

*A Walking Tour  
Of  
Arcanum, Ohio*



The Society was founded in March of 2004 and is comprised of members who share a common interest of "Connecting the Present, to the Past."

Welcome to the Arcanum Wayne Trail Historical Society, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, interpreting and disseminating the history of Southern Darke County and the Village of Arcanum located in Southwestern Ohio.



The Arcanum Wayne Trail Historical Society  
123 W. George St. Arcanum, Ohio 45304  
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Usually open "First Saturday Morning of the Month"  
including Reference Library.

Phone 937-548-6556 for facility rentals. See our web site  
for Programs, Events and Complete list of contacts.



## History of Arcanum

The village was founded in 1849 by pioneer William Gunder and wife Nancy Rice Gunder and incorporated in 1858. Arcanum means secret...hidden. Named for the impenetrable swamp and heavily wooded area it once was.

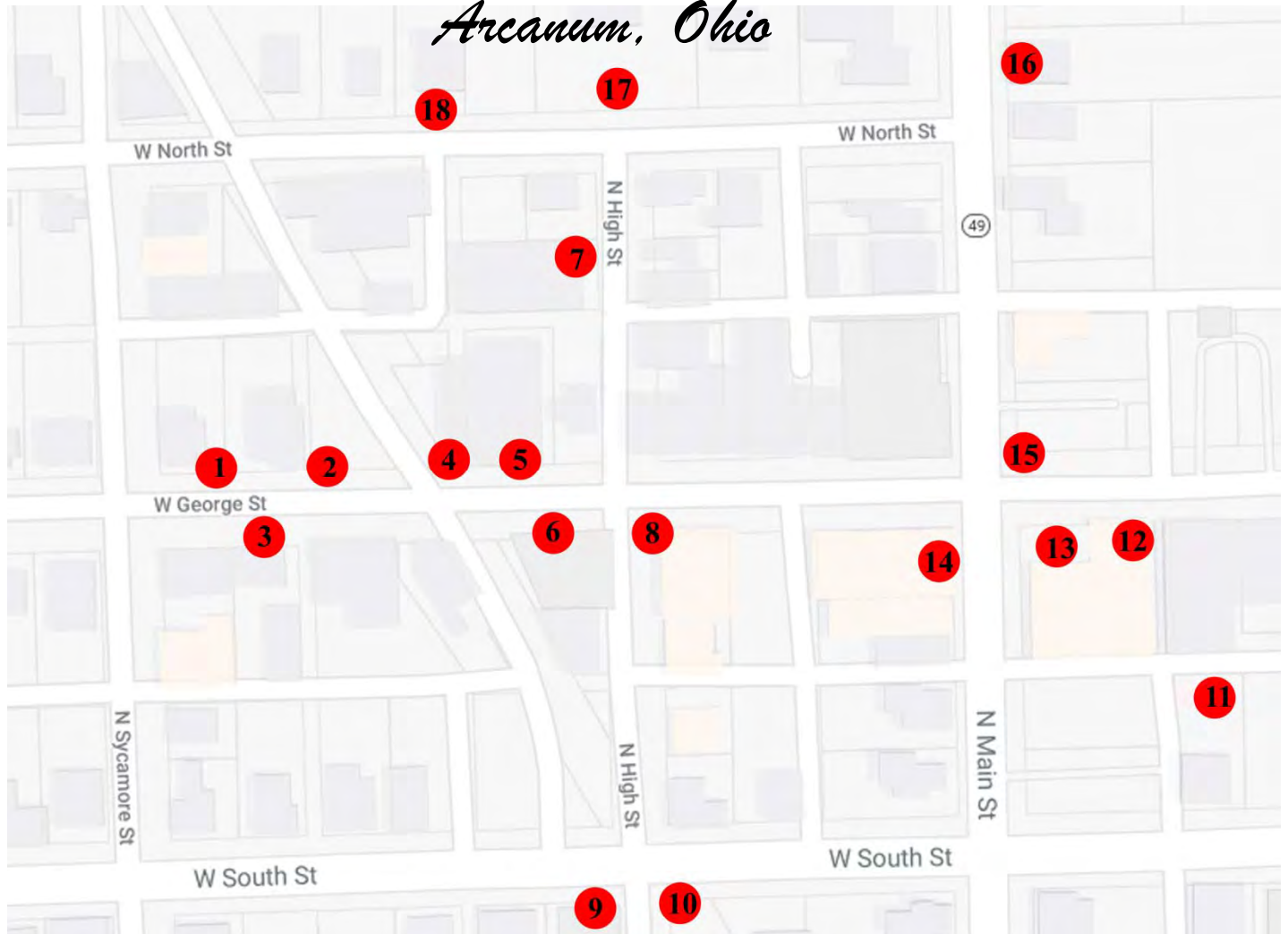
After first erecting a log cabin in Twin Township and later Ft. Jefferson, the Gunders moved back into their enlarged cabin. After purchasing more land parcels they moved to what is known as Arcanum today. There they erected a three room log house with a loft.

Back in the 1850's the growing town had flour mills, saw mills, railroads, groceries, carriage shops, blacksmiths, milliners, hotels, and brick kilns. The town was booming with the building of new homes and businesses. Some of these older buildings and homes still remain today...as a piece of history.

Today our town is friendly and hardworking citizens who have strong community ties and have family legacies that go back to some of the early settlers of the area.

For detailed descriptions, please read "The Secret Town" by William Gunder.

# Arcanum, Ohio



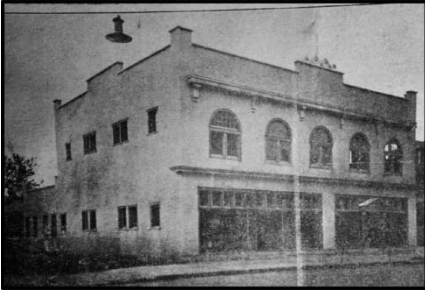
1. 123 W. George St. - The Louis Deitrich Saloon

The Louis Deitrich Saloon was erected in 1894. As with many of the buildings in Arcanum, it has housed numerous different businesses, most notably known as Beck Hotel as well as the Wayne Trail Grange. In May of 1963 the Wayne Trail Grange took over the property. The AWTHS bought the property from the Grange in 2004. Since then the society has restored the house thru community effort and offers programs, events, and a research library.



2. 113 W. George St.- The Train Depot

This was site of the Dayton & Union City (D & U) railroad depot from 1877 to 1918, at which point it consolidated with the Big Four. The train brought passengers, freight and goods into and out of Arcanum. The route came from Dayton through Verona, Gordon, Arcanum and on to Greenville and Union City. Some services ended in 1949, but trains continued to use the route until 1986. The depot site was donated to the AWTHS and is currently the Veterans Park.



### 3. 114-116 W. George St. - The St. Nicholas Hotel

In 1860 this building was known as the St. Nicholas Hotel; out of town guests could get off the train, cross the street and stay at the hotel. It was later known as the Commercial House at one time it did serve meals. We know this because according to a 1916 newspaper article "The Smith's treated their employees to Christmas dinner at the hotel". Over the years this location was also a grocery, department store, funeral home and the home of the Arcanum Times Newspaper and later, The Early Bird.



### 4. 111 W. George St. - The Flat Iron

William Gunder was the original lot owner of The Flat Iron building, purchasing the lot in 1851. The building was constructed in 1865; its unique shape, like a flat iron, is the reason behind the structure's name. It was one of the earliest buildings in Arcanum, and has been many businesses through its long period in Arcanum's history. At one time it was a shoe store, and most recently a flower shop known as the Rose Post.



### 5. 105-109 W. George St. – Smith's General Store

The first building of the John Smith Co. General Store was built in 1851, erected at the far east end of the current building. Later, the other two sections were built. The store was originally a general store, then later a grocery, home goods, family and men's clothing store. This was also the home of Arcanum's first post office in 1852, where John Smith was the first postmaster, as well as Arcanum's first bank. The upstairs of the building was open until the depression and housed Santa-land, toys, rugs, linoleum, and curtain rods. By the late 1800's, Smith's was the largest millinery store in Darke County, with five employed people to make hats on the second floor. The store remained in the Smith family until JoAnne Hill (great granddaughter of John Smith) sold it in 1995.



### 6. 102-110 W. George St. - The Kepner Block

The Kepner Block was a large, three-story brick building started in 1873. It originally housed a hardware store and a druggist on the first floor. The second and third floors were outfitted for use as meeting halls. In 1906 the building was purchased by William Dull and became known as the Dull Block. The Dreamland Theatre (later becoming the Ritz Theatre) was located here until 1953. The Chancellor Brothers operated the theatre and were also photographers, taking pictures of Arcanum in the early 1900's. The movie projector from the Dreamland was donated to the AWTHS, as well as some of the Chancellor Brothers slides. Toops Bakery is another delicious memory, located at the west end of the building. Many area brides bought their wedding cakes from here up thru the 1970's. The building is now the home to Tom Wetzel's antique and collectible store known as The Olde Nostalgia Shoppe.





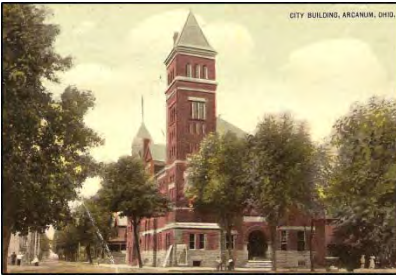
7. 110 N. High St. - Lytle's Garage

In 1880 this building was the City Hall and fire department, with the city purchasing their first fire engine in 1885. Later this building saw use as a livery, a farm implement dealer and Lytle's Garage and Ford Sales. In later years the Arcanum sixth grade, the Vocational Agriculture class, and the Industrial Arts class made use of the building.



8. 20-24 W. George St. - Farmers National Bank

In 1906 the Farmers National Bank was built. The bank was known for the large clock which chimed every 15 minutes on the hour and the huge vault inside. Today it is known as 24 W. George and is the Belle Fiole Tanning and Spa. Prior to the bank, this site was home to Koehler's Meat Market, which was moved in 1906 to 5 W. George St. (later the site of Fox Pharmacy) as well as the Corner Grocery, which was moved in 1906 to 11 W. George St. (which is currently Sink's Jeweler.)



9. 102-104 W. South St. – Old City Hall

This is the site of the City Hall and Twin Township Building. New construction began in 1889 and was completed in 1891. The Mayor's offices, Township offices, jail and fire department were on the first floor. The Opera House and other organizations used the second floor. Many events were held in this building, including graduations and the Farmers Institute until the new school was built in 1924 on North Main.



10. 7-101 S. High St. - Blevins Popcorn

This corner triangle lot held a tobacco warehouse from 1897 to 1942. Tobacco was a big cash crop in the area and Arcanum had numerous warehouses. In 1948 Blevins Popcorn purchased the Ohio Popcorn Company and began operations at this site, an area known as "Popcorn Square". In 1962 operations moved to Pop-Rite Lane. Notice the large silos in the photo. Today very few original buildings remain in this section. A storage facility as well as Warner's Insurance office sits in this approximate location.



11. 110 E. South St. - First Two Story School House

In 1876 the first two story school was built in Arcanum, with 4 rooms on each floor. It replaced the first school house in Arcanum, a small brick building which stood across from the 110 E. South. In the course of time plans developed for the building of the "new school" on North Main Street. In 1925 the south school property was sold to the Knights Of Pythias. From this point the building was divided in two halves and had two addresses. In the 1960's it was Bailey Motors. In 1986 Candice and Ken Farst purchased the building and began restoration, removing the non-original walls and tons of debris. The Farsts opened their retail store, Owl Discount, in 1987. In 1992 the Arcanum tornado swept through, extensively damaging the west side of the building. The decision was made to keep the remaining side of the building and the west hallway wall was bricked as an exterior wall.



12. 12 E. George St. - Taylor & Strader Carriage Mfg.

From 1880 thru 1917 this building was a livery, horse stable, and carriage and buggy manufacturer. Buggies were stored on the second floor. In 1941 the Troutwines bought the property and remain the owners, today using it for auto painting, detailing and storage.



13. 9 N. Main St. - Troutwines

The house was erected in 1875 for John Smith (owner of Smith's General Store) and his second wife and family. In 1927 it became the Troutwine Auto Service Company. The first cars they sold were Oakland and Pontiacs. In 1932 Chevrolet was added followed shortly after by Buick. In 1941 there was a renovation of the old house for the Troutwine business. The property has remained in the Troutwine family for four generations. The house contains several interesting features including the spiral staircase from the first to the third floor and the box rain-gutters which were used to bring water to a tank on the second floor, from which point it was distributed to the rest of the house.



14. 6 N. Main - Traction line depot

The early 1900's building served as the traction line depot and substation thru 1925. The traction car route ran from Dayton thru Ithaca into Arcanum where it followed Rt. 49 into Jaysville, Greenville and then Union City. Many people rode the line to school and different parts of the county, as well as into Dayton. Later it was the bus station. Marj Heyduck who wrote her column, "Third and Main" for the Dayton Journal Herald, rode the bus to Dayton after she enjoyed a cup of coffee at the Main Street Restaurant on the corner by the bus station. Kincaid Kleeners was located here from 1953 -1969.



15. 1 E. George St. - Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF)

The IOOF building was dedicated on December 28, 1899. Before building the IOOF building the City Hotel building first had to be moved. In 1975-1976 the IOOF building was razed and Troutwine dealership's truck lot was established which is at the present location today.



16. 207 N. Main St. – The City Hotel

The City Hotel building started out life as the California House Hotel at 1 E. George St. in 1868. But in 1891 its name was changed to the International Hotel and in 1895 to the City Hotel. The hotel was moved in 1899 to 207 N. Main St. to make way for the new IOOF building. Today the old hotel building is a private residence.

17. 101 W. North St. - The Ivester House



Born in Pennsylvania in 1821, George Ivester was a blacksmith, farmer and miller who settled in Darke County in 1854. He was married to Rebecca Davis and they had six children. In 1874 George Ivester began construction of a large and magnificent Victorian style mansion in the village of Arcanum, which was completed in 1875. Its pleasant grounds and beautiful surroundings made it the most desirable place in the village. In 1927 the Ivester House was sold, becoming the Ivy-Ester Tavern. In 1963 the building was sold to the Arcanum Public Library. To this day it continues as the library, with renovations and a two story addition. The complete story is available for purchase in the "Arcanum Chronicles" by William Gunder.



18. 105 North St. - Founder of Arcanum lot

This is the site of the log house built in 1833 by the founder of Arcanum, William and Nancy (Rice) Gunder. Mr. Gunder purchased several other large plots of land in and around Arcanum. We learn of the Gunder family history through the late William (Bill) Gunder's book, "The Secret Town". Bill Gunder was the great-grandson of founder William Gunder. While the log home is gone, the lot returned to the ownership of the Gunder family in the late 1960's when Marion and Emma Alice Gunder purchased the little home. Marion was the brother of Bill Gunder.

The sources used to create this document are "Arcanum, Ohio Business History" book by Anita Short and "The Secret Town" by William Gunder.