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# WESTPHALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Museum News

The Museum is open for the season. There are a lot of nice displays and they are not all about P-W sports although they are very popular. It includes the Westphalia Merchants baseball team of long ago, bowling, boxing, soap box derby cars and other non-high school sports.

## WHS & Building News

### Meetings are Back

Our meetings started back up in March and will continue through to the early winter.

We are always looking for new members to keep the Historical Society alive and well. The annual dues are only \$5.00. It is a good opportunity to get better acquainted with others in our community and to keep our History going well into the future.

We meet the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 in the Museum March thru December.

**Speaking of December, the Light Parade is December 3rd this year.**

### Coming Up in our Building:

September 4, 1:00-4:00 PM

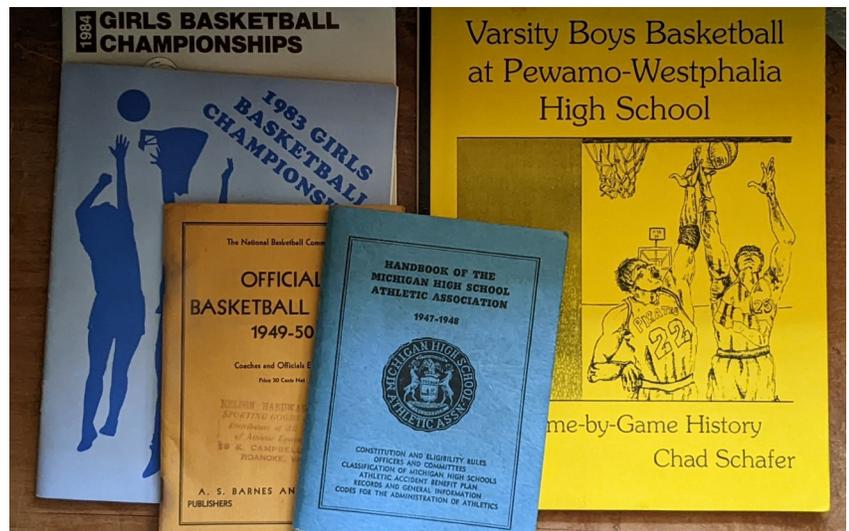
September 21, 5:00-8:00 PM

October 2, 1:00-4:00 PM

October 19, 5:00 – 8:00 PM

Find **Cemetery Walk** information at right and add that date to your calendar too!

**Bus Trip: October 11:** Sign-up Deadline is September 14 – see page 2



## CEMETERY WALK – September 18

The Cemetery Walk is coming up the 18<sup>th</sup> and will begin at 2:00 PM. The rain date is September 25<sup>th</sup>.

As in other years we are in need of golf carts and drivers. Many people who enjoy coming to this event find it difficult to walk on the grassy areas to hear the great presenters we have. Any help with golf carts is much appreciated!

We also purchased microphones and speakers for the presenters to make their presentations more hearing friendly.

This year we will feature the following people:

- Margrethe Huhn, Kloeckner Cook Naumes: She was married 3 times and was the mother of 24 children, 8 were her own.
- Leonard Thelen was a local baseball player and one of the Thelen brothers.
- Big Jim Pung was a colorful local area farmer.
- Greg and Maybelle Thelen were a local area Musical Duo.
- Rose Willems, the wife of John B. Spitzley, was a WWI Army nurse in France.

## WEDDING DANCES IN WESTPHALIA

by Judy Thelen

Those of us who married sometime in the last 60 or 70 years may have a different understanding of how to plan a "Wedding Dance" than did some of our pre-1950 ancestors. We pour over the guest list, find a venue, usually scheduled for the same day as the wedding, hire a band (or a DJ), provide refreshments, and pay the accompanying bills. Not so for some of our Westphalia and surrounding area ancestors.

From about 1910 (perhaps earlier) to about the late 1940s, some people chose to arrange a dance a few days after their wedding. They hired the venue, the band, and the refreshments, got dressed up as they did for the wedding, and invited everyone to attend; their guests paid the going fee at the door for admittance. The bride and groom kept any net profit after paying the bills. The dance was considered a local social event and people attended even if they did not know the bride or groom.

- At its 2019 wedding exhibit, the Museum displayed a poster advertising the "Spitzley-Fox Wedding Dance, Spitzley's Hall, Westphalia, Fri. May 23. Swing with "Frannie" and his Swingsters. Admission 60 cents per person" (see right).
- In some cases a brief announcement appeared in the county newspaper, "Wedding Dance – The Thelen-Werner wedding dance will be at Spitzley's Hall, Tuesday, Jul 12, 1921. Everybody welcome." (*St. Johns News*, Jul 7, 1921).
- "Wedding Dance - The VanElls-Fernholz wedding dance will be held at the Fowler opera house Wednesday night, April 25. Platte's orchestra. Everyone invited.—(Adv.) 7-lp" (*Clinton County Republican*, Apr. 19, 1923).

Evelyn Weiland remembers that the band was often the Swingsters, a 7-piece group, with vocalist Dolores Platte Fedewa. There was some square dancing but mostly popular songs. She also remembered this style of "Wedding Dance" ending about 1948, although it didn't occur as frequently during the war. Some wedding dances were also postponed during the flu pandemic – Herman Rademacher and Josephine Schaefer married Nov. 21, 1918, but had their wedding dance on Jan. 7, 1919.

To see more Wedding Dance announcements – visit our website! [westphaliahistory.weebly.com/newsletters](http://westphaliahistory.weebly.com/newsletters)

## BUS TRIP TO SHIPSHEWANA – OCTOBER 11

- Round-trip transportation via deluxe motor coach (departs Westphalia 7:30 AM and returns at 8:30 PM). Family style lunch at the Blue Gate Restaurant. Live performance of the musical [Dear Soldier Boy at Blue Gate Theater](#).
- Time to shop in the downtown and E & S Sales. All taxes and tips included. \$100.00 per person.
- **Deadline September 14, 2022**

Please contact Chris Piggott for more information 989.587.6558 – Find the sign-up form on the June Newsletter., which you can find on our website: [westphaliahistory.weebly.com/newsletters](http://westphaliahistory.weebly.com/newsletters)

## DANCES AND MUSIC AT THE MUSEM

As you read in Judy Thelen's article, the time of wedding dances was definitely a different era. Judy mentioned, "Frannie Fink and the Swingsters." The Swingsters consisted of Frannie Fink on the sax, Herm Schneider on bass, Gene Platte on drums, Ferd Platte on piano, Marv Platte on sax and trumpet, Louie Koster on sax, Paul Koster on trumpet and accordion. We are fortunate to have a CD of this band in the Museum. Bill Platte has a vast collection of music and put together a CD for us, so if you would ever like to hear this band of yesteryear while visiting the Museum let us know.

According to Bill Platte, the members would get paid about \$6-7 a night. They played all night. The big band sound was very popular then. He also put together a CD of the Thelen orchestra which contains square dances called by Greg Thelen and other songs. In addition, he put together a CD of Greg and Maybelle's music, one of this year's featured talks at our Cemetery Walk next month. And couple of weeks ago, we were donated the bandstand music holders of the "Mello Tones" by Max Feldpausch's daughter. We also have a CD of this very popular group who are no longer performing.

As you can tell, we have lots of options to play for your listening pleasure – be sure to ask us to play a tune or two next time that you stop in.

