



Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

October 2013

Volume 9

Historical Society Raffle

November 3rd at 3pm, Plannescapes Design



Many thanks to Trish Martens from Riley Township. She donated a beautiful, handmade Christmas Angel tree topper. It's on display Monday and Tuesdays at Tropical Sun Fitness and Plannescapes Design the remainder of the week.

Raffle tickets can be purchased for \$1.00 at Plannescapes, Tropical Sun Fitness, Hair Care, or from a Historical Society member.

Happy Birthday!

Belated birthday wishes for Clara Wirth, now 98 and Melvin (Muff) Smith who is 95!

St. Mary's Craft Show

See us at the craft show on Sunday, November 3rd.

Historical Society Website

Debbie Hengesbach has put together a very nice website of our Westphalia area. She has been keeping it updated with information and pictures. If you haven't seen it yet, it can be found at www.westphaliahistory.weebly.com.

St. Mary Fire Westphalia MI – 1959

There is a 4+ minute film on YouTube showing the burning of the old church with the steeple falling and the clean-up afterwards. Many of you will remember some of the faces in the clip. It can be seen by going to your search engine and typing.... St. Mary Fire - Westphalia, Michigan 1959 YouTube.

Historical Center & Museum Campaign

As of this newsletter we have received:

Pledges of: \$3,250.00

Donations of: \$0-\$499 - \$3,455.00
\$500-\$999 - \$7,300.00
\$1,000-\$2,499 - \$7,250.00

When the building is completed, there will be plaques displaying the donors' names. *And remember, if the plan falls through and you have registered your donation, you will get your money back.* The best way to register is to use the form attached to the brochure.

Our Recent Donors

Dan & Deb Trinter	Eugene & Pat Geller
Curt & Sharon Weber	Roger & Ruth Pline
Joe Rademacher	Tom & Sandy Smith
David & Kate Hanses	Lawrence E. Thelen
Harold & Clara Smith family	Joseph Spitzley
Leon & Mary Theis family	Dean & Sue Kohagen
Ervin & Mary Jane Thelen	Laura Pline
Larry & Joan Schaefer	Dr. Edward Peters
Stan & Rose Schaefer	Lehman Funeral Homes
Neal & Wendy Koenigsknecht	Dan & Mary Arens
Germaine Miller & family	Tom & Kathy Arens
Delbert & Joyce Thelen	Al & Maureen Arens
William & Mary Louise Hanses	Ken & Cheryl Arens
Westphalia Electric	Gary & Lisa Arens
Lawrence Smith Builder	Dennis & Marie Arens
Millers Redi-Mix Inc.	Marie Thelen
Portland Federal Credit Union	Village of Westphalia
Nort & Maggie Upson	Westphalia Township
Simon Brothers, Inc.	Mike & Kathy Wood
John & Elizabeth Burns	Eugene & Donna Snitgen
Irene Craig	Westphalia Telephone Co.

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



We Lost a Hero

Our area recently lost a true **World War II hero, Julius Bengel**. As most people know, he never talked about his days in the Army as an Infantryman during World War II. It was only after his death that we learned he was awarded the Silver Star, 4-Battle, & 4 Overseas Stars, Good Conduct & Victory Medals. He served in Belgium, France and Germany.

For those not familiar with the Silver Star, it is awarded to those who exhibit exceptional bravery and heroism during combat. Most of us remember Julius as a humble person who worked at the blood drives and attended PW games. On November 11th, Veterans' Day, let us all remember him as a true local Hero.

Veterans' Day – November 11

On Veterans' Day we remember and we celebrate the courage and patriotism of all men and women who have served in the United States armed services. Due to limited space we are highlighting the **Civil War** in this issue.

Civil War (1861-1865), many of Westphalia's men signed up for a term of three years and served with the **14th Michigan Infantry**. The records show that 37 from here fought in that war and of that number 5 gave their lives for our country. They were:

Franklin Fish/Fisch – He was the son of Zurial and Lucinda Fish. Franklin & his father enlisted in Company K. The father returned safely to his home, but the son died 25 Mar 1862. He was then 19 years old; his place of burial is unknown at this time.

Henry Rocholl – He was the son of Jacob Rocholl & Anna Bricher-Seckinger. At the age of 18 Henry enlisted in Company F. He re-enlisted as a veteran in 1864 and was killed in the Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina 19 March 1865. He is buried in the National Cemetery, Raleigh, North Carolina in Grave No. 203.

Andrew Seckinger – He was the son of Bartholomew Seckinger & Maria E. Britz. Andrew, a step-brother of Henry Rocholl, also enlisted in Company F. He died in Farmington, Mississippi the 2 August 1862 and is buried in the National Cemetery in Corinth, Mississippi, Grave No. 2509. He was 24 years old.

Peter Sontag – He was the son of Caspar Sontag & Elizabeth Sprigap. At the time of his enlistment into Company F, Peter was working for Michael Spitzley as a farmhand. In his last letter to his brother William in

Westphalia, he tells of the great Battle of Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee. "It will be a great battle. Once it starts, it will have a terrible end...please pray for me dear brother should I die." Peter died 20 August 1862 and is buried in the National Cemetery in Corinth, Miss., Grave No 2513. He did not die on the battlefield, but in the army hospital in Farmington, Tenn. As was the case with many Civil War soldiers, their wounds became infected. Disease killed far more men than did the bullets.

Ulrich Thoma – He was born in Germany, ca 1827. At the time of his enlistment, he was married and the father of a son named John who married Anna Miller and a daughter, Frances who died at 16 years. Ulrich's descendants tell of the hardships suffered by his unit, Company K, 14th Michigan Infantry. "We have marched for days. There is little food, no medicine and many soldiers are sick & dying." Ulrich died of his wounds 19 Oct 1862 in Nashville, Tenn. He is buried in the National Cemetery in Nashville in Grave No. 1269, Sec. B.

Two of Westphalia's Civil War soldiers were prisoners of war:

John Becker/Baker - served with the 14th Michigan Infantry was taken prisoner in March of 1865. He was the son of John P. Becker & Catherine Schafer. Perhaps our readers can add more information about John.

Mathias Weber – a private with Company D, 13th Michigan Infantry was captured in Chickamauga, Georgia at the Battle for Sutton Mill in Sept of 1863 and was sent to the infamous Andersonville Prison in Georgia until the end of the war (1865). Ed Weber (Mosh) remembers this story: "Mathias did not want the South to retrieve his \$50 bill, so he hid it in his body during the search. The South did not find it." Mathias told his grandchildren, "I survived by eating rats and the corn fed to the animals." He was released 3 May 1865 and sent to Camp Chase, Ohio and honorably discharged 29 June 1865 in poor health. He walked all the way back to his home in Westphalia with only the rags on his back, where his wife Caroline and his sons, Thomas, John (Lahme), and Michael were waiting for him. "Grandparents make the best heroes." (*From the book: Mathias Weber Family History*).

Those wounded in the war were: Peter Fox, Anton Martin, Joseph Nurenberg, and Nikolaus Schomisch.

This' n That: Next Meeting: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 8th at the Township Hall.....Any questions or suggestions send us an email at westphalia1836@gmail.com.