



# Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

June 2016

Volume 25

## Recent Donors

Dan & Michelle Trierweiler

Leo Arens

Stoney Creek Conservation Association

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



**Congratulations and a Happy Birthday to Vincent Keilen on his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on May 31, 2016! Vincent, the son of Joseph & Mary Fedewa Keilen is one of 11 children and his sister Anita Keilen Fitzpatrick celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday in January.**

Donald Schafer, spouse of Geraldine Cook celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 30<sup>th</sup>! Don, son of Adam and Pauline Martin served the best hamburgers in town in their Schafer's Restaurant.

Fred Theis, spouse of Marie Schneider & son of Frank and Mary E. Fink Theis, joined the ranks of 90 year olds on June 9<sup>th</sup>! Congratulations Fred!

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Do you use any of the following?

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

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

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

## Westphalia's Cruise-In

June 16<sup>th</sup>

We will again be selling pretzels at this year's Cruise-In. Please stop by and say Hello!! Our building will NOT be open.

## Dick Thelen Presentation

About 130-140 attended Richard Thelen's April 21<sup>st</sup> presentation on the USS Indianapolis, sunk by a Japanese submarine during WWII. Dick brought his book "Only 317 Survived" which tells the story of his experience as a survivor while 880 lost their lives. He sold 60 copies of the book and his family was very impressed with the welcome they received from the community and the students of St. Mary's. He spoke to the students in the afternoon. They were well-behaved and courteous. They asked very impressive questions. A big Thank You to St. Mary's for allowing us to use the hall for this event.

## Bake Sale:

Thank-You to those who brought baked goods for our sale at the Portland Federal Credit Union during the town's "Garage Sales" and to those who bought them. We especially would like to thank PFCU for their continued support of our Historical Society.

## Weapons of War

The evening of June 15<sup>th</sup> we will welcome people who will display their weapons of war. We anticipate having examples of weapons from the Civil War through WW II. The plan is to have them shown by their owners and taken back home with them at the end of the evening. The building will be open from 5-8 pm with the weapons being brought in between 6:30 and 7 pm.

## Korean Experiences:

Keep the evening of July 20 open. At 7:00 pm Ben Heiden will give a presentation about his experience of being drafted into the Marine Corps and being deployed to the Korean conflict. Our building will be open from 5:00-8:00 pm. Please join us.

## Veterans Display

Please stop by our building within the next couple of months. You owe it to yourself and the community to view the displays Bernie & Walt Thelen have put together with help from Phil Hengesbach and Carol Simon. There are displays from the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. Our community served and sacrificed much during these wars and should be remembered.

Gary Arens is displaying his Civil War sculpture depicting his great-grandfather Anthony Arens (standing) and his neighbor Henry Rochelle (kneeling). We will have the sculpture thru the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. It will then be on display at the State Capitol on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Our intent had been to display it in our building but it was too tall to fit through the doors & we did not have the padding or tools to lay it on its side to get it through. Even if we had been able to get it inside, it would have probably damaged our floors so it was decided to set it outside. With help from Brian Smith and his Loadall we were able to set it on the current spot. Thanks Brian for your help.

Some tidbits about the sculpture..... A) It was carved from one trunk of a dead ash tree that was likely a sapling during the Civil War. B) The base was actually the top part of the log. C) There is a compass on one of the rails by Henry Rochelle. It and Henry's musket are pointing due south, so you know they were definitely Union Solders from the north. D) When Gary had it on display last fall at ArtPrize in Grand Rapids a youngster was overheard asking his mother "Is the whole thing chocolate?" E) The sculpture is titled "Men of the 14<sup>th</sup>". We feel honored that Gary is loaning us his work of art.

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## Back When.....

On 6 April 1868 Joseph Buechel and Catherine Blundy Buechel became the parents of quadruplets, 1 boy and 3 girls, Anton, Theresia, Maria, and Anna, and all survived!!!

## I Remember

### Grandma's Beautiful Garden

We knew that spring was just around the corner when our grandma started talking about her garden seeds and the "hot-bed". Do you know about those special beds? They were a box-like structure built using long wooden slats for the base and sides. (Every farmer had a good supply of boards. Many had their own woodlot).

This box was filled with humus (compost) and placed on the south side of a shed to "catch" the warm welcome sunshine and it was covered with glass. These hot beds were used for planting seeds for rapid growth in late winter or early spring.

Grandma would start with lettuce, peas, radishes and beet seeds. Later she would plant tomato seeds. These seeds were from special tomato plants she had dried and saved in the fall. The young plants were transplanted to her large garden around Memorial Day.

When visiting our grandparents, grandma enjoyed showing us her vegetables under the glass windows, especially the peas.

I remember my grandma, smiling as she served her hungry family the fresh garden vegetables.

Germaine Miller (Theis)

*Here's to a happy life  
And a long one.*

*Here's to a quick death  
And an easy one.*

*Here's to a pretty girl  
And an honest one.*

*Here's to a cold beer  
And another one.*

## She Found Love in Westphalia

Maglyn was her name, but family and friends called her Lena. She was born on 13 April 1890 in Humboldt Twp. in Brown County, Wisconsin. Lena Tillmann was the young girl who came to Westphalia, Michigan to visit her cousins, and as fate would have it, she also found her future husband, the handsome Tony Lennemann.

Lena & Tony were married on 19 January 1915 and lived on their Sunny Brook Farm north of Westphalia on Grange Road. It was in this home where their two beautiful daughters were born – Leona, who married August Bierstetel and Florence, who married John Luna.

Many years before this happy meeting, Lena's father, Bernard Tillmann, left his home in Westphalia – possibly in 1875 or 1876 – for Brown County, Wisconsin. And it was there he found his love, Louise Gergott. The two were married on 27 October 1879 in the Catholic Church in New Franken, Wisconsin.

Bernard was born in Westphalia on 22 December 1856, the son of William Tillmann – one of Westphalia's Founding Fathers. Bernard's mother was Magdalena Koenig. Why did Bernard go to Wisconsin? His older brother John had married Catherine Burghard whose parents were from Wisconsin. Perhaps it was at this time that the Michigan and Wisconsin lines were opened.

Lena's grandchildren fondly remember her as a happy woman who enjoyed gardening and playing her concertina. They also tell of the memories that Lena had of her Wisconsin home and the stories that were passed down from earlier days.

One of the stories that Lena could recall was the Pestigo Fire on 8 October 1871 in Wisconsin. It occurred on the same day as the more infamous Great Chicago Fire. The Pestigo Fire was so intense it jumped several miles over the waters of Green Bay and burned parts of the Door Peninsula – the area where Lena's mother, Louise Gergott lived as a young girl. The Gergott family survived, Lena said, by jumping down into their well-pit as the fire ravaged their home.

Lena lived a long and happy life. She died on 25 July 1983 at the age of 93 years. She is buried in St. Mary Cemetery in Westphalia, Michigan.

It is good to remember!

As told by Bob and Ben Bierstetel – Lena's grandsons.



Below: Maglyn (Lena) Tillmann

At Right: Lena's daughters,  
Leona & Florence



At Right: Lena, as a small  
child

