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### COMMENTS ABOUT GUARDIANSHIPS

**Q** A recent inquiry by **Robert B. Wall**, a member from Dover, Delaware, seeks information about **James W. Wall**, age 13, who was living in Lorain County in 1850 with the family of **John J. Kidney** b 1816 and his wife **Anna C. (Hall)** b c1820 England. It appears that this James W. could be Bob's grandfather. Family lore says that Bob's grandfather **James William Wall** "was put out on a farm to earn his keep after his father died in 1843." The Kidneys were settlers in Rockport Township by 1820 and a **John Wall** was a resident of Dover Township in the 1840 census. Bob asked about Ohio Orphans Courts for the 1840s and where a guardianship filing would be. Since the reply might be of general interest, we decided to share it in the Tracer. Mr. Wall may be reached at <rbwall1242@msn.com.

**A** Ohio does not have Orphans Courts for probate matters such as Pennsylvania and Delaware do. In Ohio in 1843, probate and guardianships would have come under the Court of Common Pleas and may be in a book of Chancery records in some counties. In 1852, Probate became a separate court and took over all probate matters in Ohio counties. Counties recorded actions in different ways, however.

Most early guardianships in Pennsylvania Orphans Court, and probably also in Ohio and other places, occurred when children were heirs to money or property, such as from a parent or grandparent. Then a guardianship proceeding took place, mainly for the purpose of naming a legal representative to guard the property. Such guardians probably had little to do with raising the children prior to modern times. In Pennsylvania Orphans Court a guardian was appointed even if a parent was living, as there had to be a responsible person of some education able to "keep accounts" and report to the court system. If a parent did not feel qualified, often a relative or local man of some repute would be appointed guardian. Although Ohio had some early guardianship records, they are the exception rather than the rule and the records location varies by county. The assets of the deceased parent or grandparent probably determined whether any court action was taken. When it did, it would be expected to be in the county of residence of the child and/or where the property was when the death occurred.

The fact is that most people of that early day, unless they owned land, had very few monetary assets and children were usually just placed with relatives after a parent died or remarried. Sometimes they were "bound out" to others and a contract/indenture may have been written to spell out the details such as length of service, board, work and/or learning a trade. Some of these early contracts have been found recorded in Lorain County in the Common Pleas Miscellaneous books (on microfilm) so that the details were a matter of record. That, of course, was not always the case. A verbal agreement was probably common, but look carefully for a relationship of some kind.