



# Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

October 2015

Volume 21

### Recent Donor

Don Theis

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



### Cemetery Walk of September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The Westphalia Historical Society had our second cemetery walk on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. God smiled on Westphalia that day with beautiful, sunny weather and very talented actors. We wish to thank all the actors for portraying their ancestors: Bill Platte as early settler Eberhard Platte; Edie Smith as business owner Dorothy Platte; Gary Arens and Ethan Arens as Civil War veteran Anthony Arens whose story was told by Tyler Arens; Gene Geller portrayed his father, funeral director and successful basketball coach, Herm Geller; and Ruth Geller Pline portrayed her mother, teacher and also successful basketball coach, Estelle Geller. Glenn Fink portrayed his grandfather John Fink a businessman, musician and beekeeper. Last but not least, Father Eric, although not related, portrayed priest, artist, and musician Fr. Gutha. Much thanks to Evelyn Weiland who did the research and wrote some of the stories of these famous Westphalians.

We must also praise our docents: Jerry Thelen, Leo Pohl, Nathan Pohl, Phil Hengesbach, Don Miller, and Phil Hanses who directed our visitors through the cemetery. We also wish to thank our musicians Eugenia Arens and Brian & Michaela Flynn for their talents that added to the day.

The walk couldn't have happened without Paul Smith and his entire cemetery crew. We also wish

### We Remember Joe Rademacher....

Joe, our good friend and a member of the Westphalia Historical Society, died September 28, 2015. He shared with us his memories of his growing up on the farm in his book *Homestead*. We will miss you Joe and your friendly "hellos". May you rest in peace.

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to thank A&H Builders for assisting us with pictures, Sue Thelen and St. Mary's School for printing, and Ann Rademacher for special props. Many thanks to all who baked cookies for us and those who made donations.

Approximately 400 people attended the event which may inspire us to try it again. Thank you to all from the community and beyond who came to support us as we remembered our ancestors. As an added surprise to the day, artist Gary Arens brought his very detailed wooden carving of two local 14<sup>th</sup>



Infantry Civil War soldiers (his great grandfather, Anthony Arens and Henry Rocholl), which he submitted to this year's Art Prize. *Margie Wirth*

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### Birthday Greetings!!

Paul Fedewa, 93 on November 2nd  
and  
Bernadette Snitgen Thelen,  
90 on November 28th!!



**Oktoberfest 2015** As beautiful as the weather had been for the cemetery walk, the total opposite can be said for Oktoberfest's weather...cold, windy & damp, but that didn't keep the crowd away. Hundreds attended and enjoyed the German food & drink along with good music, stories and friends.

The raffle winners:

Clara Smith – gift certificate & wooden chest

Gladys Rademacher – quilt

Ken Stump – 10 yards of gravel

Abby Wirth – necklace

Thank you to everyone who attended and to the many who were involved with the entertainment, set-up & clean-up, and food preparation (especially the K of C for preparing the brats). Danke

Christmas ornaments (\$15.00) depicting the stained glass window of the Nativity Scene from St. Mary's and souvenir mugs (\$5.00) from Oktoberfest can be viewed and purchased at the **Little Flower Shop**. We also hope to have them available at the Historical Society Building's **Christmas Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>**.

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### ***Did You Know?***

Westphalia Township was established in April of 1839 and since that time 23 men and one woman\* have served as township supervisor. One of those men was William F. Dutton. He was born in Chenango Co. New York on June 23 1812, the son of Robert and Sarah Fowler Dutton.

At the age of 15, William went to work in the Erie Canal. Until he was 22 years old, he spent his summer on the Canal working as a driver, a deck hand, and finally as a captain. During the winter he worked in the lumber woods of Steuben County in New York.

In 1836 he married Mary, the daughter of Joseph and Ellen Pray Young. Shortly after their marriage, the Duttons moved to Michigan where they settled in Cass County.

After working the land for three years, they moved to Westphalia Township where they bought 160 acres of uncleared land in Section 12 of the township.

In Westphalia Township the couple built their first home – a log house. The home had no doors or windows and only a portion of it was floored. It was a wild land with no roads leading to their home. His

biographer describes Dutton as a “Man of iron – he never knew the meaning of the words fatigue or fail—with him to will was to do.”

In politics, Dutton was an ardent Republican, he was a one-term supervisor of Westphalia Township and held other offices.

They moved about a great deal. From Westphalia they returned to Cass County where they lived for four years. He sold his land there and bought 160 acres in Riley Township which he turned into “one of the best farms in Clinton County”.

In 1874 he again sold his land and moved to Watertown Township where he bought 150 acres of land. His biographers in Watertown wrote “He intends to spend the remainder of his days believing that he has done his share as a pioneer.”

William 1812-1908 & Mary 1819-1898 and several of their children are buried in Boughton Cemetery, Riley Township.

\*Who you may ask was the woman who served as Westphalia Township Supervisor? She was Mary Lehman Miller (she completed the term of her late husband, Eberhard Miller.)

## **Westphalia Milling Company**

### **More than 150 Years of Service to the Farming Community**

It all began in 1858 when Joseph Platte, John Schmidt, and Joseph Bohr built a grist mill (some writers say 1862 was the starting date). At that time the grist mill was located some 70 feet west of the present-day mill. A few years earlier these same three men had built a sawmill which was directly west of the grist mill.

Those early entrepreneurs knew that the farmers needed a mill to grind their grain and lumber to build their frame homes.

In those first years steam was used to power the mills. In 1868 the boiler located between the grist mill and the sawmill exploded nearly destroying both mills and killing John Schmidt, one of the owners. His son, William was buried beneath the ruins, but he survived and soon after rebuilt the sawmill. This mill was later sold to John Freund. Frank Noeker rebuilt the grist mill in 1872 which contained three run of stone. His business did considerable custom work and turned out about two hundred barrels of flour per month for shipment to Detroit.

William J. Arens and Peter H. Smith bought the mill from Frank Noeker in 1925. Arens and Smith made major improvements and extended their dealership to include grain, beans, clover seed and feed. The feed was named "Farm Pride Poultry Mash." This mash was sold in cloth bags and the farmer's wife would "recycle" them into pillowcases or dish towels. The farmer could buy fence and posts, fertilizer, cement, coal, and a big seller was Lily White Flour. If you needed baby chicks, Westphalia Milling Company could take your order.

In March of 1927 the co-partners, Smith and Arens took out a loan with Westphalia State Bank and paid 7% interest. In 1936 Peter H. Smith sold his shares to Lewis J. Pung, his son-in-law and to Edward J. Thelen. They joined William J. Arens as owners of the milling business.

In 1950 a new main office was built across the road from the mill and a seed warehouse was built. They also added a 30-foot truck platform scale to the office.

In 1956 William J. Arens sold his shares to his son, Joseph C. Arens. Edward J. Thelen had died in 1954 and four years later his sons Donald W. and Delbert H. bought his interests.

In 1976, Joseph C. Arens, Donald C. Pung, Donald W. Thelen, and Delbert H. Thelen were the owners. This was the beginning of many improvements.

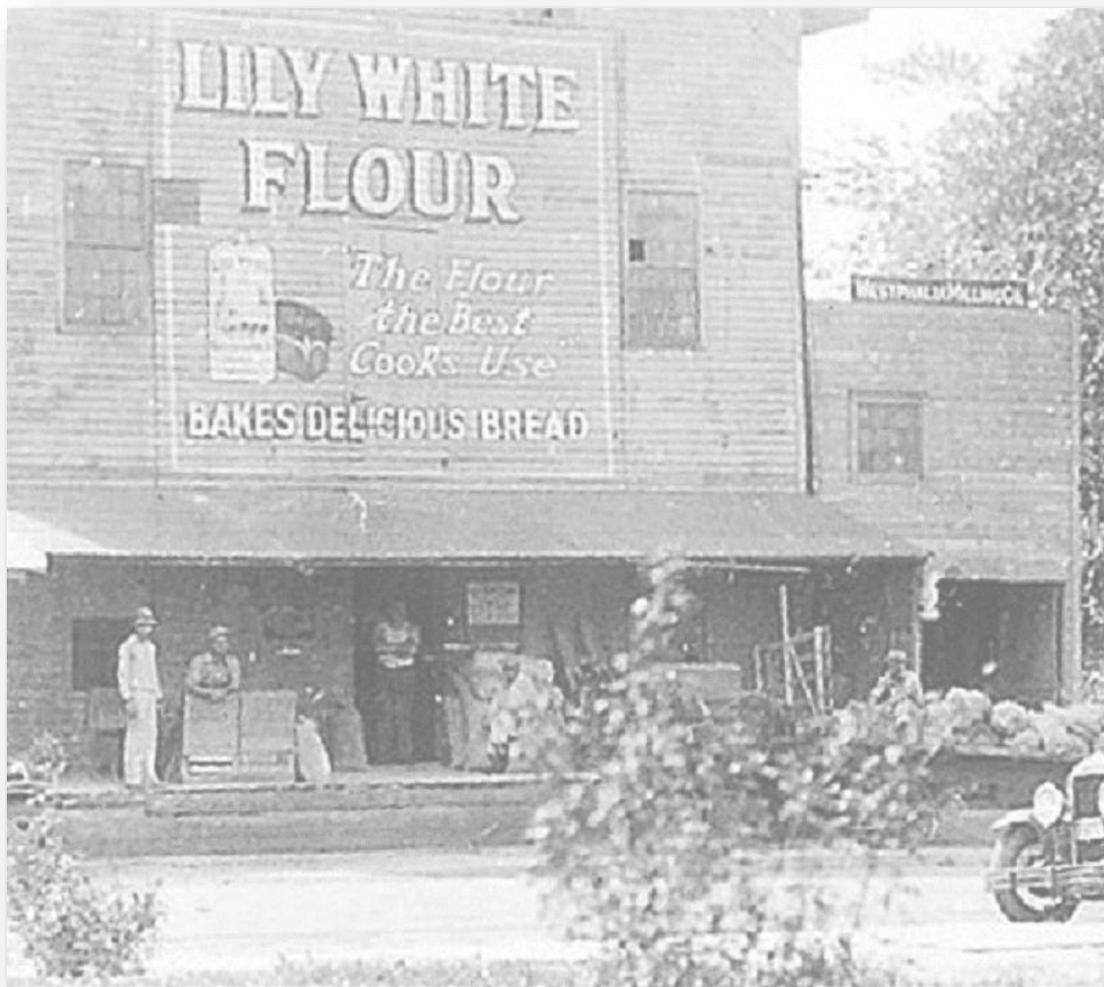
In order to extend their fertilizer warehouse: the Aloysius Thelen house was bought and demolished. This was followed by a 100,000 bushel storage complex. It was at this time that a farmer who was unloading his wheat said, "I don't like your new set-up. I was just getting off my tractor when you yelled that I should pull ahead because my wagon was empty. You're too speedy! I can't even visit with my neighbor anymore."

Joseph C. Arens sold his shares to Delbert and Donald Thelen and Donald C. Pung. And in 1989 Donald Thelen sold his interests to his brother Delbert and to Donald C. Pung.

More improvements! In 1985 a grain dryer - 1400 BPH with a 11,250 bushel wet holding bin was installed, followed by a new bag storage warehouse. In 1992 an in-house computer system for all inventory and sales was added, and two years later 2 storage tanks with a 125,000 bushel capacity were also added. The very latest improvement is a 200,000 pound outside truck scale, 70 feet long!

The two Ds - Donald Pung and Delbert Thelen, the 2015 owners of the Westphalia Milling Company continue to offer a valuable service to the farming community.

Evelyn Weiland



Early 1930s

#### Available 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.

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#### Alte Sprichwörter Old German Sayings

Der Winter kann nicht kommen,  
Bis der Herbst vorbei ist

Winter cannot come,  
until fall is done.

Lügen haben kurtze Beine  
Lies have short legs.

Alte Füchen gehen schwer in die Falle  
Old foxes are difficult to trap.

