baden, Germany, but as a young man decided to leave his

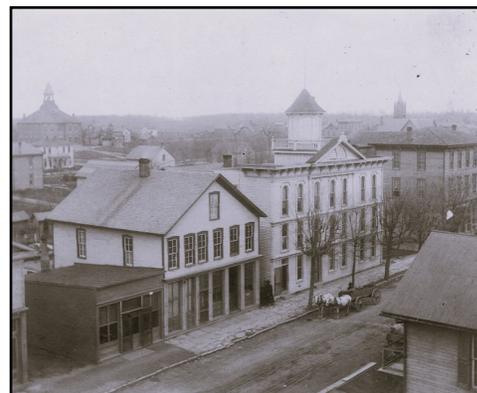
homeland for America. In the spring of 1845, he and some of his friends arrived in New York and made their way west to Ohio. Lewis had always been a talented musician, so he was able to quickly join up with a traveling band. His principal instrument was the cornet. He went all over the country with the band for the first seven summers he was in America. In the winters he taught cornet bands all over Ohio; in

eastern Ohio alone, he taught 25 bands.

In 1846, Lewis married Salome "Sarah" Ludwig, also originally from Lichtenau, Germany. He purchased land just north of Anna (where the Anna Elementary School and athletic fields now sit) as a future investment, but instead of immediately planting roots, Lewis continued to travel and follow his dream of being a professional musician.

When the Civil War broke out in the 1860s, Lewis mustered in as a musician in August of 1862 for the Shelby County unit: Company K 20th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Family records state he was motivated by patriotism to join the fight. He was soon promoted to Principal Musician of his company, earning \$85 a month, and transferred to field and staff. As such, his extra non-musical duties included pulling wounded soldiers off the battlefields, running messages to his captain, and bringing in more ammunition to the fighting soldiers. He was involved in many major battles, including Shiloh and Vicksburg. Mr. Kah was honorably discharged in 1864 after serving for over two years.

Lewis finally decided it was time to settle down and raise his family, six daughters born between 1847 and 1856, on the



Kah House is second white building on the right with trees in front of it. Present day location of US Bank.

land he had purchased earlier north of Anna. Mr. Kah had ideas for the budding village; however, he was not welcomed with open arms by the founders of Anna. At that time, the settlement was mainly

Our newest ADHS Lifetime Members...

Carol Carity

Carol Braun

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(Please let us know if we have inadvertently missed your name, and we will add it to our next newsletter list.)

inhabited by those of English descent, and they were reluctant to welcome the incoming Germans. But when he flashed his usual disarming smile and said he wanted to help build their town, his personal magnetism soon won them over.

Lewis Kah was as good as his word. When businesses began to flourish in the tiny new town of Anna, either with partners or by himself he started a drygoods store (one of the first businesses in Anna), a combination drygoods and grain business, a flour mill, and a saw and planing mill. All of these businesses began during the years Anna was being laid out just south of the Kah farm. In addition to the various businesses, Lewis Kah was also a big influence on where the future D&M railroad station would be built in Anna and secured the location for the German Lutheran Church.

However, the business Mr. Kah was most well-known for in Anna was the Kah House. He purchased the

hotel from William Flesher a year after it was built, renamed it, and turned it into one of the most impressive small town hotels in the Midwest. Lewis operated the hotel himself for 15 years before his youngest daughter, Lena, took over. She was in charge when their most important visitor, William McKinley (then Ohio governor who went on to be elected President of the United States), ate supper at the hotel in 1893 while waiting to board the train in Anna.



Lewis Kah's grandchildren at work in Kah House lobby

“Uncle Lewis.” What an amazing man. Not only did he serve as a businessman, church and community organizer, but was an avid believer in promoting education and the arts. He taught singing and instrumental lessons for free to several generations of Anna residents who wanted to learn. He was truly Ohio’s version of a Renaissance Man who took immense pride in his community.



HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

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Single Membership - \$20 yearly _____

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Lifetime Membership - \$500 _____

Mail to: ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. Box 133, Anna, OH 45302

The ADHS is a 501(c)3 charitable organization, and your donation may be tax deductible. Level giving may be automatically deducted each month from your checking account. Please ask Susie Bertsch (937.394.3072) for details.

Second Annual “Christmas on Main” ADHS Craft Fair November 11th-12th 9am - 4pm



Don't miss this year's holiday event in Anna! Once again many beautifully handcrafted items will be available at the Packer Historical Center. Other village businesses are planning to participate as well this year. What a great way to purchase holiday gifts with your donations! Handcrafted or homemade food items will be gratefully accepted from any Anna School District resident. We will be accepting items to sell at our craft fair up until Wednesday, November 9th.

Hometown Heroes Project Continuing

Our school district's Hometown Heroes banners are displayed in Anna from Memorial Day to Veterans Day each year. So they will soon be coming down to make way for Anna's annual Christmas decorations. New banners will join the others when they are put up again next spring. To order a banner honoring a veteran in your family or any other veteran you would like to honor, please contact Carol Carity (937.394.3581) or Susie Bertsch (937.394.3072) for more details.

45th Anniversary of the Great Blizzard of 1978

The worst winter storm in Ohio history struck before dawn on Thursday, January 26, 1978. The *Blizzard of '78* continued through Thursday and into Friday. This coming January marks the 45th anniversary of that storm which so many of us experienced. If you have any memories or pictures you would be willing to share from the blizzard, please send them to **carolwentz53@gmail.com**. We hope to feature many of your pictures and remembrances in our January 2023 edition of the Skipping Village Gazette.

New Parking Lot at the Packer Historical Center



Our new parking lot (pictured above) at the rear of the Packer Historical Center has been completed! The parking spaces have enough room behind them to accommodate wheel chairs which can then easily access the wheelchair lift seen in the picture.

Thanks to Wannemacher Construction of Anna on the fine job. Also thanks to Outdoors Unlimited and Brian Egbert of Anna for finishing our landscaping around the parking lot and the northwest side of the Packer Historical Center. This project completes our outdoor landscaping.

Anna District Historical Society

112 West Main Street

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

POSTAL CUSTOMER

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Additional Kah House
photos from the ADHS
collection...



Soda fountain in the Kah House lobby

Anna District Historical Society

112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

Phone: 937-646-0011

Packer Historical Center Hours

Sundays 1-4pm

Or call 937.646.0011 to schedule a private tour.



Winter scene in front of Kah House