



# Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

June 2013

Volume 7

## Thank You!!

We would like to give a big thank you to Trish Martens, one of our "cousins" to the east in Riley Township. At our last meeting she donated a beautiful handmade doll to the Historical Society for us to use as we choose for fund raising. Trish, by the way, is organizing the Farmers Market at the Riley Township Hall on Thursday evenings from 5 – 8 pm June through October. Let's hope it turns out to be a great success.

## Homes on the Move

Last year the Clinton County Historical Society published a book called, "Clinton County Michigan – A History Told Through Postcards," with 106 pages of postcards—two per page. All communities in the county are included & one of those from Westphalia shows 3 steam traction engines fastened together pulling a structure coming into the village from the north in front of the old St. Mary's high school. It would be interesting to know what the building was, where it came from, and where did it end its journey; it probably happened sometime between 1900 & 1925; if you know, how about letting Leo know?

Years ago house moving was much more common than it is now and was also dangerous work. In 1912, Albert Schmitt who would've been an uncle to Clara Wirth was killed at age 21. He had crawled under a building to fix a roller when the supports gave way killing him instantly. While Clara was not born until 3 years later, she remembers her mother saying, "He was a big man and was wearing a red kerchief around his neck and there he laid dead." This summer Mark Klein will be helping move Bill Irrer's house which will be quite a task considering the size. Following are some of the current buildings in our area that have been moved over the years:

Roy & Julie Miller's home on Hickory Lane used to be by the current Post Office.

Five years ago Tim Thelen moved his mother Joan's house from Goodwin Rd. to Spaulding Rd. His son Dustin now lives there.

Harold Smith's house on Jason Rd., now rented by Justin Hanses, was just south of Chris McQueary's home across from the Thelen Haus Apartments on Wright Rd.

The former home of Casper Bohr, now occupied by Doug Spitzley, was across the road from the Leon & Mary Theis farm on Jason Rd.

Germaine Trierweiler's home on Westphalia St. was located where the Township Hall now stands.

The house on the south side of Don Schafer on Westphalia St, once the parish janitor's house, was moved from across the road by the current St. Mary's school. When it was moved, a new house was built and was occupied by Izzy & Regina Schmitt for many years. When the new elementary school was built, this house was moved to Pine St.

The Village jail, once on Westphalia St., where the Tom Trierweiler family now lives, is now a storage building at Andrew & Jamie Schneider's farm on Pratt Rd.

Maybelle Thelen's home on Elm St. was on the slight hillside on the north side of Westphalia Electric.

Dr. Gadille's office was part of a home just north of "Plannedscapes."

And, the former home of Sue (Lapinski) Connelly was on Main St. about where Lori Pung's new location will be.

## Fund Raising Efforts:

Over the next couple of months we will be actively looking for donations to purchase the "Plannedscapes" building as our Museum/Archive building. If sufficient funds to purchase the property are not raised, registered donors will have the option of requesting a refund of their donation. We are very excited about the potential of having our very own Westphalia Area Historical Society Building. Dan Arens has been working on some sketches of how we hope it will look. Dave Rademacher, CPA, is securing our IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt designation. We very much appreciate that Dave has agreed to donate his time for this cause. Watch for our booth at the Cruise-In on June 13<sup>th</sup> and at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnic. At the Cruise-In our booth will be in front of Westphalia Electric. We will be selling T-shirts with a picture of the **original Cruise-In** which took place in **Westphalia in 1914**. We will also be selling popcorn if you're still hungry after your favorite brat or hotdog. We're looking forward to seeing you at both events.

### John Herman Hanses 1796-1884

John Herman Hanses was born Jul 12, 1796 in the small village of Hespercke in the Sauerland area of Westphalia, Germany. His parents, Franz & Anna Maria Mueller Hanses, were local farmers. Already 40 years old and not married, he decided to make a major life change in 1836. After working many years for his brother as a quarry worker and road builder he decided to begin a new life in the United States. On May 25, 1836, Hanses set foot from Hespercke to the port of Bremen, a 180 mile walk, with his inheritance of 300 gold Thaler (local Bremen currency at the time). In Bremen, he boarded a sailing vessel bound for New York and continued his journey through the Erie Canal to Detroit and ultimately to modern day Westphalia. Traveling with him was the Franz Rademacher family who settled in Detroit before coming to Westphalia in 1839.

In 1836, the United States Government owned the land surrounding Westphalia, as spectators didn't consider the newly surveyed Grand River Valley area worth their attention. On the advice of Detroit clergy, the pioneers agreed that this land, rich with hardwood trees, would develop into good farmland. Westphalia's first settlers paid approximately \$1 per acre for all but 80 acres of Section 5 of Westphalia Township. On November 10<sup>th</sup> John used his inheritance towards the purchase of 136 acres of land for his own farm just north of Westphalia on what is now Hanses Road. The farm remains in the Hanses family today.

The only unmarried original settler, he was the pioneer bachelor of Westphalia, and spent his first 18 months in the new world clearing his acquired land and working in Lyons for others. Said Hanses, *"The timber about them was often so thick that when they wanted to see the sky they had to chop down a tree!"* Upon returning to his bachelor's hall for a permanent stay, he was stricken with fever and ague (malaria) and lay helpless for six months. He was taken in and cared for by the family of Nicholas Martin, his neighbor. He was united in marriage with Mr. Martin's daughter, Elizabeth on February 1, 1840. Rev. Fr. Kopp performed the ceremony which was the first wedding celebrated in the settlement. There was a humble wedding feast and then the bride and groom walked from Mr. Martin's house to the groom's cabin down Hanses Road for their wedding trip.

Around a year later, Elizabeth had a thrilling experience with a bear. After visiting with her parents one night, she was headed back to her

home when she encountered a bear in the woods. Scared to death, she kept calm enough to climb a tree small enough to support her and not the bear. With the bear keeping watch close by, she stayed in the tree all night. No one was looking for her because her parents thought she was home and her husband thought she was with her parents. Eventually the bear left and she was able to climb down to safety. Such was the wild and exciting life in the early days of Westphalia!

Hanses spent his remaining years as a resident farmer in Westphalia. John & Elizabeth were the parents of 10 children, 5 sons and 5 daughters. They lived to a hearty old age as respected citizens of the community. John died on October 26, 1884 at the age of 88 & Elizabeth died on December 8, 1896 at the age of 77. Both are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Westphalia.

*A big thank you to Tony Smith, Great-Great-Great Grandson of John Herman Hanses for his contribution to this article.*

#### John & Elizabeth's Children\*

Helena b 1841 - d 1911, spouse Anton Hufnagel  
Anton b 1842- d 1868, spouse Anna Maria Miller  
Bernard b 1844- d 1936, spouses Anna Trierweiler, Maria Herres  
Elizabeth b 1847- d 1868, spouse William Brechting  
Catherine b 1849 - d 1918, spouse Mathias Simon  
Maria b 1851 - d 1929, spouse Peter Pohl  
Joseph b 1854 - d 1868  
M. Francisca b 1856- d 1933, spouse John Miller  
Peter - b 1858 - d 1861  
John - b 1861- d 1863

\*Are you perhaps a descendant??

**Donation Received:** \$50 from Ray Buhl of Walkerville, Michigan in honor of my Eifel/Westphalia ancestors. His ancestors are the Pung & Roll families.

**Please send future donations for the Westphalia Historical Society to:** The Westphalia Historical Society, P.O. Box 163, Westphalia, MI 48894.

*Thanks*

**Next Meeting:** If you'd care to join us, our next meeting is at 7 pm., Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup> at the Township Hall.

Do you have a story to share? We welcome your suggestions. Call Evelyn 587-6839, Leo 587-3843, or email Charlotte, [jerchar@4wbi.net](mailto:jerchar@4wbi.net).

