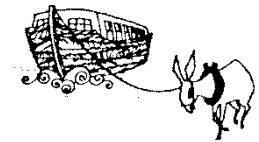


# Johnnycake Village

**Produced by: Eden Valley Enterprises  
For: The Cuyahoga Valley National  
Recreation Area  
1977 - 1979**

Johnnycake Village was first produced in 1977 for the National Park Service at The Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. As an outdoor, living history program, Johnnycake Village re-created a mythical canal town as it might have existed on the Western Reserve during the 1800's. Visitors to the Village took part in major events in the building of our country as they became involved in debates over whether or not to build a canal, helped rescue a runaway slave or celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the State of Ohio. During its three years, eight different scenarios and two Christmas programs were developed by EVE's director and 15 actors. Over 15,000 people relived history at the Village.



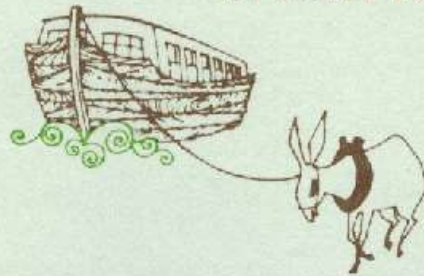
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**PRESENTS**

**JOHNNYCAKE  
VILLAGE~**

(A Canal Town Revisited)



A

LIVING HISTORY EXPERIENCE

Produced by **EDEN VALLEY  
ENTERPRISES**

PROGRAM SERIES...

June 30 to September 5, 1977

## *IN THE VILLAGE*

Welcome to Johnnycake Village !

We invite you to journey back in time to the 1820's to a mythical village that may have existed in Ohio's Western Reserve. Here you will meet and be able to talk to the people who moved from "the crowded East to the Western wilderness".

During 1820, the canal issue is the most explosive topic of the day. You may be in the village during a town meeting when heated debates erupt between villagers who are for the canal and those who are against it. Governor Ethan Allen Brown will make a visit to Johnnycake to present his views on the topic.

In 1825, the canal began. You may join the townspeople in the commencement ceremonies as they remove the first shovelful of ground. Governors Clinton, from New York, and Brown, from Ohio, Orator Thomas Ewing and canal commissioner Alfred Kelley will be on hand for the festivities.

By 1826, the canal construction is well underway. Interesting "characters" find their way into Johnnycake Village. Medicine men and bounty hunters come through town disrupting the village calm.

Finally it is 1827 and the canal is ready to open its first section between Akron and Cleveland. Join in the celebration of the opening with Alfred Kelley.

We encourage you to fully participate in these events. Express your opinion in the debate over the canal, enjoy the foot races and hay mazes, join in the celebration of the first digging and consequently, the opening of the canal ! Most importantly, get to know the people of the village – talk to them, and live with them !

Johnnycake Village will be open Thursday through Sunday afternoons from June 30th till September 4th and on the Fourth of July and Labor Day, September 5th. We hope you will visit us often !

## JOHNNYCAKE VILLAGE

### *THE SCENE*

The small canal town of Johnnycake adjacent to the Ohio and Erie Canal.

### *THE TIME*

Approximately 150 years ago.

### *TOWNSPEOPLE*

Elizabeth Mills (1802, '25, '27)	Jackie Chesney
Rebecca Schmidt (1826)	Jackie Chesney
Debra Goodson (1820-27)	Debra K. Gemind
Carole Goodson (1820, '25, '27)	Carole Geraci
Rachel Johnston (1826)	Carole Geraci
Governor Brown (1820)	John Houser
Governor Clinton (1825)	John Houser
Jacob Brown and Micheal O'Reiley (1826)	John Houser
Governor Tiffen (1827)	John Houser
Luke Mansfield (1820, '26)	Kelly Lawrence
Alfred Kelley (1825, '27)	Kelly Lawrence
Fessie Hopes (1820, '25, '27)	Sandra Helene Melton
Thomas Goodson (1820, '25, '27)	Derek Schneider
Jack Smith (1826)	Derek Schneider
Obadiah Quiqlem (1820 - 27)	Kem Schneider
Ebenezer Mills (1820, '25, '27)	Rick Simmons
Shawn Behen (1826)	Rick Simmons
Jane Merriweather (1820 - 27)	Jane Spencer
Sarah Comstock (1820 - 27)	Bette Lou Versaci
Nathaniel Goodson (1820, '27)	Richard L. Weisheimer
Thomas Ewing (1825)	Richard L. Weisheimer
William Jones (1826)	Richard L. Weisheimer
Jonathan Schmidt (1820 - 27)	Anothony Weinert

*Special Thanks To*

Dr. Mary Ann Fruth

## JOHNNYCAKE VILLAGE

*Produced for the National Park Service by*  
Eden Valley Enterprises  
6342 Sunset Drive  
Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125

Director . . . . . P. K. "Kem" Schneider, Jr.  
Production Manager . . . . . Bette Lou Versaci  
Costumer . . . . . Shirley Kovacs  
Costumer . . . . . Herb Reszka  
Production Staff . . . . . Carola Bamberger, David Bamberger  
Joseph D. Kern, Jim Lawrence  
Josephine Lawrence, Joy Lawrence

*For the National Park Service*  
*Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area*  
501 West Streetsboro Road  
Peninsula, Ohio 44264

*William C. Birdsell, Superintendent*  
*Robert F. Holmes, Management Assistant*

The National Park Service is pleased to bring this unique production of JOHNNYCAKE VILLAGE to the American public as a part of its celebration of the Ohio and Erie Canal Sesquicentennial.

The National Park idea is a legacy of our Nation, an historic outgrowth of the democratic ideals of opportunity and equality for all. A quotation from the Yellowstone Act, carved above the Park's North Portal, clearly states the intent of Congress in establishing all national parks: "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People". Today, the National Park System numbers nearly 300 natural, historical, and recreational places, touching every region of the country and nearly every chapter of United States History. These parks and the associated national landmarks preserve the diversity of the original American landscape and pay tribute to the many peoples and cultures that have shaped America and its people.

The National Park Service hopes your visit to the 19th century town of JOHNNYCAKE VILLAGE will enable you to obtain a better understanding of the people and the activities of the early settlers of the Cuyahoga Valley.

Printed: W. J. Delgado (Volunteer in Parks)  
Special Thanks to: Jane Mauk, Akland Advertising & Lithography

# Johnnycake Village's First Season

Four years in the life of the Ohio-Erie Canal were presented during the first season:

- A day in 1820 when the idea of the canal in the state of Ohio is being discussed
- July 4, 1825 - the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ohio-Erie Canal
- A day in 1826 - town life during the digging of the canal
- July 4, 1827 - The opening celebration of the Ohio-Erie Canal

During the following years,  
Johnnycake Village presented  
additional years in the life of  
the town including:

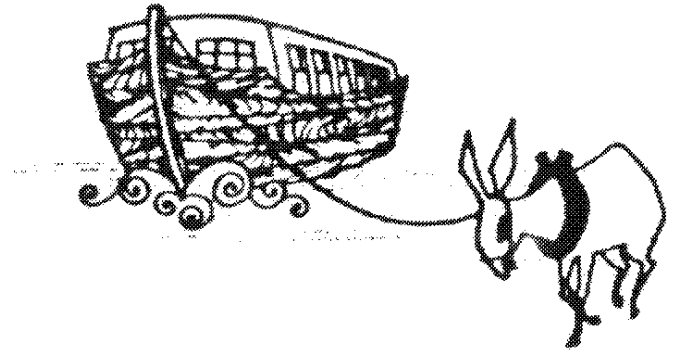
**1833: the impact of the Leonid  
Meteor Shower in the Western  
Reserve.**

**1840: William Henry Harrison's  
Campaign for President**

**1844: A run-away slave comes  
through town**



# Johnnycake Village Scenes

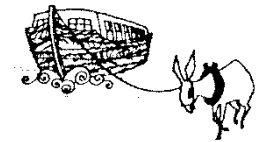




**Paul K. Schneider as  
Obadiah Quigley**

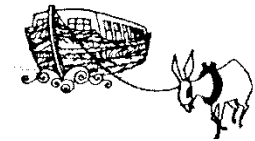
**Debra Gemind as Mrs.  
Goodson**

**Derek Schneider as  
Jack Smith**



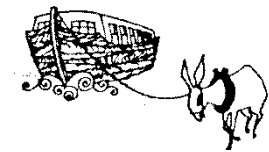


**Jackie Chesney as  
Elizabeth Mills**



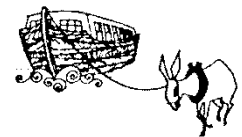


**Dennis Wemm as  
Nathaniel Goodson**



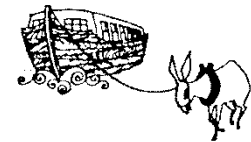


**Ken Schworm as  
Luke Mansfield**



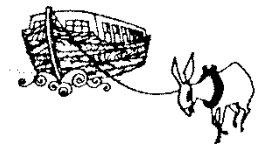


**Luke Mansfield (*Ken Schworm*) gets ready for a celebration**



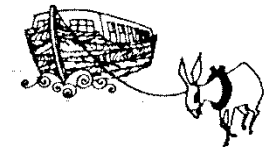


**Carole Goodson (*Carole Geraci*) makes a friend**





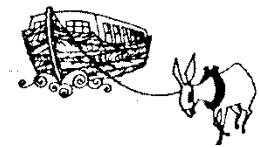
**Carole Goodson and friend  
at the General Store**





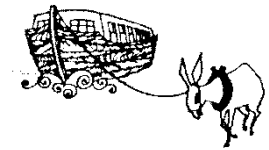


**Luke Mansfield  
(*Kelly Lawrence*)  
and Jack Smith  
(*Derek Schneider*)  
in the General  
Store**



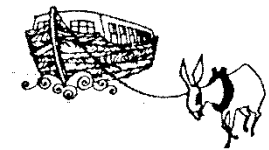


**The Villagers discuss the benefits of building the canal by their town.**



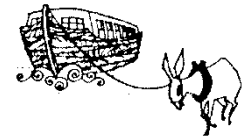


**The Villagers at  
a town meeting.**



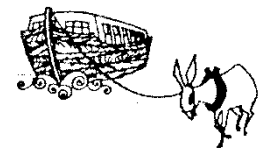


**A day in 1826 -  
The Canallers  
take a day off!  
Gamblers, Con  
Men and "Ladies  
of the Afternoon"  
come to the  
Village**



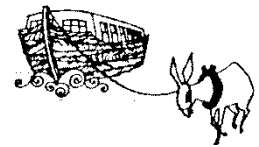


**1826 -  
The Con Men arrive!**



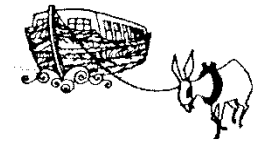


Debra Beck (*Debra Gemind*) - a "Lady Of The Afternoon" - plans her revenge on the Con Men



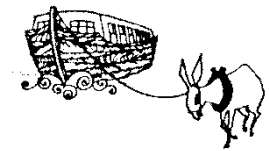


**The Con Men get  
conned by the  
Villagers!**





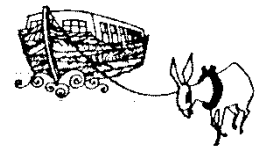
**Townspeople gather  
in front of the  
General Store**





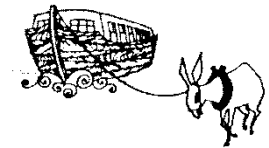


**John Houser as Jacob Brown teaches the children about Ohio's statehood**



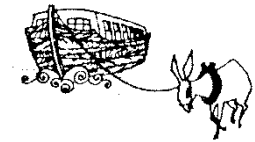


The children learn about Ohio's statehood during a Fourth of July celebration



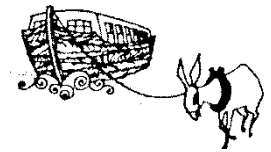


**Getting ready to  
muster during the  
Fourth of July  
Celebration**



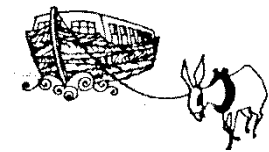


**Getting ready for  
the Flag raising on  
the Fourth of July**



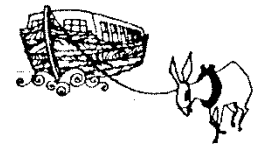


## Flag raising on the Fourth of July



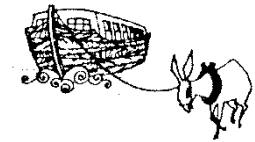


**1844: A Runaway  
Slave comes to town  
and the Villagers  
meet to discuss a  
plan**



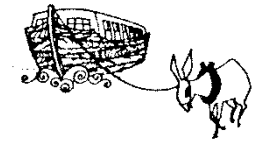


**Willie Womac  
(*Jeff Bivens*) is  
the escaped slave.**





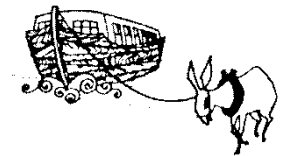
**The Ladies  
disguise the Male  
Runaway as a  
Woman and lead  
"her" out of town.**





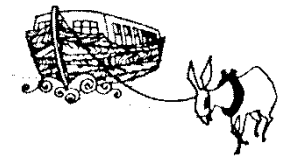


**The Ladies of the  
Village have a  
sewing bee**



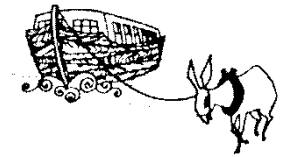


**Governor Ethan  
Allan Brown (*John  
Houser*) visits the  
town**



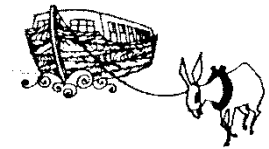


**The Ladies plan a  
reception for  
Governor Ethan  
Allan Brown**



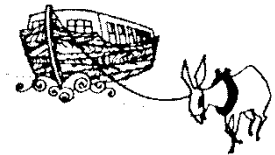
# Christmas at Johnnycake Village

The villagers celebrate with Reverend Schmidt who puts a Christmas Tree up. This is the first Christmas Tree the villagers have seen. After decorating the tree with apples, yarn dolls, and popcorn strings, they listen to the Reverend read the story of the birth of Christ and then all join hands to sing "Silent Night" together.



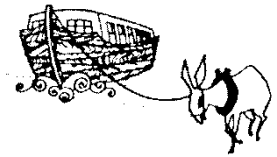


**Getting ready to  
decorate the  
Christmas Tree**



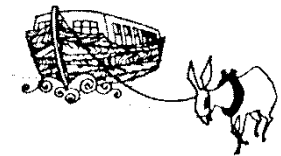


## Decorating the Christmas Tree

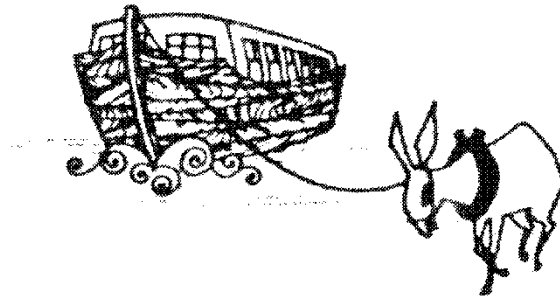




## Decorating the Christmas Tree

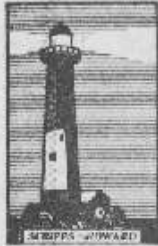


# Johnnycake Village makes the news





GIVE LIGHT AND THE PEOPLE WILL FIND THEIR OWN WAY



# The Cleveland Press

*A Scripps-Howard Newspaper*

THOMAS L. BOARDMAN, Editor    WILLIAM A. HOLCOMBE, Business Manager

OHIO'S LARGEST EVENING NEWSPAPER

Friday, Sept. 30, 1977

PAGE B 4

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### *The good old days came alive in park*

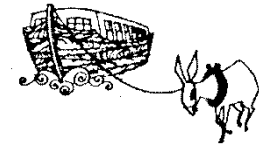
The Cuyahoga Valley National Park has really outdone itself with the opening this summer of Johnny Cake Village in Peninsula.

Johnny Cake is a recreation of a town as it might have existed in Ohio's Western Reserve during the 1820's and the building of the Ohio canal.

Reliving the opening day of the canal, with the speeches and festivities with "town people" like widower Merriweather (played by Jane Spencer) and town drunk, Obadiah Quiglem (Kern Schneider, is an experience no history book can match.

Thank you, National Park Service, for telling it like it was.

GREG CZNADEL, 13402 Terminal Ave.



## Experiment in the Woods

The farmer complains to the little boy about how difficult it is to clear his land of tree stumps. "Why don't you use a bulldozer?" asks the first-grader. The farmer pauses for a moment, then answers, "What would I want with a sleeping bull?"

It's not really a put-on. The farmer "believes" he is back in the nineteenth century, back in the Western Reserve pre-Civil War wilderness. The farmer is an actor with Eden Valley Enterprises, the group that produces "Johnnycake Village" at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

And for ninety minutes on a sunny afternoon or a midsummer evening, the troupe of over one dozen actors asks the audience to believe it, too. They invite their twentieth-century guests back in time to the small, mythical, but typical Ohio Canal town of Johnnycake Village, which stands in a clearing, down a path from the Happy Days Information Center, on Route 303 in northern Summit County. There they enact one of five scenarios depicting special events: the 1840 Presidential campaign, the formation of an antislavery society, the arrival of a meteor shower, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Ohio statehood and a wild and woolly payday.

The audience becomes part of the action as the "townspeople" draw it into a loosely structured scenario, sans script. It is improvisational theater of the most grueling sort, because when the audience enters the scene, the time frame is often disrupted.

"Are you all college students?" ask many inquiring visitors. They are politely informed that Mr. Goodson, an attorney representing the Connecticut Land Company, is the only college graduate in the small frontier town. People who persist in raising twentieth-century questions are referred to Sarah Comstock, the hotel clerk.

Sarah Comstock is a fringe character; she's in the twilight zone between the 1800s and 1970, and acts as a liaison," says Bette Lou Versaci, production manager

and the actress who portrays Comstock. "If you have questions about the production or a real problem, such as 'Where is the bathroom?', Sarah will give you real answers."

"We break down the audience's resistance in the first ten or fifteen minutes by getting them actively involved," says director and general manager Kem Schneider. "We ask the women and children to decorate the meetinghouse for the Fourth of July celebration, while we line up the men to march in the flag-raising ceremony."

Now in its third year, and its second season at Happy Days (the first season was spent in a scorching field transected by a deceptively mild-looking creek that twice flooded over), "Johnnycake Village" has entertained over 10,000 people. Admission to the village is free and there are five different story lines, so many people return often during the summer.

Preparation to greet this throng of visitors (the company has played to as little as four and as many as 500 people in one day) begins intensively in May. After selecting the actors, Schneider puts them through day-long rehearsals covering three different areas: acting techniques (improv, character building, holding the time frame), history lessons and work on the actual scenarios.

The outdoor setting creates problems for the actors. Garter snakes and dastly-longlegs inhabit the set, and the modern sounds of dirt bikes, planes and cars must be ignored.

Despite these difficulties, the show has been criticized for being too easy, too juvenile — in two short words, Mickey Mouse. Schneider and Versaci jump on these derisive words and turn them into compliments by praising Walt Disney, Disneyland and the slick, polished family entertainment practiced there.

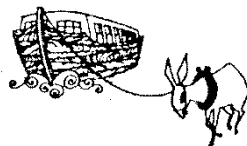
"Our purpose is to entertain and educate at the same time," says Schneider. "We treat a lot of things lightly because it's easier for the audience to cope with that. You learn more with laughter, but it doesn't make it any less important."

"We're going after the middle audience, not over the heads of the children and not below the interest of intelligent adults."

This summer a daily discussion series on Ohio history conducted by Schneider, Versaci and University of Akron professor H. Roger Grant will follow the 1 p.m. performance. During the school year, Eden Valley Enterprises offers two programs: "Meet the People: The Ohio Pioneers" and "Meet the People: Great Americans." Both programs use the "Johnnycake" technique of meeting historical characters within their own time frame and environment.

"There's no better way to learn history," says Versaci. "When I saw Thomas Jefferson's house, I wanted to see people in it."

—PAT JENKINS







PIREES

*Living history performers at Johnnycake Village assemble for a cider break at the general store.*

*(Press photo by Van Dillard)*

## Actors and audiences are reliving Canal Days

By **BARRARA WEISS**

In the midst of a thicket in Boston Twp., history is being repeated.

There, in the Cayahoga Valley National Recreation Area, is a community called Johnnycake Village. It is a mythical village but the events portrayed are based on fact.

Twelve actors and actresses dressed in costumes of the 1820's move about the village in a scenario that depicts one of four dates during Ohio's Canal Days.

Visitors to the village might be catapulted back to a day in 1826 when the building of a canal is first proposed. Or they might arrive on July 4, 1825, when the ground-breaking ceremony for the Ohio and Erie Canal is taking place.

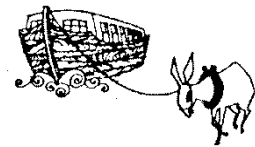
If the players are portraying a day in 1826, spectators will observe town life during the digging of the canal. A celebration of the canal's opening takes place when the date depicted is July 4, 1827.

The four performances will be rotated every Thursday through Sunday from now until Labor Day weekend. There are performances at 2 and 3:30 on each of the days, with the final enactments scheduled for Labor Day.

Because Johnnycake Village is meant to be a living history experience, the audience is encouraged to carry on a dialogue with the performers. Visitors also can participate in games of the era, such as *Duck and Drake*, *King George's Men*, *Snop*, *Rachel, Rachel* and *hay mazes*.

Currently, the outdoor drama has six sets—a meeting house, hotel, two homes, a general store and a law office. The village will expand in future years, according to the National Park Service, and eventually will have a coterie of craftsmen.

This is the sesquicentennial years of the Ohio Canal and visitors are given beautifully designed booklets that capsule the canal's history. Admission to the village is free. It is on Stanford Rd., one mile north of Boston Mills Rd.



Eden Valley continues to present living history programs as well as murder mysteries, reader's theatre programs, plays and other event programming. The company has produced special programs for a number of local organizations including The Tuscarawas Historical Society, The Lorain County Metro Parks, North Coast Harbor, The Steamship *William G. Mather*, Roscoe Village, The Great Lakes Historical Society and the Western Reserve Historical Society.

Eden Valley is a not-for-profit organization under section 501(c)(3)

Contact Information:

Website: [www.edenvalleyenterprises.org](http://www.edenvalleyenterprises.org)

Eden Valley Enterprises; 1250 East River St.; Elyria, Ohio 44035

