



Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

February 2015

Volume 17



Historical Society Building Grand Opening

We had a very successful grand opening on December 6th. It began with Evelyn Weiland cutting the ribbon and Fr. Weber blessing the building. We estimated that between 130 and 150 people came through the building that Saturday.

The following day Kurt Thelen had his book signing. Kurt sold about 30 books in addition to the many books people brought in for him to sign.

We have decided to close the building during the winter months except for meetings to conserve energy. During the winter we will be thinking about what our next display will feature. In the meantime stay warm.

Raffle Winners: Chest, Jan Bierstetel; Angel, Sharon Hengesbach; Throw, Eveline Miller; Throw, Edith Smith; Ornaments: Evelyn Weiland, Ken Stump, Jeanine Cook, Bonnie Rademacher, Bill Wirth, and Deb Mulvaney.

Harold Smith

Our community just lost a true giant of a man. As most here know, he was very involved in the Westphalia community with the volunteer work he and his family have done. He was very involved with the Historical Society building and was instrumental in getting the building remodeled in time for our open house. Harold you will truly be missed.

Note: We will not meet in February. Our next meeting is scheduled for **March 17 at 7:00 pm.** Guest speaker at the meeting will be **Wayne Summers** a teacher at P-W schools. Several years ago Mr. Summers wrote a book about one-room schoolhouses in Clinton County. He has agreed to come and talk about these schools, especially those that were in Westphalia Township. *If you have a story to tell or some pictures, please bring them along.*

Our Recent Donors

Walt & Bernie Thelen
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Aggie Fedewa
Joan Platte
Rita Thelen Estate
Kurt & Carol Thelen
Bruce & Sharon Arens
Jay & Joanne Schafer
Harold Smith Estate

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



“The Meeting”

Some have asked this question: what is the meaning of the painting in St. Mary Church – that massive work-of-art that shows six men greeting each other with a handshake and their luggage at their feet?

Let us go back to the years 1934 to 1936 and join Father Gutha as he makes plans for the centennial celebration of Westphalia St. Mary in 1936.

We can see Father Gutha standing in the vestibule of old St. Mary Church and looking at the painting of the “Fourteen Holy Helpers”. A companion painting on the opposite wall would be good! It should be a painting with a historic theme. Certainly he had read Father Kopp’s account of the immigration. But that apparently was not enough. He needed more. Remember – many sons and daughters of the first settlers were still alive in the 1930s. He would ask them.

A member of the Hanses Family – Revella Hanses Smith – tells us that Father Gutha asked her grandfather, Bernard Hanses, then 90 years old and son of one of the Founding Fathers, John Hanses, many questions about the immigration from Germany.

Our Founding Fathers did not leave Germany as a group. Joseph Platte and his family left Helden in 1834 and the Anton Cordes family soon followed. John Hanses sailed from Bremen in May of 1836. Then John Salter and his family left Attendorn as did William Tillmann. Fr. Kopp left Germany in August of 1836, sailed on the *Leontine* and arrived in Detroit in October 1836.

After the many questions were answered, we can assume that Father Gutha had the

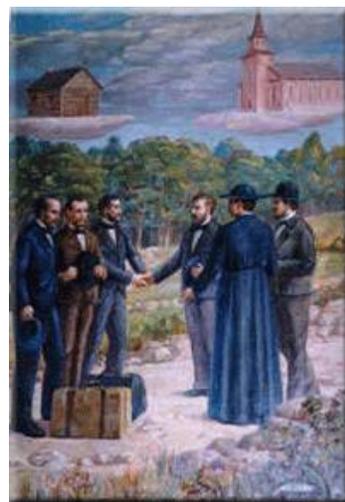
information he needed. It was time to talk to the artist. He was G. Zamboni and his finished work depicts “The Meeting”. And what a meeting that must have been in November of 1836 for the six men named above now reunited in a place they would soon call “Westphalia”. They had made their pilgrimage across sea and land to a new home in America. We thank them for their courage and great faith.

The painting was dedicated in time for the centennial celebration of 1936 and it was hung on the wall in the vestibule of old St. Mary Church. Thank you Fr. Gutha for the wonderful historic oil painting.

This painting and its companion work-of-art, “The Fourteen Holy Helpers” were rescued from the fire of April 20, 1959 that destroyed the church.

In 1983, 24 years after the pictures were carried from the burning church, they were restored and their frames refinished by local crafts-people. The paintings were then rededicated and hung on the walls of the new St. Mary Church.

Work done with love will endure!



Westphalia Brewery - Part II

By Leo Pohl

Sometime before the holidays we received a call from Ed Spitzley. He asked if I had a copy of the "Brown Book" which I had. He told me to go to page 351. He said "Do you see the picture of me and the flags?" I said I did. He then said he still had the bicentennial flag and wanted to know if the museum would like it. I told him since it had local history we would take it.

When I went to pick it up we shared some nice conversation and he proceeded to say he had a little history about the brewery. He said that when his dad was building the garage (brown building next to Trierweiler Insurance) it was at the same time they were tearing down the old brewery north of town. True to our German heritage, if something could be had for nothing why not? His Dad removed a set of steps from the brewery and brought them to the new building he was putting up. He used the stairs to reach to the storage loft above the main floor.

I asked John Hengesbach (A&H Carpentry) one day if I could look at them. The steps are extremely worn down. John said he could never figure out how they could have been so worn from simply going up to the loft. So now the mystery was solved.....they were used. When I told the story to Evelyn Weiland she said it was no wonder that the steps would be worn, more so than the steps leading up to church!

In the meantime, just prior to her death, Jeanette Pohl Beachnau was in contact with the granddaughter of Peter August Fritz, the one-time owner of the Brewery. She received a lot of detailed information about Peter Fritz. As his granddaughter explained, when Prohibition began he decided to close up shop and move to Windsor, Canada where he could continue to brew beer. He died at age 45 in 1910 and is buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Detroit. Included with the correspondence Jeanette gave us is a picture of Peter and a rather detailed description of his final days and hours up to his death.

Annals of Westphalia and St. Mary's High Schools

1943-44 This year for the first time in the history of Westphalia High a school paper *INK SPURTS* made its initial appearance the week before Thanksgiving. The first edition was mimeographed at the telephone office through the kindness of Isidore Miller.

1944-45 On January 20, the parents of Ronald Spitzley, class of '41, were informed that he was missing in action...Later when it was definitely known that he had been killed in action on Dec. 31, 1944, the students attended the funeral Mass as a body on February 28.

Ronald Bohr, popular member of the senior class, responded to the call of his country on February 9. At a farewell party on Wednesday afternoon, February 7, his classmates presented him with an identification bracelet. Ronald completed all his studies before his departure so he was able to receive his diploma with his graduating class in May.

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**Happy Birthday** to Rosaline Theis Kolp who celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 20<sup>th</sup>.  
Congratulations Rosaline!

**Next opening of WHS Building for the public April 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**(hours to be announced later)**

Our website: [www.westphaliahistory.weebly.com](http://www.westphaliahistory.weebly.com)

Our email address: [westphalia1836@gmail.com](mailto:westphalia1836@gmail.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/westphalia1836](http://www.facebook.com/westphalia1836)

*Written by John Fink for his wife Katie on the occasion of their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary,  
and recited by John at the celebration November 1949*

**Tell Her So**

Amid the cares of married life,  
In spite of toil and business strife,  
If you value your sweet wife  
Tell her so.

Prove to her you won't forget  
The bond of which your seal is set.  
She's of life's sweet the sweetest yet.  
Tell her so.

When days are dark and deeply blue  
She has her troubles the same as you.  
Show her that your heart is true  
Tell her so.

In former days you praised her style  
And spent much time to win her smile.  
'Tis just as well now worth your while  
Tell her so.

There was a time you thought it bliss  
To get the favor of one kiss.  
A dozen now won't come amiss  
Tell her so.

Your love for her is no mistake  
You feel it dreaming or awake  
Don't conceal it for her sake  
Tell her so.

You never know what you have missed  
If you make love a game of whist.  
Lips mean more than to be kissed  
Tell her so.

Don't act as if she'd passed her prime  
As though to please her were a crime.  
If ever you loved her, now is the time  
Tell her so.

She'll return for each caress  
A hundredfold of tenderness.  
Hearts like hers are made to bless.  
Tell her so.

You are hers and hers alone.  
Well you know she's all you own.  
Don't wait to carve it in a stone  
Tell her so.

Never let her heart grow cold  
Richer beauties will unfold.  
She is worth her weight in gold  
Tell her so.