

Unionville: The Tiny Town That Time Forgot

Lake County wasn't always Lake County. Even decades after the Revolutionary War, the Western Reserve era was still in the offing. Those stories are well known and for another day. This month we look at an unincorporated community where two counties meet and that simple fact caused "union" to be selected for its name. The hamlet of **Unionville**, Ohio, is unique because of its nestled location between Lake and Ashtabula counties. The community is split down the middle by County Line Road.

In many ways, it is the little town time forgot. Located between borders south of Geneva (Harpersfield) and Madison, the spot was christened Unionville. Just four square miles in size, it has a lot of big history. From the famous **Old Tavern** to the **Unionville United Church** that was established in 1834, it even has its own post office and zip code, 44088. Let's examine some of its best-known moments in Western Reserve history. All sites are located in the same general block and can easily be enjoyed by visitors.

The Old Tavern dates back to 1798 and was a stagecoach stop. Originally two separate cabins, it has had other names and has changed hands many times during its 224-year history. Additionally, it has had many variations as a commercial business over so many decades, but it was the first tavern in Ohio's history. Also, it was the heart of antebellum and Civil War era merriment and suspicion.



Documented as part of the **Underground Railroad**, **Harriet Beecher Stowe** was a guest at the Tavern. During that visit, the infamous tale of Milton and Lewis Clarke was shared with her. In her most famous work, **Uncle Tom's Cabin**, the story and character appear and were based in part on this event. The building remains today, although some unfortunate circumstances between 2007-2012 have left the site a mere shadow of its former grandeur. Dedicated local preservation groups have begun an arduous campaign of conservation and restoration. Ohio Historic Marker 13-43 reminds us of its importance in state history.



Before 1800, the western parts of Pennsylvania and New York generally remained wilderness, and the Northwest Territory was mostly uncharted. **Abraham Tappan** was a member of the **Connecticut Land Company's** surveying team sent to map the five-mile tracts of land soon to be sold to early New England pioneers.

Tappan, born in 1780, arrived in the Western Reserve in 1801 (two years before Ohio's statehood). He lived at first in the home of noted local educator/ pioneer John Walworth of New Market (1803-1806 /later Grandon, 1812 / finally Fairport, 1836). A search of deeds and records indicates that Abraham Tappan purchased 241 acres of land in Tract 11, Range 6. He built this magnificent brick home in 1827-1828, with six bedrooms,

nine fireplaces, servants' quarters and many fine interior appointments. The two and a half story house was in the Federal and Greek-Revival Style, and was consistent with the era. Later, an addition dating from 1847 added Neo-Classical elements. The home features stepped gable ends, Venetian patterns, elliptical arch windows, a carved interior staircase, two rear stairways and a full cellar divided into six sections. Other notable owners were Tappan's son and son-in-law, the Stephen C. Warner family and even a nursing home in 1954.

Because Tappan served as the **Connecticut Land Company Surveyor and Deed Office Legal Recorder**, in 1817 he erected a small



