



Westphalia Historical Society Newsletter

August 2013

Volume 8

Who were they and where did they go?

We often think the early settlers came to Westphalia and planted their feet here to stay. But some of them came and moved on to spread their roots to other parts of the country.

Perhaps one of the first to leave the early settlement was Anton Cordes one of our founding fathers. In the cold winter of 1842-1843 he sold his farm in section 5 to Peter Simon and moved his family to Alpine Township north of Grand Rapids. There he bought 640 acres of land and today many of his descendants still live in the Alpine area.

The young and enterprising Peter Caspar Gast moved to Grand Rapids where he owned and operated a successful soap manufacturing plant. He more than likely learned the trade from his father, Bernard, who owned an Ashery in our village on West Main Street. Some of our readers may know that ashes were needed to make lye an important ingredient in the making of soap.

Adalbert Damsky, a teacher and organist at St. Mary's in the 1860s and 1870s also moved on to Grand Rapids and was one of the founders of St. Adalbert Catholic Church.

Some of our Irish families....Moriarity, Egan, Lawless and others relocated to Portland, Ionia or to the beautiful little town of Hubbardston on Fish Creek. Places that are like a "wee bit of Ireland".

Many traveled and even walked the more than 50 miles north to Beal City. The time was in the 1870s and the settlers were looking for good farm land, and it has been said that nearly 90% of the early Beal City settlers were from Westphalia. Today we would feel right at home among these families with names like Fedewa, Schafer, Hengesbach, Fox, Tillman, Pohl, Pung, Martin, Gross, and the list goes on and on.

Anton Pulte, from the Mecklinghausen/Westphalia area of Germany arrived here in July of 1840 and bought 80 acres of land in section 9 and in July of 1842 he sold his land to Jacob Neuman and moved to Detroit (Alvin &

Janice Feldpausch now live on this site). There he was married to Aloysia Gabler in St. Mary Church (Greektown). Anton is the ancestor of the very well known and successful "Pulte Builders", one of the largest homebuilders in our country. Even during the current recession they built 7,095 homes in 2011 while they had built 45,630 homes in 2005. Some of his great-great grandchildren who visited Westphalia a short time ago said, "Our ancestor did not want to be a farmer so he decided to move to Detroit."

These are just a few of the families that lived here for a time and then moved on. However, there is a good chance they all took a little bit of our Westphalia with them.

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Historical Center & Museum Campaign

During our last meeting there was much discussion on whether to list the donation and pledge amounts given by our donors. Our Newsletter will list the names of those we have received donations from as we definitely want to recognize them; also, they will be receiving a thank you letter/receipt. 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

Dennis & Marge Thelen	Ted & Mary Jane Simon
Dr. Deborah Gadille	John Luttig
Gene & Michelle Droste	Gladys Heckman
Jim & Doris Crowley	Don & Mary Ellen Schneider
Marie Pohl	Louis & Ruth Spitzley
The children of Stan & Rose Schafer on the occasion of Rose's 80 th Birthday!	

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



Love is Triumphant

“Pilgrims are we on this earth,
Traveling down a thousand roads
However it pleases our God,
In search of our goals.”

(From the book “Basilica of the Fourteen Holy Helpers”)

In 1836 the Heinlein family indeed were pilgrims – searching for freedom and happiness in America and finally in Westphalia, Michigan.

The father was born of nobility in 1794 as Baron George Friedrich into the family Heinlein of Lower Franconia in the State of Bavaria, Germany. The mother was Barbara Boehmer, also of Lower Franconia, born in 1796. When she married George Friedrich Heinlein, he was disowned by his family and lost his title.

How did this come about? Mrs. Diane Fricka of Oak Lawn, Illinois is a great-great-great granddaughter of Barbara and George Friedrich Heinlein. In a recent letter she writes:

“To me it is a very romantic story because Baron George Friedrich fell in love with Barbara, the beautiful seamstress who worked in the castle. His family thought the marriage was beneath him and they disowned him. His brother would not allow him on the castle lands. The brothers fought bitterly. Then George, Barbara and their young children decided to leave Germany for America. Love is grand.”

“And like I told you, the picture (The Fourteen Holy Helpers) was the only valuable possession they owned and they brought it along on their journey to America. When a great ocean storm came up and they feared they would die, Barbara promised to donate the picture if their lives were saved.”



Their prayers were answered and the promise was kept. Their masterpiece of the Fourteen Holy Helpers now hangs on the wall in St. Mary's Church.

The Heinlein family arrived safely in Detroit in 1836. Fr. Anton Kopp – our first priest – recorded their arrival in Westphalia in October of 1842. They had farmland in

Section 16 and their home in the Village on S. Westphalia Street (now the home of Larry and Erma Feneis).

George and Barbara had eight children – 7 daughters and 1 son. George died on 1 May 1875 and, at the age of 98 years, Barbara died on 2 Apr 1894. Both are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Westphalia.

The painting's hand-carved frame was made by Westphalia craftsmen with wood from native-grown black walnut trees.

The painting of the “Fourteen Holy Helpers,” and its companion work-of-art, “The Founding of St. Mary's,” 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 craftspeople. The paintings were hung on the back walls in the new St. Mary's Church.

Work done with love will endure.

St. Mary Craft Show

We plan to have a booth at the Craft Show at St. Mary's School on Sunday, November 3rd. We will be selling our books and our “Original Cruise-In” T-shirts. They would make great Christmas gifts. We have sold about 75 of the T-shirts so far. They can also be purchased at Plannedscapes Nursery & Landscape Design.

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Grace before Meals

Komm Herr Jesu
Sei unser Gast
Und segne was
Du uns bescheret hast.

Come Lord Jesus
Be our guest
Bless all these gifts
That You have given us. Amen

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This 'n that....

If you'd care to join us, our next meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, August 13th at the Township Hall.

Any questions or suggestions? Call Evelyn 587-6839 or Leo 587-3843, or email Charlotte, jerchar@4wbi.net.