



WESTPHALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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CEMETERY WALK & MUSEUM EXHIBIT

As most of you have probably guessed by now there is no display planned for the remainder of the year. If all goes well next year will treat us better. Sadly, the same goes for the Cemetery Walk.

MEETINGS

We are continuing to hold off on meeting. We hope to pick it up again in the near future. In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy.

MASKS!

By now most of us are sick and tired of hearing the words Pandemic. Covid 19, and Coronavirus. Another topic is "to mask or not to mask.". I think most people agree it is better to mask, thereby protecting others. Plain and simple.... masks are here to stay for a while longer.

Our community has been very active in the making of masks and will become more involved with school starting soon. Phyllis Thelen has been one of the coordinators and to date, she has about 7,000 masks credited to our area. The materials and the cutting of the masks are a donation from the Irwin Seating company from Grand Rapids. Once the masks are sewn by volunteers they are then handed off to a non-profit called "Storehouse" also located in Grand Rapids." Storehouse" then hands them out to other non-profits for distribution to those in need at no cost.

Masks continued.... Those of us alive now will certainly remember this part of our lives. In an effort to document and record this information we would like to recognize the people involved in the making of these masks for future generations. Current mask makers are Phyllis Thelen, Linda Armbrustmacher, Jake Thelen, Morgan Thelen, Lucile Feldpausch, Edith Smith, Karen Spitzley, Jane Bierstetel, Evelyn Pohl, Theresa Quartermus, Diane Bertram, Suzy Miller, Marylyn Pline, Phyllis Meyers, Gladys Rademacher, and Peg Keilen. There are no doubt other groups sewing for other organizations i.e. hospitals, schools etc. that we would like to hear about.

There are many different styles using many different materials. The internet is full of various patterns and ideas. One unique one is using a Crown Royal bag as the outer material. Another is using a dinner plate as the pattern. Some use ties others use elastic, which was hard to come by for a while. Driving around town you can see a mask on Bernice Thelen's collie dog statue by her house, or a mask on Lori Pung's huge rooster in the front of her store. We thank them for their humor. It's a good thing to have some sense of humor as we all go through this period in our lives. (to be continued in our October newsletter).

Written by Leo Pohl



FR. BERGRATH OF WESTPHALIA, PASTOR TO WHITE HAVEN, PENNSYLVANIA

The Cemetery Walk for 2020 has been canceled due to the pandemic. In its place, we will take a "walk" to St. Patrick's Catholic Cemetery in White Haven, Pennsylvania. In this cemetery is the grave of one of Westphalia's native sons, Father Michael Bergrath. He was born on April 4, 1851 in Westphalia; he was the youngest of four children born to Theodore and Ann M. Heinrich Bergrath.

In May of 1841, Michael's parents, with their two oldest children, left the village of Honningen, located in the Ahr River Valley in Germany's Rhineland. They arrived in Westphalia that same year and bought land in Section 28, about 3 1/4 miles south of town on Lehman Road.

Michael's brother Anthony joined the Union army to fight in the Civil War (1861-1865). His sister Elizabeth married John Trierweiler. They lived in Westphalia in their home on Lehman Road.

After Michael's schooling at St. Mary, his parent sent him to St. Vincent College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where his brother, Innocent, had studied for the priesthood also. Innocent was ordained at Scranton, Pennsylvania April 2, 1860.

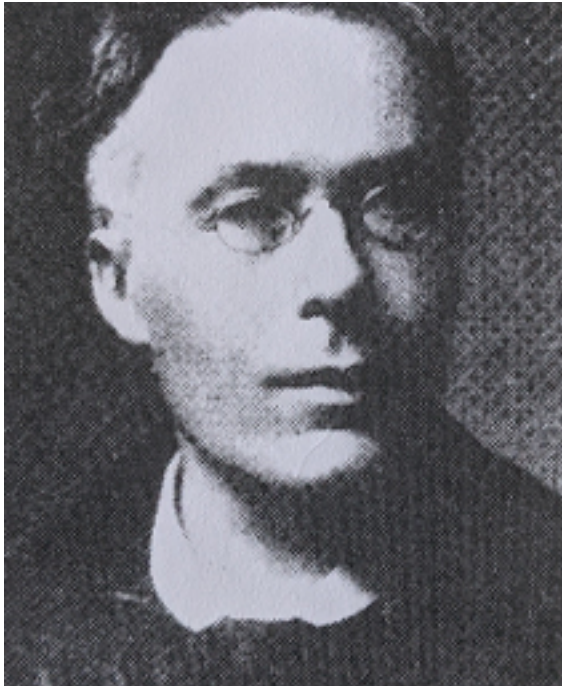
Michael was ordained a priest on July 30, 1874 at Scranton, Pennsylvania. He celebrated his first Mass at St. Mary in Westphalia. St. Mary was a new brick structure then and Fr. Michael had the honor for being the first of many native sons to celebrate their first Mass in the new church.

Fr. Michael was appointed pastor of St. Patrick in White Haven - his first and only charge. He also was synodal examiner in the Scranton Diocese. He died in March 1909 and is buried there. Even today, people of St. Patrick Parish are ready to express their love and reverence for Fr. Bergrath, "He was an extraordinary priest."

The next page shows a picture of Fr. Michael and his grave site. At right is a poem written by Julia Cleary about St. Patrick Parish and Fr. Bergrath. It was sent to us by John and Cletus Sullivan of White Haven.

Nestled among the hills and valley of Pennsylvania,
There's a little town that so many people call home,
That's always first in their hearts and thinking,
No matter how far away the path they roam.
It's White Haven, the town that has a history.
In 1874 Father Bergrath became first resident Pastor,
And to him all important was a soul.
Father Bergrath truly was a spiritual Father,
For the love of God and saving souls he worked.
Neither was there any kind of manual labor
That this Pioneer of Christ ever shirked.
He was equally gifted in his humble workshop,
Or as a fireman in the engine rooms for heat.
Or playing the organ in the Rectory office,
And the upstairs study with library complete,
He loved to roam the quiet and beautiful woodland,
On his shoulders was a knapsack and a gun,
By his side was his curly old dog "Coaly,"
Listening to signing birds or spotting a rabbit was fun.
In the simple and beautiful language of the scholar,
He brought God and love and beauty to humble souls,
To the sick, the children, the people of all ages,
He was part of all their hearts, their homes, their toils.
After thirty-five years of pure and honest labor
Father Bergrath in 1909 to his Maker had to go -
And we know in Heaven, he was justly rewarded,
For life of Godliness and kindness to friend or foe.
In the early days of our first resident Pastor,
Frank's farm was bought for a burial ground.
And there Father Bergrath and his flock are resting,
Until the Four Winds blow, and trumpets sound,
They are sleeping among poplars, pines and maples,
Birds singing a Requiem that will never cease,
With the angel choirs joining in chorus,
May the souls of the faithful departed, Rest in Peace.

Written by Evelyn Weiland



JUST FOR FUN: GENEALOGY HUMOR

Genealogists: The only people who are excited to read obituaries.

"Done! Everything in the family tree has been found and is completely organized" — said no genealogist. Ever.

Genealogist: Disturbs the dead and irritates the living.

Genealogy is like playing hide and seek: They hide... we seek!

"My husband calls cemeteries ancestor farms."

"I'm more interested in what happened in 1816, than what's happening today..."

credit: blog.myheritage.com/2016/03/19-jokes-all-genealogists-will-appreciate/

THE 4TH PRINTING OF THE BOOK "OF PILGRIMAGE, PRAYER, AND PROMISE"

A "Blue book" update: Our book is now on the shelves and is for sale.

Our book is a book of memories with pictures of people and their deeds of the past and present of Westphalia. Listed are the veterans who served in the wars - Civil War to the Vietnam War. Also listed is the family registry of Westphalia - current for 1986.

This book should be of interest to the genealogist. Named are over 300 "first families" of the early pioneer days. In many cases this includes their European birth place, date of arrival, their first home in Westphalia, and the names of the children. There are articles of interest in this book, which is a quality publication. There are sixteen pages of color pictures of our people, our land, our Church with its beautiful interior. It is a book of 200 pages, 11 1/2 "x 7 3/4". It is hard bound. The cover, with a four - color photo of our Founding Fathers painting, is laminate. This book has won two awards: an Efficiency Award from Jostens and Honorable Mention from the Michigan Historical Society.

Written by Evelyn Weiland

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