



### **Madison Seminary:**

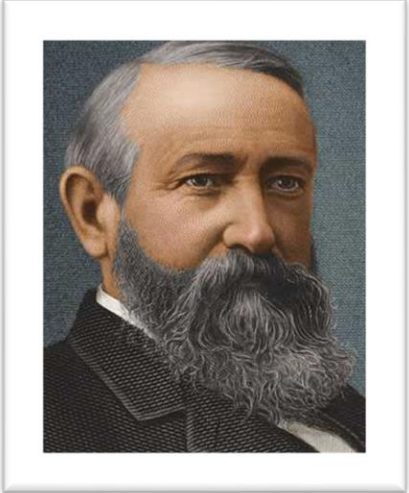
From the Grand Army to Ghosts

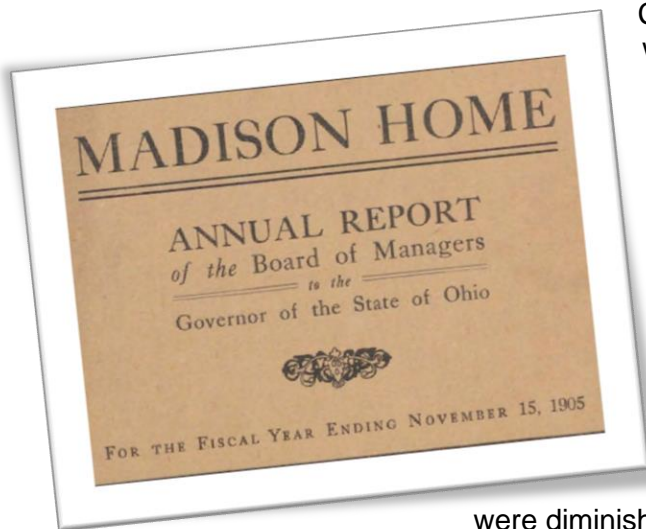
The brick edifice at 6769 Middle Ridge Road was chartered in 1845 as an institute for higher education. The original small wood frame building was completed in 1847. Known as the Madison Seminary, it served as a high school and college. By 1859, a larger brick structure was added on the east side, providing boarding for up to 150 students. The Seminary continued in its mission virtually unchanged to July 1891.

At the same time, growing attention was being given to survivors of the Civil War. President Benjamin Harrison, a veteran himself, had promised living assistance and pensions to members of the Grand Army of the Republic in campaign speeches in 1888. A nationwide search identified Madison, Ohio, as the best of five proposed sites for such a home. The Madison Seminary property was chosen. \$1000 and ten acres of land were donated by Madison and Geneva residents; and in November 1891, a

reconditioned property and structure were purchased and owned by the Women's Relief Corps. Consisting of two buildings, the Ohio Cottage and the Civil War building, a new history emerged as the Madison Home. The Civil War building contained 23 rooms on three floors and over 6,000 square feet. The newer Ohio Cottage had 63 rooms and 26,000 square feet. The home offered assistance and a residence for GAR women who were displaced, as well as for army nurses. It was in this period that the west wing was added.

One of the Home's most famous residents was Elizabeth Stiles, a





Civil War spy. Her husband was executed in front of her by Confederate sympathizers upon learning of her pro-Union views. Recruited by Abraham Lincoln, she was a valuable spy through 1864 when her identity cover was blown. She returned North and moved into the 'Home' until her death in 1898 at age 82. She is buried there.



By 1901, Civil War veterans were diminishing in number and the 'Home' was experiencing financial problems. The property was donated to the State of Ohio although a small portion of the space remained for WRC residents. A new name for the facility made it a Home for Soldiers, Sailors, Wives, Mothers, Widows & Army Nurses. In 1959, another structure was added to the complex.



1962 saw the site change missions to rehabilitate mentally ill patients as part of the Cleveland State Hospital / Apple Creek Institution. A later name change brought the moniker Opportunity Village. Patients and honor inmates from Marysville, Ohio, were housed there through 1975.

*Sec. of War, please refer the heirs, Mrs. Stiles, to the proper place, if there is any, to present her claim for property destroyed by the rebels. Also her application for employment.*  
*A. Lincoln*  
 Aug. 19. 1863.  
 Reply referred to Col Baker. Jas. A. Hardie a.s.f.  
 War Dept.  
 Aug 22. 1863

Since 1977 the Ohio Cottage complex has had varied uses.

County government offices were located there until 1994. Madison Police used a portion of the building for their station needs. Cass-Mill nurseries owned the property in 1998 for several years. The Madison Historical Society used the building briefly. John Cassell was the owner on record through 2008. Cassell's grandson owned the property starting in 2009 until Adam Kimball purchased the site in 2016. Kimball has worked to not only restore the now registered historic building but has promoted its spectral happenings with programs, social media postings and public events throughout the years. He and his volunteer crew continue to work on restoration needs and anticipate making the building a vibrant and featured part of Lake County history. Visits to the Ohio Cottage, a scheduled tour or sponsored Ghost Hunt are just a one tank trip away.

*Submitted by Dan Maxson - Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - Community Media Lab, The News-Herald - Volunteer Trustee, Curator - FHHS/ Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township*