



# Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

August 2014

Volume 14

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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.



## August Birthdays of Special Note

Clara Wirth - 99 on the 12<sup>th</sup>

Melvin "Muff" Smith - 96 on the 14<sup>th</sup>

Jeanette Beachnau - 94 on the 6<sup>th</sup>

Also, these ladies will be 89 years young in August:  
Revella Smith, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Esther Rademacher Brown,  
on the 13<sup>th</sup> & Lucille Bohr on the 31<sup>st</sup>!

**Happy Birthday!!**

## Magic Needle Arrives In Heaven

On July 25th Helen Wirth passed away and the Piece by Peace quilting group lost an important helper. It was thought that Helen's needle was a "magic one" because it seemed to work so quickly. Helen will be remembered for her wonderful quilting ability and she will surely be missed.

## Museum's Progress

People have been asking about the building renovations. We will give a short summary now with more information in the next newsletter.

We have a beautiful open stairway, most of the floor is tiled, new walls have been constructed and wiring has been moved to fit our needs. As soon as we have finished walls we will paint, put down carpeting and finish plumbing fixtures. Then we will clean, clean, clean.

## Mark Your Calendar for the Cemetery Walk

The members of the Westphalia Historical Society invite you to St. Mary's Cemetery on Sunday September 21<sup>st</sup> for a "Cemetery Walk." There the "presenters" will share with you memories and stories of six of Westphalia's notable deceased. The Walk will start at 2 o'clock. Light refreshments will be served. Admission is free. Donations, however, will be gladly accepted. Rain date: September 28<sup>th</sup>.

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**Nicknames:** Who was "Pro"? .... Isidore Miller.

Isidore was a real Pro—at his golf game and as the manager of the Westphalia Telephone Company. And do you remember those "long rings"? Isidore sat at the switchboard and plugged into everyone's phone telling us about an upcoming event or maybe an emergency. It was better than e-mail!!

**Annual Membership Fee:** With the implementing of new Bylaws at our July meeting, there will now be a \$5.00 annual membership fee.

## From the Annals of Westphalia & St. Mary's High Schools 1941-1942...

The usual routine of school work was somewhat broken on Wednesday, April 22 when Fr. Gutha assumed charge of the entire high school during the morning session. This was due to the fact that Sisters Octavia and Marianda were summoned to St. Johns

to attend a meeting regarding Sugar Rationing Registration.

**Footnote:** *During World War II rationed items in the United States included automobiles, bicycles, fuel oil, gasoline, kerosene, shoes, stoves, tires, typewriters and many foods. Sugar was rationed the longest from May 1942 to June 1947.*

## The Brewery

They say that Germans like beer. So, early on, what was needed in Westphalia? A brewery! In the first years of our settlement, Christopher Thiel, an immigrant from the Lorraine Province of Germany, started the first brewery in town in 1861. It was located on the site of our present day barber shop on Main Street. His partner was Mr. Schmuck. They stayed in business until 1866 when Peter Arens and Peter Thome started their brewery north of town on Grange Road directly across from where Randy Simon's farm is located today. There Arens and Thome built their two-story brewery on the banks of Kloeckner Creek - also known as the Platte Bach.

In those days our roads most likely were muddy, rutty, and then dusty. To accommodate the customers, a board sidewalk was built from town to the brewery. Today we can imagine our ancestors walking to the brewery to buy an "Achtelchen" (a little eighth of beer) for their Sunday afternoon picnic or maybe as refreshment at the local baseball game.

The ownership of the brewery changed hands several times (see p. 107 of the Brown Book). Peter Arens & Peter Thome were the first owners followed by Joseph Droste and then Fritz and Cook. Perhaps, the last was Peter August Fritz. The beer business was good until 1907 when Prohibition became effective in Clinton County.

Bil Turner, a collector of "Old Michigan Beer Stuff", was a presenter at our May Historical Society Meeting. His interesting talk added more information to our Westphalia brewing history. Millie Droste brought a beautiful painting of the Brewery to the meeting owned by Terry Nurenberg. Thank you Millie & Terry!

Evelyn Weiland

## 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 125<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:westphalia1836@gmail.com).

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

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 19th at 7 p.m. at our building 120 W. Main St., Westphalia.  
Hope to see you there.**

**The Peace of Westphalia  
A Piece of the Peace  
Our Piece of the Peace**

If you've read our recent newsletters, you have seen a little history of the local nicknames. Names can carry a lot of different meaning, importance and weight. Some names like Washington, Lincoln, Mozart and Khan all have a place in history. Even America has a special meaning. To most people America serves as a place to start over. In the words of Emma Lazarus in *America's Colossus*, it is a place for the "huddled masses, yearning to breathe free." So what about Westphalia? What is that name's place in history?

Since the first non-Latin, non-Druid people were driven into Europe, that continent has had a history of conflict over resources. It took their near destruction and the deaths of millions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to bring that history to an end, but it was the history of conflict that brought our forefathers here. At the time of Columbus' discovery of the New World, Europe looked very different. Many countries we now know did not exist (Germany would not become a country until 1871) and the borders of Europe were not where they are today. In 1501 Spain and Portugal were the dominate forces in Europe with the New World divided between them. Not to be outdone, other nations were working to carve out pieces of these empires and by the middle of the century, England and France had started to whittle them down. Spain did the only thing it could, it fought back seizing part of what would become part of the Netherlands in an effort to protect its territory.

What followed was nearly a century of war among the Spanish, Dutch, French, Germans, Austrians, Russians, Swedes, Danes, Poles and Italians (I thought WWI began in 1914). The final phase after some made peace, and others gave up, or treaties failed, was known as the Thirty Years War with fighting in Central Europe, the Caribbean and along the frontier of the North American Colonies. The destruction in Europe is likened to images we have seen from WWI and WWII. The crops in the entire countryside were decimated, and homes and livestock destroyed. Some chose to stay and rebuild while others left to start over in the New World.

So, what does this have to do with Westphalia? When the powers in Europe were trying to find a way to end the war many of them would sit in the same room and they started to talk and listen to each other, and many of them met in the city of Münster, Westphalia to hammer out a deal, and on October 24, 1648 peace was achieved. History shows it would take another 300 years to bring real peace to Europe, but the first steps had been taken in Westphalia! The Swiss became independent, and they stayed out of future wars, and the first steps of religious tolerance were taken in Europe. The German Princes gained autonomy and now had the freedom to enact their own laws and not have to follow an Emperor just because he was the Emperor (I wonder what that led to).

Not all of our families hailed from the original Westphalia, but they were all influenced by these events and the lasting effects. Many people have said how blessed we are here in Westphalia - maybe it is because Peace has always been a Piece of US!

Philip Hengesbach