



Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

October 2014

Volume 15

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If you would like to make a donation, please send it to Westphalia Historical Society, P.O. Box 163, Westphalia, Michigan 48894-0163.



Historical Society Raffle

Trish Martin has again donated a beautiful handmade angel treetopper and Andy Hengesbach has donated a Treasure Chest which was built by his students at the correctional facility. We will be raffling these items at **1:00 p.m on Decemter 6 at the WHS Building**. When tickets are available the information will be on our website: westphaliahistory@weebly.com.

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Sympathy Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Phil Thelen, a valued member of The Westphalia Historical Society. He will be missed.

Cemetery Walk Was a Success

The Cemetery Walk on Sunday, September 21st was a great success! A little drizzle didn't stop us...after all, if our ancestors could spend months on a ship and then travel overland for weeks, we could certainly do this. We had more than 200 people come to see the six presenters and stay for cookies, donuts, cider, and community spirit afterwards.

We have many people to thank for our success. First we thank our presenters: Peter Sullivan who came from Ohio to portray his grandfather, Dr. Bruno Cook; Stephen Snitgen portrayed of his great-great grandfather, Joseph Snitgen. Stephen's sons and grandsons were a big hit; Ed Weber portrayed his great grandfather, Mathias Weber and Ed's grandson looked awesome with his Civil War musket; Cindy Fedewa portrayed Barbara Heinlein her great, great grandmother. Cindy was ably assisted by her daughter, Michelle; Tom Hattis and Sharon Miller portrayed their great, great grandparents, John and Elisabeth Martin Hanses. Tom & Sharon looked very good in their period clothes; and last, but not least was Phil Hengesbach who portrayed James Hayes, son of Michael Hayes, our immigrant from Ireland.

We thank our group leaders: Gerald Thelen, Nathan Thelen, Leon Theis, Bob Pline, Don Miller, and Phil Hanses. And we thank our musicians: Eugenia Arens with her accordion and Michaela and Brian Flynn on the piccolo and snare drum.

We must also thank Gross Machine Shop, Portland Federal Credit Union, PW High School Theater Department, Albin Hengesbach Carpentry, Ben Heiden, Debbie Hengesbach, Margo Cook Sullivan, Cindy Fedewa, Tom Hattis & his cemetery crew, Ken Quartermus, Dan Keilen, and Joe Fedewa. And, a big thank you to those who provided the golf carts: Jeff Platte, Jerry Smith, Tim Fandel, Dean Kohagen, Scott Smith, Bruce Cook, Duane Hengesbach, Randy Thelen, Andy Miller, Jack Miller, Dan Droste, and Nort Upson. If you're still reading this and you weren't able to make it this year, perhaps we'll see you at our next historical society event!

Thank you again to all the participants in the event, be it as a presenter, group leader, volunteer, or viewer.

THANK YOU!

Are you a member of the John & Elisabeth Martin Hanses' family?

Since John & Elisabeth were part of the Cemetery Walk and theirs was the first Westphalia wedding, it might be good to take a minute to consider the long reach of this couple.

Of course, if your last name is Hanses, it's pretty much a foregone conclusion that they are your ancestors.

But beyond that, if you connect to the Westphalia, Michigan area and...You were born a Hufnagel or if there's a Hufnagel in your ancestry it's more than likely that you too are descended from John & Elisabeth.

The same can be said if you have a Goodman in your background.

Many a Smith, Martin, Pohl, Simon, and Miller can also claim connection to the Hanses family.

If you're still sitting there thinking "I'm not", you might think again if Michael & Susanna (Simon) Spitzley or if Henry & Elizabeth (Spitzley) Their figure into your ancestry!

And, the list goes on... Keep watch!

Mystery Solved!



Thanks to Don Pung's research (*Don Pung, Westphalia Milling Co.*), we now know the names of the two men in the picture that has been hanging on the bulletin board in Hair Care and shown on the picture page of our website for a few months.

The man on the left is Carl Bozung and standing next to him is Bill Kramer. Don showed the picture to Helen Simon Goodman, spouse of Harold (Bobby) Goodman and, she, of course, knew their names (*Thank You Helen*). "Bill Kramer, she said, "was my husband's uncle and Carl was Bill's half-brother".

The picture was taken in 1961 when Westphalia was celebrating its 125th anniversary!

Available Publications

- 1). "Of Pilgrimage, Prayer, and Promise...The Story of St. Mary's Westphalia 1836-1986," \$23 each/2 or more \$20.
- 2). "Quiet Heroism". This book remembers the 87 Westphalia area women who entered the convent \$6.00.
- 3). "Westphalia High School Reunion 1938-1950", \$3.00.
- 4). "Historical Film Footage 1936-1961", contains footage taken by Fr. Gutha of the 1936 Centennial & footage of the 125th taken in 1961, \$15.00.
- 5). "Sisters of Christian Charity", \$1.00 each.
- 6). "Westphalia Area History, 1836-1976, 140 years of growth", \$40.00.

Our email address: westphalia1836@gmail.com.

Our website: www.westphaliahistory.weebly.com

The Historical Museum is rapidly approaching completion and we are looking for artifacts from the community to exhibit in the museum. We are looking for objects that reflect the history of Westphalia and the surrounding township and we would like to have some history of the objects and how they relate to our past. These items can either be donated to the Historical Society, or they can be loaned to us for a period of time for display and have them returned to you to keep.

Also, if you have items such as old coat racks, display cases, dress forms or mannequins, old rugs, shadow boxes or other items that we can use for displaying items that would also be greatly appreciated.

If you have items for us to consider please call either Leo Pohl 587-3843 or Maggie Upson (989) 587-4193.

“A Member of “The Greatest Generation”

What follows is a letter written by Fr. Ernest Keilen to his parents, Joseph and Mary Keilen in Westphalia. These anxious parents had not heard from their missionary son in the Philippine Islands for almost three years. How their hearts must have been overjoyed with the news of his dramatic rescue...

Manila, February 24, 1945

Dear Mother and Dad,

Liberation at last. Thanks be to God! Thanks to our brave boys in the ranks. Thanks to dear brother Bob, who also appeared on the scene with our American liberators!

What a meeting the two of us had! What a surprise! I did not even know that Bob was in the service. It was a wonderful birthday gift to meet one of my family for the first time since May, 1940 – first meeting since my ordination to the priesthood here in Manila. In fact, all the army boys surprised us with their fine appearance, especially after Japanese propaganda had tried to tell us about the awful food shortages in the States. How happy I was to learn that Bob has been in regular contact with you and that you are all well. I must confess that ever since December 7, 1941, I have been greatly concerned about your well-being.

We were liberated from our camp at *Los Bana* 40 miles south of Manila on Friday, February 23. The Yanks made a daring raid. It was like a dream to see our boys and our Flag! The liberation came at the 11th hour. Our condition was desperate. We were down to rock bottom. Starvation stared us all in the face. Since last September and up to the day of our liberation the food situation was very bad.

Many of our aged and the feeble just faded away with hunger. The death rate was so high during the last weeks that the grave diggers no longer had the strength to sink the graves fast enough. I myself had to give up this detail because of my weakness and beriberi.

God surely was good to us. We are now enjoying excellent care. Never did I appreciate the Stars and Stripes so much as since December 7, 1941. Never did I realize and appreciate what it meant to be an American. My religious superiors have decided that I avail myself of this opportunity to return to the States and to celebrate my first Solemn High Mass at home. (Fr. Ernest Keilen celebrated his First High Mass at home in Westphalia on June 13, 1945).

There are many things I shall have to tell you when I see you again. Thank the Lord with me that I am liberated and alive. God's blessings be with you!

Devotedly in Christ,
Father Ernest (Keilen), S.V.D.

Father Keilen served 50 years in the Philippines as a missionary with the Society of the Divine Word, teaching at the seminary and working in parishes on weekends. He died in Manila on July 25, 1996 and was buried in Manila. Today he is survived by his sister, Anita Fitzpatrick and his brother, Vincent.

Our Family Tree

*If we could see our ancestors all standing in a row,
Would we be proud of them or not, do you really know?
Some strange discoveries are made in climbing family trees,
And some of them you know, do not particularly please.*



*If we could see our ancestors all standing in a row,
Some of them perhaps, we would not care to know.
Still, there's another question which we might discuss,
If our ancestors we would meet, would they be proud of us?*

Author Unknown