



WESTPHALIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 9 | Issue 3 | Number 49 | June 2020

*Our meetings are on hold for the moment.
In the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy, and enjoy your summer.*

2020 CEMETERY WALK

Some names have been selected and the committee is now reviewing their locations in the cemetery to make sure they do not interfere with each other. Of course at this time it is unknown if we will be able to have it. We're hoping to make a positive decision on this in the near future.

2020 BAKE SALE

The Westphalia Garage Sales are Friday, July 24 and Saturday, July 25. As in years past, the WHS will have a bake sale the Friday of garage sales; HOWEVER, we will not be inside of PFCU.

We will host the bake sale in our building or in a tent outside if weather permits. We're asking those who work to wear masks. We'll be "open" Friday, July 24th from 9 AM - 3 PM.

We're excited to be able to have the bake sale and we're hoping all the garage salers stop in for a snack. We hope to see you Friday, July 24th.

IN OUR BUILDING THIS WINTER

A Mural

You may have heard that Dan Arens used the building this winter and early spring to work on a mural for the city of Ionia. It involves 5 panels, each being 5 ft. by 10 ft. It is a typical Dan Arens mural of highest quality and similar to the ones in Pewamo and Fowler - only much larger.

He has now finished three of the panels and plans to finish the last two at his home.

1985 WESTPHALIA BANK ROBBERY

On Friday March 29, 1985 at about 10:00 in the morning the Maynard Allen State Bank was robbed. This article will not attempt to go into all of the details but to recall what the people there remember most. Present at the time was Harvey Hoskins, bank manager; Dorothy Hattis, assistant bank manager; tellers Marie Pohl and Clara Smith; customers Dan Fedewa and his 5 year old son, Matt.

Some remember two people, some remember three people but they all remember the two of them looked like the comic strip characters, Mutt and Jeff, one was tall the other was short. They all remember the short one as being the mean one with the extra large automatic pistol. The others had long guns under their coats.

The bank had received a call about two weeks earlier advising them to be on the lookout for 'Mutt and Jeff'. They had robbed the bank in Clarksville and Lyons earlier and were assumed to still be in the area. They liked to rob banks on Fridays because that's when the tellers had the most cash in the tills so they could cash payroll checks. This was the days before direct deposit.

Marie Pohl still has the *Ionia Saturday Sentinel-Standard* newspaper article of March 30, 1985, which was very helpful. Marie remembers them walking in and announcing the robbery. The short mean one then went up to Dorothy, who was on the phone and did not see them, and put his gun next to her head while he yanked the phone cord from the wall.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

www.westphaliahistory.weebly.com
www.facebook.com/westphalia1836

Clara was in the vault doing some filing and did not notice them right away. Dan and his son Matt were at the table filling out a deposit slip and were not noticed by the robbers right away. Dan said Matt pulled on his hand saying, "Those people have guns." Dan went on to say that Matt was jabbering away asking the robbers questions and they finally told him to shut up or they were going to shoot him.

Dorothy said she pushed Matt under a table. Harvey, Dorothy and all of them said it went very fast, but that it was also traumatic and scary. The robbers had a bag and had the tellers put money in it. Then they were all herded into the vault. The vault door was closed but not locked; they were told not to leave for 10 minutes. They did not have a phone in the vault. After a couple of minutes Dan remembers Joe Arens walking in wearing his bib overalls, wanting to cash his milk check and wondering where everyone was.

Harvey and Dorothy said the FBI was there within the half hour. The State Police, Clinton County Sheriff's Department, and Dewitt Township Police along with two helicopters were also there. St. Mary School was put into immediate lock down.

The robbers, four in total, split up after the robbery. It is assumed that one of the robbers was in a getaway car in front. It was believed that the second car was stashed by the park. The short mean one was captured within the hour by I-496 and I-96. The money was eventually returned after it had been kept as evidence for a couple of years. The robbery team was traced back to Kentucky; two of them were a husband and wife trying to make a quick buck in Michigan. The short one was a brother to the wife.

Following the robbery all of the employees were interviewed. One of the detectives told Dorothy that they were very lucky. The short mean one had committed a murder in California and if they kill once there is nothing stopping them from doing it again.

All of the employees and customers in the bank at the time of the robbery received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Clinton County Sheriff's Department for their Calmness, Courage and Alertness during the robbery. Clara still has hers. In addition, Matt received a police badge, which he said he still has. One thing that really stood out in Harvey's memory was Sister Myra calling for several mornings following the robbery to see if everybody was doing

okay following their traumatic experience. That small act of kindness meant a lot to him.

Each person there has his/her own memory that is still vivid today. Hopefully it will go down in history as our one and only bank robbery.

QUARANTINE BIRTHDAYS

How do you celebrate a birthday during a pandemic? Family, friends, and neighbors must practice social distancing - no handshakes, hugs or kisses. But there is a way to celebrate: "drive-by parades."

Maevyn Huhn was ready to celebrate her 4th birthday in April, but without her young friends; however, her parents, Mike and Mallory, knew a way to make her day. They organized a drive-by-parade. Family, friends, and neighbors came in cars and pickups with the Westphalia fire truck in the lead with Randy Bengel at the wheel.

Haven Hengesbach, daughter of Charlie and Whitney, turned 4 in April. She too was celebrated with a big drive-by parade. Again, everyone came in their cars, tooting horns and waving balloons. Kevin Wieber was the driver of the firetruck.

Drive-by parades are not just for kids. Bob Spitzley, celebrating 83 years, Eileen Trierweiler, 90 years, and Don Pohl had drive-by parades to wish them happy birthdays. May saw Kate Hanses turning 85 years old and Donald Schafer turning 94; both celebrated their birthdays with a parade of family and friends - again led by Westphalia fire trucks.

The following birthday celebrants did not have drive-by parades but were showered with birthday cards. Helen Nurenberg turned 75, Fred Hengesbach is now 80 years old. Connie Lenneman and Theresa Thelen celebrated their 87th birthdays in June. Mary Louise Hanses celebrated her 90th birthday.

The Westphalia High School class of 1944 celebrates 76 years out of school and 94 years of age. In July, Lily Mae (Spitzley) Fox will be 94 years old. Classmates Donald Schafer, Bernadette (Snitgen) Thelen, and Evelyn (Freund) Weiland have already turned 94. Three classmates have died, Bertha (Pung) Cavendish, Viola (Fedewa) MacDonald and Joan (Trierweiler) Thelen. Don always claimed he was the smartest boy in the class. With that, we'll say - "Congratulations, Happy Birthday, and may God grant you many more happy years and good health."