



BORN IN 1846, Martha Anthony-Keiffer, played by Anita Hirsch (above), homesteaded in Decatur County in a dugout home and had the first school

in her living room. About 75 to 100 people came to the first cemetery re-enactment on Mini Sapa Day this Sunday, where 10 lives and deaths were

acted out, veterans of three wars were honored and victims of both the Last Indian Raid and the 1942 tornado were remembered.

Mini Sapa Day helps re-create stories of yore

Despite the unseasonable heat and a barrage of flies, those gathered Sunday for the first historical re-enactments for Mini Sapa Day were not let down.

The day began with an open house at the Last Indian Raid Museum, where close to 100 people mingled, enjoying refreshments and listening to Channing Fortin play guitar and Anita Hirsch and Jenny Tally play the piano. Jenny also sang.

Actors in character for the re-enactments mingled, posing for pictures in their period dress with those who came. About 3 p.m., everyone headed out and up to the city cemetery.

There, people set up lawn chairs in the shade or just stood among the tombstones, as the various characters took their places by their headstones. The production began with the Oberlin American Legion and Auxiliary going to each soldier's grave in the north section. Members called out the veteran's name, military station and which unit he served with. After all five Civil War soldiers, five World War I soldiers and three World War II soldiers had been announced, the Legionnaires marched back to the cemetery's main monument for a beautiful rendition of "Taps."

After that, Judith LaBash read the poem "The Unknown Grave" by Adelaide Anne Procter, ending with this stanza: "No grief, though loud and deep / Could stir that sleep / And earth and heaven tell / Of rest that shall not cease, / Where the cold world's farewell / Fades into endless peace."

Then began the re-enactments. Museum Director Sharleen Wurm said she researched the 12 people being brought to life, and found varying amounts of information on

them from public records, diaries and newspaper clippings. The actors then got to arrange the information as they liked and personify their character.

These ranged from Charlie Canfield, a buffalo hunter whose wife had to identify his body while holding their 2-week-old son, to a former Oberlin mayor, a sister of "Wild Bill" and a man who was murdered by his brother over a horse.

Mrs. Wurm told the tale of the second greatest tragedy Decatur County has known, next to the Indian raid, — the great tornado of 1942. Seven homesteads were destroyed, she said, and 15 people killed. The victims ranged in age from 4 to 65.

Here she held up an old issue of *The Oberlin Herald*, which as it did with this summer's fires, had released a tornado extra. The yellowed paper held accounts of the furious twister and its damage. Copies of this edition, she said, are available at the museum.

The day commemorates the Last Indian Raid in Kansas, which occurred near Oberlin on Sept. 30, 1878.

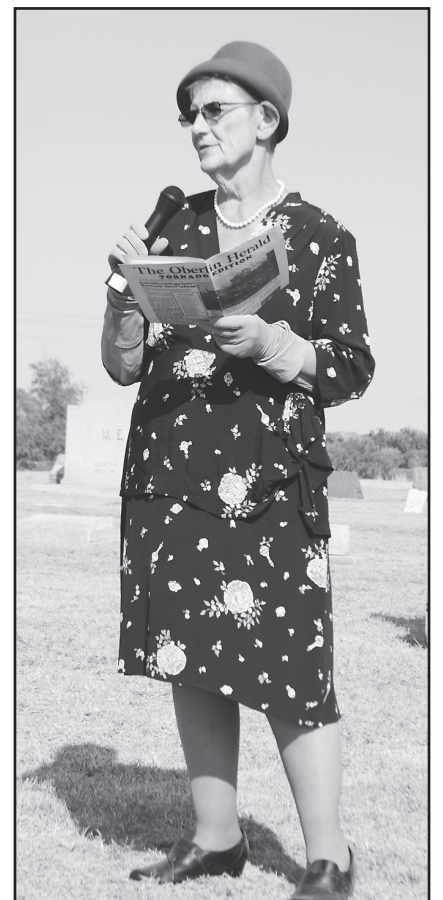
"We have Mini Sapa every year," said Mrs. Wurm. "We started in 1958 and next year will be the 55th anniversary of the museum, as well as the 135th of the Last Indian Raid. I think everybody really enjoyed the re-enactments ... so for the cemetery tour, we'll have at least a couple more next year."

"I like the genealogy, history and research. We could have just done so many more. The Legion did a wonderful job of honoring the veterans. That was a really nice highlight, and we really appreciate their time in doing it for us. I really enjoyed that part a lot."



SALUTING THE FLAG AS "Taps" was being played, the Oberlin American Legion and Auxiliary (above) opened the re-enactments by honoring each veteran in that section of the cemetery. Melvin Martin (below left) played Jerry McCauley, who was shot by his

own brother over a horse, one of the many stirring stories told that day. Museum Director Sharleen Wurm (right) told of the 1942 tornado that ripped through the county, as detailed in a special edition of *The Oberlin Herald*.



— Story and photos by Stephanie DeCamp