



## Frazees House



Photo by Mark Slater

Overlooking the Ohio & Erie Canal in Valley View, Ohio stands a two-story Federal-style structure that holds, within its handmade bricks and hand-hewn beams, stories of the dreams and traditions of the valley's early settlers. Cuyahoga Valley National Park preserves this historic structure and invites you to gaze through streaked windows, peer into narrow closets, and touch the once hot fireplaces of the Frazees House. Perhaps in doing so you will better understand the adaptability, ingenuity, and experiences of those who traveled to this western frontier seeking the American dream.

### Go West

The American dream of new land has led generation after generation to the ever-expanding frontier. The Cuyahoga Valley was that frontier in the early 1800s. Settlers like the Frazees found the valley a challenging place to live. Dense forest needed to be cleared, houses built, and crops planted. Steven and Mehitable Frazees took the challenge when they purchased 190 acres of Cuyahoga Valley farmland in 1816. Why leave

a property in Poland, Ohio that had tripled in value over a 12 year period, call a log cabin home, and risk traveling with four young children into a sparsely populated valley?

Imagine traveling to an area where you had to provide everything for yourself. New settlers had no grocery stores, malls, or fast food restaurants to purchase the items they needed to survive.

### Dream House



Painting by Florian K. Lawton

What does your dream house look like? If you lived here in the 1820s, it might have been similar to the Frazees House, a two-story brick structure with a large kitchen and spacious rooms for a growing family. One of the first

brick structures in the valley, its impressive façade indicates that the Frazees were doing well for themselves. This Federal-style architecture was dominant in the eastern United States from 1780-1820, but declining in popularity when the Frazees built their home around 1825. Why build an out-of-style home? Perhaps the builder was familiar with the style, or maybe Mehitable remembered it from her New Hampshire childhood house.

Federal-style buildings were generally square or rectangular, brick or frame, two or three-stories high, and topped with a gabled roof. Federal-style buildings also exhibit repeated patterns and delicate lines, creating a sense of balance. This can be seen in the arrangement of windows, floors, fireplaces, and built-in cabinets.

---

## This Is Different

The traditional building materials and professional architects found in New Hampshire were scarce in the Cuyahoga Valley. The result was a vernacular structure, one made using local building materials and builders not schooled in formal architectural traditions. These traits can be seen in the lack of highly decorative elements and the use of bricks crafted from the clay of their own backyard, rather than an eastern factory. During construction the house began to settle. The Frazees adapted by cutting windows and doorframes to fit the structure. The result was a home with unique angles that can be seen still today.



NPS Photo

---

## The Ohio & Erie Canal

How could the Frazees afford such an impressive home?

Stephen Frazee sued the State of Ohio when the Ohio & Erie Canal cut his property in two. Some believe that Stephen used his settlement from the suit, \$130, to pay for the construction of his brick house.

The canal benefited the valley's residents in other ways. This continuous 308-mile canal would provide a water link between the Atlantic seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico, opening the area's markets to the nation and the globe. Canal boats would carry goods in



NPS Photo

from the east coast and provide farmers like the Frazees a market for their crops. In the midst of the canal's construction, the Frazees would use the resources of the valley to build their dream home.

---

## Passing It Down

Seven Frazee children were raised in this home, considered quite a large house in the 1800s. The family sold it to John and Elizabeth Hynton for \$3,500 in 1861, one year after Mehitable's death. The house would change hands twice more before its final resident, Agnes Foote, worked with the Valley View

Historical Society to save the building until 1977 when it was incorporated into the boundaries of the newly formed Cuyahoga Valley National Park. It was her hope that this historic structure, now on the National Register of Historic Places, would be preserved for this and future generations to enjoy.

---

## Come and Visit

The National Park Service invites you to tour the Frazee house on summer weekends, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Explore the exhibits that tell the story of the structure and Frazee family. Experience a historic structure that preserves the stories of the past. Whatever your experience, the National Park Service hopes that you will return to your home with a better understanding of the adaptability, ingenuity, and experiences of the valley's early settlers.

Frazee House is located at 7733 Canal Road in Valley View about 3 miles south of Rockside Road.

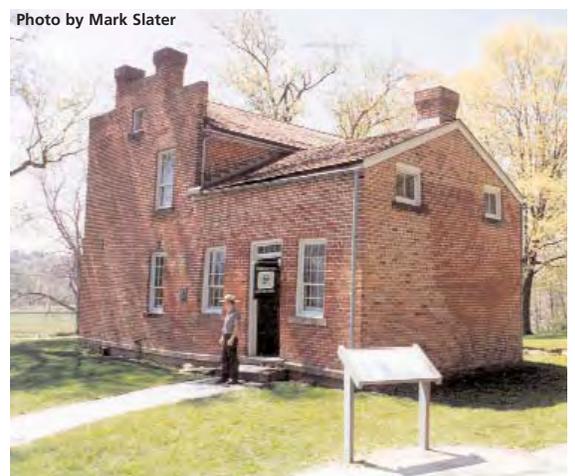


Photo by Mark Slater

15610 Vaughn Road  
Brecksville, Ohio 44141  
(216) 524-1497 or (800) 445-9667  
[www.nps.gov/cuva](http://www.nps.gov/cuva) or [www.dayinthevalley.com](http://www.dayinthevalley.com)



**Cuyahoga Valley  
National Park**