



Frazee House

Overlooking the Ohio & Erie Canal in Valley View, Ohio stands a two-story Federal-style building that holds within its handmade bricks and hand-hewn beams stories of the valley's early white 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 Frazee House.

Perhaps in doing so you will better understand the adaptability, ingenuity, and experiences of those who lived in what was then America's western frontier.



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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. The story of the Frazee House tells of one family's success at wilderness' edge.

Steven and Mehitable Frazee took the challenge of frontier life when they purchased 190 acres of Cuyahoga Valley farmland in 1816. They left property in Poland,

Ohio that had tripled in value over a 12-year period and risked traveling with four young children. In the early years, they provided almost everything for themselves, cleared dense forests for farmland, and lived austere in a log cabin. Hard work paid off. Artifacts found by archeologists around their later brick house, including nice tableware, reflect the economic prosperity that they eventually achieved.



Dream House



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What does your dream house look like? If you lived here in the 1820s, it might have been similar to the Frazee 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 and in Ohio from 1790 - 1840. When the Frazees built their home around 1825, were they following frontier fashions that lagged behind the East or was Mehitable just remembering 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. They 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 door frames to fit the structure. The result was a home with unique angles that can still be seen today.



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. His settlement from the suit, \$130, may have been used to pay for the construction of his brick house.

The canal benefited the valley's residents in other ways. This continuous 308-mile waterway provided a link between the Atlantic seaboard and the Gulf of Mexico, opening the local markets to the nation and the world. Canal boats would carry goods in from the East Coast and provide farmers like the Frazees a market for their crops. The Frazees built their new house during the canal's construction. Did they already have extra canal-related income or just high hopes?



Leaving a Legacy

Seven Frazee children were raised in this home, considered quite a large house in the 1800s. An eighth died in childhood. The family sold the property to John and Elizabeth Hynton for \$3,500 in 1861, soon 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 it was incorporated into the boundaries of the newly formed Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Her hope that this structure, now on the National Register Historic Places, would be

preserved for this and future generations is now being fulfilled.

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. Also check the park's quarterly *Schedule of Events*, available at all visitor centers and www.nps.gov/cuva, or our online calendar at www.dayinthevalley.com for programs at this location. We hope you leave with a deeper understanding of life on the Ohio frontier.



**Cuyahoga Valley
National Park**

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