



# The Lakewood Historical Society

established 1952

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## LITTLE LADY, LOTS OF ZING

By Marilyn Butcher

"Little Lady, Lots of Zing" was the headline for an article in The Cleveland Press in 1968 about Margaret Manor Butler, founder of the Lakewood Historical Society. This was an apt description of the woman who not only founded but also directed the museum and the Society until her death in 1971. This year's (2002) 50th year anniversary celebration would not be complete without a tribute to Margaret Butler. Margaret was born in Cleveland, Ohio on March 1, 1898. She attended Smith College during 1918 through 1921. She was married at Canal Fulton on June 21, 1930 to Clyde Butler. She lived with her husband Clyde from 1930 to 1950 in Lakewood at 1063 Rosalie. In 1950 they moved to 15323 Edgewater, then to 14923 Edgewater until she died on October 2, 1971. Margaret and Clyde had two sons Gerald and James.

Margaret's employment history is quite diversified. She worked for Ohio Bell Telephone Company from 1921-1928. Then for six years she was an associate in the Education Department of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. She was a substitute teacher for the Lakewood Schools from 1947 through 1950. Margaret was director and curator of the Lakewood Historical Society from 1952 to 1971. She taught creative writing at Parma High School from 1962 through 1964. Then in her "spare" time she served as secretary-treasurer of her husband's company, Butler Air Survey Company, from 1930 through 1971.

Writing was a large part of Margaret life. She wrote *The Lakewood Story* in 1949, a history of Lakewood College Club's 40 Years [1926-1966], *Romance in Lakewood Streets* in 1965 and *A Pictorial History of the Western Reserve from 1796-1860* in 1963. For the latter publication, she won the first American Award given by the National League of Pen Women of America.

In 1942 Margaret took a memorable walk. With her husband in the Air Force and gas rationing in effect, she got her preschool children out every day and walked. She walked the streets of Lakewood. One day she noticed the house at the corner of St. Charles and Detroit. It was old fashioned, made of stone, and looked interesting. She began research on the house and found it was one of the last remaining homes of early settlers of Lakewood. Ten years later in 1952, Margaret heard the stone house was going to be torn down to make room for an office building. Since it was the last stone house in the area, she was very determined and felt a personal responsibility to save it. Stephen Babin, the owner, agreed to donate the stone house to be used as a museum if it could be moved by Oct. 15, 1952. This momentous decision may have been influenced somewhat when Margaret purchased a fur coat from Mr. Babin.

Margaret could not afford to buy the house and certainly couldn't afford to move it. It had no place to go. She went to the city fathers and they gave permission to place it in Lakewood Park. The lowest moving estimate was \$13,500. City Council would provide \$10,000 but the house would be lost if they didn't act quickly. To raise the balance of funds, Margaret borrowed money on her own house and solicited funds from the community. The house was moved to its current location in Lakewood Park as a result of the determination of this little lady.

In September 1952, the Lakewood Historical Society was formed under the direction of Margaret Manor Butler. Her title, curator, included many demands of her time. In 1970, she wrote a letter to Don Bryant, President of the Society, and to members of the Board of Trustees. She stated with amazement that the Society had grown to be a major organization involving many executive duties. Her activities included working with the LHS president,

Program committee, treasurer, membership chairman and planning publicity and acquisitions for the museum. She also handled all communications of the society and supervised the Junior Women's Board organized in 1964 and other details too numerous to relate. At this time her title went from curator to director of the Museum.

As many members of the Society remember, Margaret was involved in everything. She was adamant about the proper hostessing by the Junior Board. There was no embellishment of the scripted tour of the house. She called any member of the Society whose dues were in arrears. She supervised the house and contents related to cleaning, installations, repairs and inventory. Margaret was always on the look out for new members and volunteers and had a job ready for any new talent.

Howard Preston wrote a description of Mrs. Butler's spirit in an article. The telephone company was called to the museum to install a telephone line for administrative purposes. At first the installers said it couldn't be done because the house was too far away from the pole, etc. Margaret pointed out a telephone in the nearby "skate house" and suggested they tie in with that. The installers went to work and came to another stalemate. Did you ever try to drill an opening in a stone wall? The next plan was to put it where the water line goes in. Bad news, there was no water line in the 130-year-old house. With Margaret urging them to further efforts the installers were able to get in to a shallow crawl space and found a feed in for the electricity and got a telephone wire in the building. The installers joked about going 130 years without a telephone. However, if it were not for Margaret Manor Butler's determination, there would not have been a Stone House, an herb garden, or a museum, or the modern conveniences needed for operating a successful Historical Society.

Margaret Butler not only dedicated herself to the Lakewood Historical Society, but also was a wife to Clyde and devoted mother to sons Jerry and James. Clyde was an aerial photographer with his own business. Gerald was a teacher, art dealer and historian, who passed way in 1988. James was a full professor at Harvard and has many other accomplishments.

Anyone who knew Margaret Manor Butler was familiar with her determination and drive to preserve the cultural heritage of Lakewood. She coerced volunteers for

contributions of time, money and labor and pitched in right beside them going full speed ahead. She is a woman to be greatly admired and the citizens of Lakewood and the Western Reserve have been honored to receive the contributions of this indomitable "little lady with lots of zing".

#### Books By Margaret Manor Butler:

The Lakewood Story by Margaret Manor Butler with a foreword by John Lewis Shissler.

Published in New York by Stratford House, 1949 (271p., illus., maps)

Romance in Lakewood Streets by Margaret Manor Butler. Published in Cleveland by W. Feather Co., 1962 (47 p., illus.)

A Pictorial History of the Western Reserve 1796-1860 by Margaret Manor Butler.

Published in Cleveland by the Early Settlers Association of the Western Reserve, 1963. (155 p., illus., ports., maps., facsim.)

Lakewood College Club's Forty Years, 1926-1966 by Margaret Manor Butler.

Published in Lakewood by the Lakewood College Club, 1966. (61 p., illus., ports.)