

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 08, 2005

## The Jonathan Wright House in Springboro, Ohio: The Home of the Founder of Springboro and a Station on the Underground Railroad

On June 7th, 2005, a *Ohio Historical Marker* was dedicated in front of the **Jonathan Wright House** in Springboro, Ohio. The home is the oldest house in Springboro. It was built in 1815. Descendants of **Joel, Jonathan** and **Aron Wright** were present at the dedication. The house is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* and is a documented Underground Railroad site. The home is now the *Wright House Bed and Breakfast*, for more information see <http://www.bbonline.com/oh/wrighthouse/>.

The Wright family of Springboro has a long history with Ohio even before it became a state in 1803. The patriarch of the family, **Joel Wright** (1750-1829) was a prominent teacher and surveyor. In 1798, because of his experience surveying in the Northwest Territory, he visited the Wyandotte Native Americans and **Chief Tarhe** near Upper Sandusky, Ohio as a representative of *Baltimore Yearly Meeting*. Twenty days out of Baltimore they reached the Ohio River and six days later they encamped near a Moravian Mission called Goshen where the services of an Indian guide, **Joseph White-Eyes**, were secured to lead them to Upper Sandusky. It was here that **Joel Wright** met their Moravian pastor; **David Zeisberger**. Because of this journey into the wilderness and other surveying journeys to the old northwest, **Joel Wright** was familiar with the Waynesville-Springboro area before he permanently moved into this area of southwest Ohio in 1806.

While still living at Pipe Creek in Frederick County, Maryland, **Joel Wright** was a noted schoolteacher and was the superintendent of the school under the care of *Pipe Creek Monthly Meeting*. Students from the surrounding country were sent to learn from him. In 1788 he was hired to survey the Muskingum Valley and then later the Scioto Valley and the Little Miami and the Great Miami Valleys in the Northwest Territory. In 1806 Joel moved into the area along the Little Miami River at Waynesville. Both he and another Quaker pioneer, **Abijah O'Neill**, owned a thousand acres of land near Waynesville. For six years he surveyed and sold parcels of land. He was also the surveyor of Dayton, Ohio, Louisville, Kentucky and Columbus, Ohio.

Because of his success as a teacher in Maryland, it is not surprising that **Joel Wright** also became involved with schools in the Miami Valley especially the school of his friend and business associate, Friend **Abijah O'Neill**. The O'Neill school was located on the O'Neill homestead across the Little Miami River opposite the site of Waynesville. In 1814, **Joel** moved further east about six miles to Springboro to be near his son, **Jonathan** and his family. **Joel Wright** was an active member of the *Society of Friends* his entire life. Up until his death in 1829 he always wore the dress of the Revolutionary era: long overcoat with flap pockets, a long waistcoat and knee breeches with low shoes trimmed with silver buckles. He always wore a broad-brimmed beaver hat. He is buried in the *Springboro Monthly Meeting* Cemetery on Factory Road.

**Jonathan Wright** (1782-1855) was the fourth child of **Joel** and **Elizabeth Farquhar Wright**. He was also a surveyor like his father and a miller. He moved into the area after **Joel** was settled in Waynesville. He and his family and a dozen families of Friends traveled down the Ohio and then up the Little Miami River to Waynesville where his father, **Joel**, was living. **Jonathan** and his companions moved on east and settled on Clear Creek. He was the founder of Springboro, Ohio. He plotted the land and sold it. **Jonathan** also built two mills and the woolen factory in Springboro. He built a store on Main Street, which prospered for many years under the supervision of **Mahlon** and **Josiah**, two of his sons. His death was announced in the *Miami-Visitor* newspaper of Waynesville, Ohio on February 14th, 1855: **Jonathan Wright, a prominent member of the Society of Friends, died at his residence in Springborough, on the 12th, Inst."**

**Jonathan Wright** was the father of **Dr. Aron Wright** (1810-1885), a physician, wealthy land owner, and the first president of *Miami Valley Institute, a Hicksite Quaker College*, which he founded on the outskirts of Springboro in 1870. **Aron Wright** and his family were great benefactors of *Springboro Monthly Meeting (Hicksite)*.

The **Wright** family were successful business men and also dedicated Quakers who reached out in ministry to African-Americans, Native-Americans and were educators and founders of schools.