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Building & WHS News

Meetings are Back

Now that winter is behind us (hopefully) there's lots to do and talk about. Our meetings started back up in March and will continue through to the early winter.

They are the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in our building.

Coming Up:

April 19, 7:00 PM Meeting

April 29, 9:00 AM until ? Bake Sale at PFCU in Westphalia

Stay tuned for more information about exhibit & museum opening dates and other happenings!

FREE ORGAN

When the museum first opened we were offered a pump organ from the parish which had been stored in a back storage building for years.

At that time our building was pretty empty and we needed some items for display. It is unknown whether this organ was in the convent or in the school. It is a "Packard" parlor reed organ. The bellows are shot. It is our understanding that at one time a vacuum sweeper was hooked up to provide air to make it playable. If interested contact Leo at 989.587.3843. We are moving this organ out soon.

The Society is doing this because we were given the display case that was in the hall. The hall - which is being remodeled - will no longer have this case. Ironically the Society gave this display case to the hall in 1987. Now we're getting it back, which is ideal for our exhibits.

WESTPHALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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HAPPY SPRING

And With Spring Comes Garage Sales and ...

BAKE SALE

The Portland Federal Credit Union in Westphalia is graciously allowing us to have a bake sale on **Friday April 29** during the Westphalia area garage sales. The sale will be from **9:00 AM till sold out**.

All donated baked food items are welcome and greatly appreciated. They can be dropped off at the Credit Union during the sale or they may be dropped off at the home of Theresa Quartermus, 310 S. Westphalia St. They can be dropped off at Theresa's the evening before or the morning of the sale. They can be placed on her porch. Margie Wirth has agreed to coordinate the bake sale again. Thank you Margie and Theresa for helping us out.

SPORTS IN THE WESTPHALIA AREA

Our new exhibit, after a three year hiatus due to the COVID outbreak, will be about sports in the Westphalia area. It does not have to include the word "ball" to be a sport, i.e, pitching horseshoes, soap box derby, racing, tractor pulling, archery, swimming, etc.

Steve Hanses has agreed to coordinate this new exhibit. He will begin after spring break. His phone number is 989-587-6897. If you would like to contribute to this exhibit please let Steve know. We are looking for pictures, trophies, uniforms game balls etc. Please make sure that any item brought in is clean and will need to be clearly identified. Watch for updates in the church bulletin.



SPRINGTIME MEANS SHEEP

Years ago many local farmers raised sheep. When God created these animals He made them all very cute when they are babies. On the top of the list for being cute are lambs born in late winter. Bottle fed orphan lambs can turn into really adorable pets. Unfortunately, they turn into some of the dumbest farm animals when they mature. Back in the day when we still had family farms most farmers would plant some cash crops, have some cows, hogs, chickens and sheep. About the only sheep left in the area now are by Charlie Silm, east of town on Price Road.

Sheep were fairly cheap to raise. They would eat just about everything and required very little grain. When sheep are pastured they need to be checked on periodically because if they get in a ditch or deep dead furrow they are not smart enough to climb back out or if they stick their head in a hole in the fence they are too dumb to back out. The pasture would also need all of the burdocks cut down so they would not get in the wool causing the owner to be docked upon shearing.

Sheep are notorious for just dying for no apparent reason. Jerome and his brother Dick Hengesbach as young boys used to take care of Vince Hengesbach's animals during the week when he used to stay in Lansing. It was during this time that Anna Hengesbach came up missing. A search party was established. Tony Arens and his dad Edwin found her decomposing body in a cornfield nearby. Jerome remembers an odor at the time but just assumed that an old ewe that had probably gone off and died somewhere in the area.

Lambs could be sold in the fall as well as the adult sheep being sheared for their wool in the spring. Sheep shearing was a lot of very hard work. There were several shearing teams in the area: Lawrence and Urban Hengesbach, Norman Thelen and his brothers, Marvin and Gene Platte and other teams.

Walt Thelen and his brother Mark took shearing lessons at Michigan State in the late 50's. The power supply would normally power 2 sets of shears with a motor, belts, pulleys and long drive shafts connected to the clippers. This was before electric clippers were widely introduced.

Marvin and Gene Platte were shearing sheep the day the church burned April 20, 1959. They felt guilty because they came to town to help remove items from the burning church and they were walking around on the altars and other parts of the church with manure all over their boots.

Wrestling the sheep to keep them in position while shearing was very hard work. The person shearing would get very dirty with the manure and oily clothes from the sheep. The only good part was their hands would be nice and soft from the lanolin in the wool. Another nasty part was making sure that no insects would hitch a ride on your clothes or yourself. Ticks loved living in a warm wool blanket during the winter months. Normally a tarp would be laid down where the sheep were sheared to catch all the wool it would then be packed into a box about 18 to 20 inches square to form a bale and tied off with a twine made of paper rather than sisal twine to avoid the sisal fibers from getting into the wool. The two prominent wool buyers in the area were Rob Platte and the Snitgen Store.

Sheep can cause many memories but not too many people who have been around them miss them enough to want them back.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FROM OUR MAY 2012
NEWSLETTER --
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!
AND WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT
WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT!

What is a future goal?

After the 175th anniversary, the Society had heard many positive remarks about the display of antiques and heirlooms the Society had gathered in Audie Cassel's shop and the Hardware Store. There is a real interest in having a museum/archive to showcase local historical items and to store written material about our community. Accomplishing this goal in the not too distant future is one of the Society's chief objectives.