

# *St. James Meeting House*

*~ Built 1828 ~*



*Boardman Township Park  
Boardman, Ohio*



# History of St. James Meeting House



t. James Meeting House, Boardman Township's oldest public building, sits proudly and clearly atop a knoll as a symbol of our Community's heritage, and perhaps most importantly, is considered and appreciated as one of Boardman's greatest treasures. Once called the "Church of the Boardman's," St. James is a testament to the early pioneers who built it and the spirit of the Community that continues to support it today.

## History

St. James Episcopal Church was the first Episcopal Church in Ohio, and the first home of the oldest Episcopal parish in the Connecticut Western Reserve. The building was built by the family of Elijah Boardman, one of the original landholders of the Connecticut Western Reserve {Northern part of Ohio} and the founder of Boardman Township. Mr. Boardman served as a Revolutionary Soldier, United States Senator, and as a member of the Connecticut Land Company, which developed the Western Reserve of Ohio. Mr. Boardman married Mary Anna Whiting on September 25, 1792, in New Milford, Connecticut, and they had five children. Elijah first came to Boardman in the Summer of 1798, to survey the land and establish boundaries. In May of 1799, Elijah was deeded Lot No. 1 of the Second Range of the Western Reserve, which was named after him, Boardman. Over the years he traveled to Ohio often in order to attend to his business concerns. He died on August 18, 1823; his body was returned to New Milford for burial.

### *Hon. Elijah Boardman*

*March 7, 1760 -  
August 18, 1823*

**Founder of Boardman Township,  
when the land was purchased as part  
of the Connecticut Western Reserve.**



The parish of St. James held its first meetings in Boardman in 1807, and was officially incorporated as an Episcopal Society in 1809 for the 21 inhabitants of Boardman, Canfield and Poland. Among the group were Judge Thurhand Kirtland, Joseph Platt, Ethel Starr, Judson Canfield, Mrs. George Todd, and John Hitchcock, the Withers, Ripley and Best families. In 1817 the Reverend Joseph Seale incorporated the parish of St. James, and was given "eight barrels of flour to be delivered before the snow comes" for establishing the parish.

Henry Mason Boardman, son of Elijah, came to Boardman in 1819, and being a man of strong faith saw a need for a church in the new territory. Henry donated the land and money for the construction of the Church, which began in 1827. He drew with his own team of horses much of the timber used in the building of St. James, and contributed \$500 worth of materials.

The Church was consecrated on Sunday, August 23, 1828, by Philander Chase, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio. The first pastor of the Church was Marcus Tullius Cicero Wing, who was called from a

teaching position at Kenyon College in 1829, and was paid \$400, per year. The Church was originally located on the East side of State Route 7, {Market Street} and approximately a quarter mile South of U.S. Route 224.



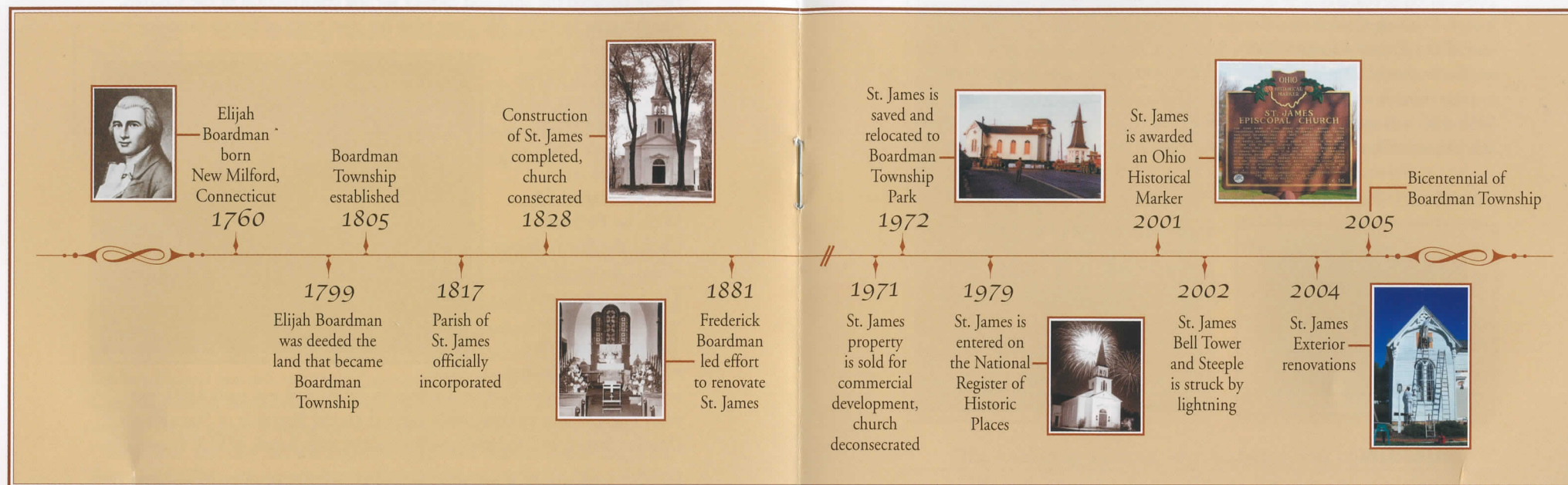
In 1881 Frederick A. Boardman, son of Henry, led an effort to renovate the Church at a cost of approximately \$3,000. The belfry and steeple were added, as well as the cruciform wings on each side at the rear. The chancel was remodeled to accommodate the Elijah and Mary Anna Boardman memorial stained glass window located above the altar and a baptismal font. These items were brought from the Episcopal Church in New Milford, Connecticut, the hometown of Elijah and Mary Anna, by oxcart. The remaining six stained glass windows were also installed during the restoration.

## Preserving History - 1971

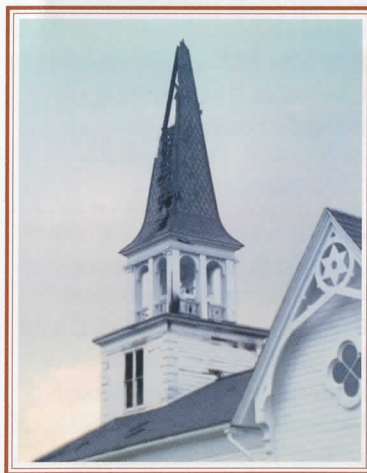
In 1971 the area adjacent to St. James was rapidly becoming highly commercialized due to the development of the Southern Park Mall. The congregation of St. James decided to build a new church on Glenwood Avenue; on Sunday, March 28, 1971, the last service was held. The property was sold and St. James was deconsecrated. St. James was slated for demolition in 1972, to make room for additional development. Fortunately, through the efforts of Thomas C. and Miriam Masters, Fred and Phyllis Wilkie, the Boardman Historical Society, Fenton Meredith and the Rotary Club of Boardman, a community-wide effort was initiated to save St. James, and over \$32,000, was raised in 30 days to have it relocated to Boardman Township Park. On Tuesday, January 11, 1972, St. James was moved to the Park and renamed St. James Meeting House.



# St. James: A Connection to the Past, Hope for the Future



## Lightning Strike - 2002



During a severe thunderstorm on August 24, 2002, at approximately 3 AM, lightning struck the bell tower of St. James. As flames started to spread through the belfry and steeple, a passerby traveling on U.S. 224, noticed the fire and called 911. Within minutes the Boardman Township Fire Department arrived on the scene and managed to contain the fire to just the bell tower; thereby, saving St. James from total destruction. The fire completely destroyed the steeple and severely damaged the bell tower and belfry, while the interior suffered major water and smoke damage. In an effort not to compromise the historical significance of the structure, all the destroyed and damaged materials were replicated in order to restore St. James to its original condition. The cost of repairing the damage was \$228,000.

## Restoration 2004

Over the years, time and the elements had taken their toll on the exterior of the structure. There was an excessive buildup of lead based paint, which was preventing new applications of paint from adhering to the structure, and had caused severe checking and cracking of the existing paint over a considerable portion of the exterior. Additionally, there were large amounts of trim pieces, moldings and siding material that had deteriorated over the years. Therefore, plans were made to restore the exterior in time for the Bicentennial of Boardman in the year 2005. The Park District employed the services of The 4M Company, an architectural firm with experience in historical preservation, to develop plans and specifications for the renovation project. Again, with a commitment not to compromise the historical value of St. James, the scope of the work called for all materials to be replicated to the original specifications. The Project also included the installation of architecturally correct storm windows over the stained glass windows, and the restoration of the masonry for the side entrance porches. The most costly aspect of the Project was the removal and disposal of the lead based paint that had accumulated over the years. Fortunately, the Pittsburgh Paint & Glass Company had recently developed a paint product, named "Timeless" that eliminated the need to completely remove the existing lead based paint from the structure; thereby, dramatically reducing the



scope of work and cost of the Project. With the goal of completing the restoration for the Bicentennial year, the Park District, on August 24, 2004, hired Brock Builders & Associates for the carpentry work and Joseph Painting Contractors for the painting of the structure. The total cost of the Project was \$192,000. Similar to the community-wide effort to save St. James from demolition in 1972, a capital campaign was initiated to raise monies to help defray the cost of the restoration project. Over \$138,000, was raised not only to restore, but most importantly, to preserve this historical landmark for future generations of our Community.

### National Register of Historic Places



St. James Meeting House was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, United States Department of the Interior. St. James is the only building or site in Boardman Township to be so designated.

### Architecture

*"St. James is an abundant treasury of architectural triumphs – the triumphs of our founder's efforts to create here, on what was then the sparsely settled western frontier; a worthy and inspiring house of worship – A church which remains today a living testimonial to the good taste, fine sense of design, and infinite patience with smallest detail, the most difficult construction, which our ancestors possessed."*

- W. Fenton Meredith

The architecture of St. James is of the traditional Cruciform plan and is styled after the colonial churches of New England. The craftsmanship and beauty of St. James is found in the following architectural features: the separately defined yet integrated bell tower, the repeated classic lines of the roof and moldings to accentuate the entrance, the paladin arched windows above the entrance matching, on a diminished scale, the three stained glass windows over the altar, the rusticated trim on the corners of the bell tower {a rarity only found on the finest buildings of colonial America}, the classic scrolled finials at the top of the eight columns supporting the steeple, and the gracefully soaring steeple with its concave corners. The top of the steeple is approximately 74-feet above the ground and is topped by a 4-foot metal cross.



The interior features the Victorian stained glass window over the altar, consisting of three tall, slender round-arched openings. It is inscribed as a memorial to Elijah and Mary Anna Boardman. The ceiling over the nave is a continuous Gothic vault, with a flat ceiling over the side aisles. Keystone motifs atop the arched moldings over the side stained glass windows and alcoves are also a prominent architectural feature. The division of the side windows into two vertical panels accentuates the feeling of height and loftiness and enables each panel to form a perfect Gothic arch within the rounded crown of the main frame. All the pews and interior trim are original.

*"Yes, within as without, this St. James, this church of the Boardmans, speaks to all ages of the creative spirit, of the sense of harmony and beauty which these founding fathers expressed here to bear witness to their heritage and to be our heritage for the future."*

- W. Fenton Meredith



Over 120 years ago, Frederick Boardman in a letter to his aunt wrote –

*"my wish is if we do anything with the old church let us do it well and thoroughly that it may prove lasting as to time and benefit."*



## Historical Village

The Park purchased the **Beardsley-Walter-Diehm House** (not pictured) and its adjoining 5 acres in 1982. Named for its builder and major tenants, the house was built circa 1828 by Josiah Beardsley.

The Walter family bought the home in 1846 and held it until 1945. During the 1920's major portions of the land were sold in three parcels. The remaining 123 acres were sold to the Federal Subsistence Homestead Corporation in 1935. Seventy-two of those acres later became Boardman Township Park.

The home's last owners were Edgar and Maude Diehm. Mr. Diehm, a Brethren preacher, South High School teacher and County Court Judge, often held court on the home's porch. The family sold the property to the Park in 1982.

The **Oswald Detchon House** (pictured) was moved to the Park from its location at the N.E. corner of U.S. 224 and Southern Blvd. in 1985.

Built between 1840 and 1870, the home was occupied by Oswald Detchon, a descendant of one of Boardman's first settlers. The home is a museum for the Boardman Historical Society.



The **Schiller-Chuey Summer Kitchen** was given to the Park by Dr. Carl Chuey in 1985. It was built on the Schiller family farm in New Springfield.

Originally the structure housed a brick oven, which was used for baking in the summertime to spare the main house from the excess heat. The herb gardens that surround the kitchen are maintained by the Holborn Herb Growers Guild.

*St. James Meeting House  
Located in Boardman Park  
For more information or reservations:  
(330)726-8105  
[www.boardmanpark.com](http://www.boardmanpark.com)*