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## Building & WHS News

### Quilting

As many of you know when we are in the off season (winter months) our building is used by the Peace by Piece quilt group on Tuesday mornings.

If you are interested in learning a traditional art form, the Peace by Piece quilters meet at the Museum Tuesday mornings at 9:00 AM. It's a chance to see how quilt patterns are made and you can probably get caught up on the latest village news.

### Wedding Exhibit Books

If you are interested in getting one of these popular books your time is running out. We are down to 5 or 6 remaining. They can be purchased at The Little Flower Market in Westphalia, near the counter. The cost is still \$40.00. There are no plans to do another printing **unless we get a waiting list of at least 50 people.**

### Meeting & 2022 Exhibit

Our next scheduled meeting is March 15 at 7:00 PM. At that time we will have to decide if we will do a featured display this coming year or lay low again because of COVID.

### Genealogy Research Saturdays

We are sad to announce that we are **canceling the open research time on February 12.** We are planning to offer time March 12 and April 9 though. These will be open times to come in and use our library of family history sources.

See our website for more information or the [December newsletter](#).

# WESTPHALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 11 | Issue 1 | Number 59 | February 2022

## Bowling in Westphalia

Every once in a while Evelyn Weiland decides to reduce her inventory of historical stuff. Several years ago she had some pictures and other things she wanted to get rid of. One of the pictures that caught my eye was that of a long building loaded on a moving dolly and being pulled by a truck. The picture was developed in August 1963 - remember this was in the days when we would take our roll of film to the drugstore to be sent out to be developed. Cell phones in cars were introduced in the middle 1980s; portable cell phones with cameras were much later.

This picture is from back when there were several buildings behind the former convent and old high school (which were removed so the current elementary school could be built on that property). The long building in the picture (see the next page), a shorter building and several storage type sheds were removed but not destroyed. One building was used as for the 4th of July Parish Picnic. One of the sheds was the former Nuns' outhouse, which now resides on Dan Wirth's farm. Another is believed to have been the Nuns' chicken coop. Back when farmers would have their chicken feed ground at the mill they would donate some to the Nuns for their chickens. When boys misbehaved in school the Nuns would sometimes have them clean the chicken coop after school as punishment, which Delbert Thelen can attest to. The building believed to be the chicken coop ended up on the Joe Hanses farm.

It's believed that one of the longer buildings served as a bowling alley. The longest building ended up at Dick Wirth's farm and is now gone. The shorter of the two ended up at Alvin Feldpausch's former home east of town on Price Road and is still there. Alvin was told this was the old bowling alley. On the other hand, it makes sense that the longer building, which was also used to serve food during the 4th of July Parish Picnic, was the bowling alley. At this time no one can say for sure which building was used as the bowling alley.

### Lanes Under the Parish Hall (The Current Funeral Chapel)

In the early days of bowling, they had duck pins. Duck pins are shorter and fatter than the pins used now. The bowler had three chances to knock down 10 pins using a smaller 5lb. ball with no finger holes. Duck pin bowling was the beginning of present day 10 pin bowling.

Father Gutha was here at St. Mary from 1932 until 1942. The former Parish Hall (now funeral chapel) was just finished in time for the 1936 Centennial. He is credited for installing two bowling lanes in the basement of the former Parish Hall. The alleys were along the south side of the basement, running east to west, with the pins being on the west end. It is not known exactly when Father Gutha had the lanes installed, but it was during his tenure here. All pins at that time were set manually; one of the pinsetters still alive is Bill Hanses Jr.; he remembers getting 2 cents per game.

### **Re-purposing Old Lanes**

It was sometime after the new alley was built that the one under the Parish Hall was taken out. Gerry Schmitt remembers two workbenches under the old rectory that were made with what appeared to be the old bowling lanes. There are probably other workbenches and butchering tables around the area made from the lanes.

Gerry also remembers his dad, Izzy, being the ever resourceful person, kept part of the ball return lane. He then used that to make a makeshift slide for the steps going down in the basement of the hall that could be used for sliding down the kegs of beer for wedding receptions instead of carrying them down the steps. In those days mixed drinks and wine were not typically served. Ten to 20 keg weddings were very common with 400 to 500 people on the guest list. Glenn and Marie Smith's wedding had 16 kegs; 14 were used, the 2 leftover kegs were saved for deer camp. The slide Izzy put in certainly came in handy.

Back then, many people smoked. The groom would give out cigars; consequently, as the night wore on the smoke was so thick in the basement, that with the low ceilings you could almost cut it with a knife. People smoked the cigars and cigarettes freely and everybody went home smelling like stale smoke. Can you believe we now look back and call that one of the good old days?

### **Current Bowling Alley**

The new Knights of Columbus building was built in 1949. The original design was for it to be a two story building with a rental hall upstairs. The building was eventually built as a one story. A six lane bowling alley was installed and is still there and in use. It has had updates over the years, such as automatic pinsetters, which were installed in 1973. The alleys are also now synthetic with newer pinsetters, and gutter bumpers are now available to allow for kids bowling.

The first 300 game was bowled by Roy Thelen on October 5th, 1983. He was awarded an engraved ring and a bowling pin for the occasion. He remembers using a 16lb. ball. Nowadays 300 games are not that uncommon with the newer balls and lanes. It took 33 years to get that first 300 game in Westphalia.

### **The Job of a Pinsetter**

Prior to 1973, the bowling alley required manual pinsetting with some mechanical assistance. The guard would come down with a frame that the pinsetters set the pins into. The guard would protect them. When done, they would pull a rope cord, which would lift the guard and frame. They would then have to get out of the way to avoid being hit by flying pins.

Pinsetters would work two alleys at a time by standing in between the two to stay out of the way. They were paid 10 cents a game. They would make \$6.00 a shift with 18 cents taken out or Social Security. After their shift they would buy a candy bar or pop as self reward taking home five dollars and some change. Some would occasionally work a double shift, which was a killer.

### **Wrapping it Up**

Bowling was a very popular pastime during the 1950s thru the 1980s. Bear in mind the pinsetters then are now in their 70s and 80s. Time does indeed fly. Many of them can remember some of the people who threw the hardest. For the men it was big John Schmitt, and for the women it was Betty Roach.

Special thanks to the following people for digging back into their memories to help put this story of the past on paper. Evelyn Weiland, Revella Smith, Bill Hanses Jr., Walt Thelen, Roy Thelen, Steve Thelen, Gerry Schmitt, Alvin Feldpausch, Dan Wirth, Glenn Smith, Fred Martin, Delbert Thelen and Scott Thelen.

