



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

What's in a Name?

Written by Randall Wentz

Hoying, Kindred and Poppe, Wentz... In small towns certain names become nearly synonymous with certain businesses after a generation or two in the same family. Hoying and Hoying Builders, Kindred and Poppe General Store, Wentz Chevrolet are just several which come to mind in our school district.

The name Wentz first became associated with transportation in the Anna area in 1903 when two young brothers from Wapakoneta, Elmer and Ferdinand Wentz, opened a blacksmith shop. The brothers had just returned from fighting in the Spanish-American War and wanted to open their own business. They located their shop one block south of the current Noll Fisher Building in Anna. Ed Richardson learned the trade of blacksmithing from the Wentz brothers after the shop was moved to their new building.



Brothers Ferdinand (at left) and Elmer Wentz (at right)
during the Spanish-American War



Original blacksmith shop in Anna begun
by the Wentz brothers

As the automobile became more popular, Ferd saw a new opportunity and began servicing and selling new vehicles in addition to helping Elmer with blacksmithing. Their business grew to the point that more space was needed, and the brothers decided to build a new two story building (where Noll Fisher is located today). They built it with concrete blocks they poured themselves. The first story was used as their repair garage, and the second story was used as a body shop. A ramp was built at the back of the building to drive vehicles up to the second story which was a real challenge in the winter.



Newly built Wentz Brothers Garage
in downtown Anna

New Lifetime Membership...

Scott and Tessa Koppin

New Yearly Memberships...

Deb Vaubel

Shirley Umstead

Mary Barhorst

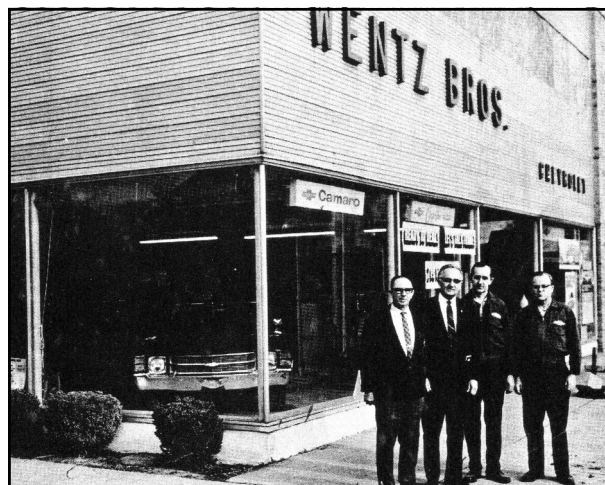
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During the 1920-30's, the upper floor also doubled as the town gymnasium regularly hosting high school basketball games and dances. Basketball players had to develop a flat shot to accommodate the lower ceiling.

Ferd and Elmer continued in business for many years, selling a number of different vehicle makes (Dodge, Ford, Pontiac, and Oakland) before deciding to sell Chevrolets exclusively.

In 1942, after working in various capacities in the business, Ferd's sons, Lloyd, William, Harold, and Russel purchased the business and became equal owner/operators of the Chevrolet dealership. The four brothers continued to operate the business together, even during WWII, when William and Harold were called into the service of their country. Lloyd and Russel held down the home front during the war through the rationing of fuel, tires, and even new cars.

In 1949, after the war was over, Wentz Brothers Chevrolet purchased another dealership in Sidney, Ohio. Shelby Motors, which sold Chevrolets and Cadillacs was



(l-r) Wentz brothers, Lloyd, Bill, Harold, Russel (Shenny), said to be the only four equal owners/operators of a dealership in the United States.

renamed Wentz Chevrolet-Cadillac, Inc., and William left the Anna store to manage the Sidney dealership. The other three brothers remained in Anna at the original dealership.

In 1953-54, after many successful years in the Anna business following WWII, the four brothers made the decision to expand the original building on Main Street.



HELP US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

Please consider becoming a member of the Anna District Historical Society.

Name of member _____

Name of spouse (family memberships) _____

Children under 18 (family memberships) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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Dr. Milliette Level _____ (\$50 per month)

Anna Carey Thirkield Level _____ (\$25 per month)

Lois Lenski Level _____ (\$10 per month)

Single Membership - \$20 yearly _____

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Lifetime Membership - \$500 _____

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

Contact Susan Bertsch at 937.394.3072 for more information on leveled giving.

A new two story addition for a vehicle showroom, office space, parts department, and upstairs storage was added to the front of the original building. Also, a seven bay service building was attached to the rear of the original garage. This building was capable of housing school busses and other larger vehicles.

In 1969, as the brothers were nearing retirement age, they decided to sell the Sidney dealership and focus on the original store in Anna. The four brothers were together again.

In 1976, due to health concerns, Lloyd and Harold sold their interests in the business to the third generation of the family, Russel's son, Randall, and Richard Eshleman, Russel's son-in-law. Randall, Richard, Russel, and William continued to operate Wentz Chevrolet in Anna until 1991. At that time, they were faced with the decision of building a new facility on the outskirts of town, knowing that General Motors was at the same time trying to force the smaller dealerships out of business. The hard decision was finally made to terminate operations of Wentz Chevrolet, ending an era of 88 years in the transportation business in Anna. (cont. on page 4)

Anna Notables History Fair

The first Anna Seventh Grade History Fair was held at the Packer Historical Center on Thursday night, April 3rd. Winning students, parents, grandparents, and any interested community members were invited to view the twelve top projects that were displayed throughout the first floor of the Packer Historical Center.



Students who created the top twelve projects and their teacher, Mrs. Nancy Stutsman

The idea for the local history project was conceived by Seventh Grade English/Language Arts teacher, Nancy Stutsman. The project was based on the book, Dead End in Norvelt by Jack Gantos which was read by all the seventh graders in Mrs. Stutsman's classes. In the book, a long-time resident of Norvelt writes obituaries for the original residents of that small town when they died. The obituaries were also linked to important news events of the day. The students chose an Anna notable from the past, wrote a similar obituary, and also created posters to illustrate more about the Anna notable. The projects were judged, and the best twelve were chosen to be displayed at the Packer Historical Center.



Several of the student projects prior to the open house



Brayden Wiedman with his project about Anna notable, Dr. Delphis Milliette

Upcoming ADHS Events

- **April 23th** - Special historical presentation by several ADHS members at the St. Philomena Montessori School
- **April 28th** - Anna High School Advanced Art Class coming to the Packer Historical Center to photograph local history archival items
- **Early May** - Anna Third Grade local history tour led by ADHS members
- **May 21** - Anna Seventh Grade tour of Packer Historical Center

Anna District Historical Society

112 West Main Street

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

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New Car Announcement...

Beginning in the 1950's, GM, Ford, and Chrysler began to make major body changes to their cars each year to add excitement for the new models. These new models usually arrived early in September and were kept under wraps until New Car Announcement day which was held in late September. Wentz Chevrolet employees would prep and clean the cars in secret and then hide the new models around town in Wentz family garages with windows covered.

New Car Announcement always took place on a Thursday, so usually 4-5 new cars were brought to the showroom on Wednesday evening. There were cookies and coffee available for customers beginning at 9am on Thursday morning. Give aways like small bottles of perfume for the ladies, yardsticks and ice scrapers for the men, and candy for the children were also a part of New Car Announcement. Business went on at the dealership as normal during the day on Thursday, but in the evening many folks stopped in to see the new models. Often 200-250 people were in attendance over the course of the day and evening.

Anna District Historical Society

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

Anna, OH 45302

Phone: 937-646-0011

**The Packer Center is now open by appointment
only. Call 937.646.0011 to schedule
a private tour.**



Wentz Brothers building before the remodeling
was completed in 1953-1954