



Delaware City Placed First Marker in 1913

Submitted by Meghan Hensley

This is the first installment of a series on markers placed by the Delaware City Chapter in Delaware County.

AFTER THE APRIL REGULAR CHAPTER MEETING, I took possession of photocopies of the meeting minutes from 1909 through 1922. The minutes were handwritten by the chapter secretaries over those first 13 years. As digital writing has taken a more prominent role in our lives, there is a worry that younger and future generations will not be able to easily read any handwritten document from previous generations. This thought drove me to start transcribing this collection of minutes. During the transcription process, I found details pertaining to the first marker the Delaware City Chapter ever placed in Delaware County. This led me on a hunt to find it.

The first mention of the marker is in the minutes from the November 26, 1910, chapter meeting. A committee was formed to move forward with placing a marker on the site where General William Henry Harrison stopped on his way to Sandusky from Franklinton in 1813 during the War of 1812. This path is known as the Harrison Trail, and the marker is identified in the minutes as the Harrison Trail Marker.

Over the next almost two years, the committee members worked to raise funds, find a location to place the marker, and commission the marker. The chapter was able to raise the required funds to have a tablet cast in bronze and to be placed on a granite boulder. February 22, 1913, was the date set to unveil the marker on the site where Harrison stopped in Delaware, Ohio. The program included patriotic songs,

speeches, and the official unveiling of the marker. The official minutes from the day are below:

Program

Harrison Trail Tablet Unveiling

February 22nd 1913 – 10 a.m.

America – Audience

Invocation – Rev. J.H. Fitzwater

Address – Mrs. Edward Orton Jr.

Vocal Solo – Mrs. T.G. Dewall

Address – Prof. R.T. Stevenson

Presentation of Tablet – Mrs. Chas. Riddle, our Regent

Star Spangled Banner – Audience

Unveiling of Tablet – Charlotte Rice, Catherine Houk

Address – Mrs. R.E. Hills

Held at Grey Chapel Annex.

The note at the bottom of the minutes from the day led me to believe the marker was placed somewhere on the campus of Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU) but that was the extent of the detail of placement in the minutes. I didn't know where the Grey Chapel Annex was as it is not a place on campus today. I wanted to find it as I had never heard of this marker before starting the transcription process. I attended OWU and was certain I had walked by the marker often. I also walk through campus at least weekly. I could not recall seeing a marker for the Harrison Trail. But there are dozens of markers across campus for various things, many made of granite. I decided to track down anything I could find regarding the marker.

I did a general internet search for "Harrison Trail marker" which returned markers in Franklinton and Sandusky

marking the start and end of the trail. There were articles about additional trails through Ohio and into Indiana. I refined the search adding "Delaware, Ohio" which returned the same information as the first search. I thought a newspaper article in 1913 would exist. Unfortunately, the Delaware Gazette does not have an online digital archive for 1913. I searched on Newspapers.com, which is a searchable archive of newspapers across the globe. I searched for "Harrison Trail, Delaware, Ohio." Two articles, one in 1969 and another in 1994 mentioned the marker but again nothing further on the location beyond "on the campus of Ohio Wesleyan University."



Late spring tulips flowering around the Harrison Trail marker on the Campus of Ohio Wesleyan University.

A lunchtime stop at the library on April 22 had me digging into books in the local history room. I was going to look at the microfiche archive of the Gazette, but I didn't have any dimes on me to run the viewer and I was short on time to get some dimes. I knew there were copies of the chapter history (a pair of books published in 1959 and 1969) and I remembered the last time I looked through them there was a list of markers placed by the chapter from 1913 through 1969. In the book published in 1969, there were copies of an article published in the DAR magazine celebrating the 60th anniversary of the chapter. In the pages of that article was a page dedicated to the Harrison Trail Marker. It included a photo of the marker and a little more detail.

The marker was placed on the site of the tavern where Harrison stopped in Delaware. The Pioneer Tavern was one of the earliest buildings in Delaware by the intersection of the Olentangy River and the Delaware Run, a creek that runs west to east through the modern day downtown. A quick Google search using "Pioneer Tavern, Delaware Ohio" returned an article from September 2020 which contained photos of the marker and GPS coordinates. Clicking on the coordinates brought up Google Maps with a pin on the exact location. I knew exactly where it was. And yes, I walk by it weekly on my way to church when I cut through OWU.

The marker, though on private property and unassuming, can easily be accessed by the public. The easiest way to locate

the marker is to turn south onto Henry Street from William Street. On the right you will pass the parking lot for St. Mary Catholic Church, the parking lot for Phillips Hall, and come to a long driveway that runs through much of the academic side of OWU's campus. Stop when you come to this driveway. To your right on a slight rise of the ground sits a boulder. That boulder is the Harrison Trail Marker placed by the Delaware City Chapter in 1913.

The bronze tablet is slightly off center on the face of the boulder and reads:

The Harrison Trail
Site of Pioneer Tavern
Headquarters of
General
William Henry Harrison
on the march from
Franklinton to Sandusky
February 1813
Erected by Delaware City Chapter
Daughters
of the American Revolution
1913

OWU does some landscaping around the marker throughout the year. Currently a nice grouping of tulips and grasses are planted and in bloom.

The next marker placed by the Delaware City Chapter was the marker placed in 1926 denoting the location of the house where Rutherford B. Hayes was born. Unfortunately, the chapter was not able to save the house from demolition. The marker was placed using the money raised by the chapter. This marker was replaced by a historical place marker on February 17, 2020, which the chapter assisted with. The original is in city storage for preservation. As far as I can tell, there were no further markers placed by the chapter until the 1960s with the lead up to the US Bicentennial with the most recent being placed in 2010. I have a list of markers placed by the chapter and I am on a hunt to find them all.



A close up of the bronze plaque marking the location of the Pioneer Tavern and headquarters in Delaware County for Harrison during his march to Sandusky, Ohio, in 1813.