

Starke County Historical Society

THE PRIDE OF STARKE COUNTY

Fall, 2020

Newsletter

MESSAGE from the PRESIDENT

As the leaves begin to change and the weather cools, we welcome the last quarter of 2020. What a year it has been! Never knowing what is around the next corner and hoping this all goes away so we can get back to normal.

Due to the many variables caused by the pandemic, the Starke County Historical Society made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 annual meeting. A mailing will be sent on November 1 which will have a ballot for election of the 2021 SCHS Board, the 2021 membership application and the Memory Tree form.

Your membership renewal is vital to our mission. Your completed ballot will need to be received/postmarked no later than November 30, 2020. Please complete and return the ballot and renewal form to the History Center either by mail or in person. It may be returned in the same envelope. It is important for everyone to return the form - your vote is your voice.

Despite Covid-19, work is continuing. The display committee, along with other volunteers, has worked tirelessly to set up new exhibits and displays at the History Center. The museum is featuring a nice military display spotlighting uniforms of local veterans. The wedding exhibit will continue to be on display through December. We have a beautiful display of

glassware and child tea sets. Come in and visit. The new Starke County Veterans Memorial and the new Veterans Memorial Plaza, located on the grounds of the Starke County Courthouse, will officially be unveiled on Veterans Day. Please plan to attend the dedication ceremony. The History Center will be open on that day (Wednesday, November 11 - Veterans Day) from 10-4 for those wishing to visit either before or after the program.

Volunteers are working on updating PastPerfect, a program for inventorying and cataloging artifacts (objects, photographs, etc) owned by the Society. This project is going to take many hours of volunteer work. If any of you, our members, could contribute some time to the inventory project or any other activities around the museum, please submit a volunteer application (in this newsletter) or contact a board member. We will put you in touch with the correct person.

Although the year has had more challenges than expected, we are happy to recognize that the Starke County History Center has now been open for two years. As the state moves forward into Stage 5 of getting-back-to-normal, we all look forward to the holidays and the start of a new year. May the holiday season bring Blessings to all and the new year hope for what is to come.

NEW INDIANA FLAG

Starke County Historical Society is excited to express its deepest appreciation to Senator Ed Charbonneau. He recently donated an Indiana State Flag to the Starke County History Center. The new flag will take its place on the flagpole in front of the History Center.



SCHS FACEBOOK

Starke County Historical Society has an active Facebook page. During the summer of 2020, we shared over 100 postings. Some of our topics have included local sports highlights from the past, pictures of local sites, trivia about Starke County and Indiana, and other miscellaneous posts. If you have a Facebook account, please follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/StarkeHistory/>.



Newsletter Contributors were Venita Cunningham, Melba Shilling, Lori Smith, and Dolores Surfus



UPDATED WEBSITE

Starke County Historical Society is excited to announce that our new and refreshed website is live. The updated site includes changes to navigation. We've also improved the structure of our content, so you'll get more from a quick read. There's a whole host of smaller but impactful changes, all to make your experience better for you.

Using the drop-down menu, you can search information on current museum exhibits and displays, articles and videos about the history of the county, and more. Check it out at starkehistory.org.

This Newsletter has been sponsored by:

Starke County Farm Bureau Co-op



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*THOUGHTS
from
the
COUNTY
GENEALOGIST*

MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS

On Veterans Day we honor those who have served in the military. Many families have long histories of service to their country, with many veterans throughout the family tree. All members of the military leave records that when piecing a family's genealogical history, can be used to prove the line. Using records of service correctly can open new locations of research. Knowing military campaign years can narrow the specific records to search.

Between 1775 and 1916 the military service records may include pension records. Pension records can be a rich source of information. These records list not only the veteran but may also list the spouse of the veteran, child(ren) of the veteran, and/or where the veteran lived. Confirming the residence can lead to Bounty Lands records which can be seen for war-time service between 1775 and 1855. The Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 may have a combined Bounty/Pension file.

Bounty Lands can be a gateway to other records. By searching the land granted through Bounty Land records, a chain of ownership can be established from the veteran to descendants. Land ownership usually generates records traceable through the courts, either by sale records or probate. Locating a will that leaves the land to descendants can be solid proof of relationship and service.

The Civil War has many detailed records including draft registration, which lists where the person lived at the time. In Indiana, the Adjutant General published a report after the war listing those who served, the division served in, and if they survived the war or not. Using this basic information, a search for both pension records and headstone applications is possible. Often the Civil War tombstone applications will list a family member as a receiver of the stone - this can help confirm family relationships and locations.

Newspapers can secondarily confirm service beginning in the Civil War up through the Vietnam Era. Local newspapers often have detailed service information for local veterans. Letters to loved ones were often published with details of service location, troop movement, and living conditions.

Once you confirm your veteran's service, his/her service record can be ordered online from the National Archives. Details about veterans' daily life, muster roll, achievements, locations, and other information about their service is included in this file. Names of next of kin as well as birthplace may be listed as well. The National Archives website is:

<https://www.archives.gov/veterans>.

Modern records can also be requested. However, a fire destroyed many World War II service records so many no longer exist. In the case of destroyed records, local newspapers may help piece together service information.

Using service records for genealogy can help fill in trees as well as provide insight into how ancestors lived. Access to records is available through the National Archives and through paid sites like Ancestry or Fold 3. If you have a specific service record question, stop by the Starke County History Center any Saturday to speak with the county genealogist.

EXHIBITS AT THE MUSEUM

The Starke County History Center has a variety of exhibits on display. In case you've been unable to visit recently, here are a few photographs of current displays.



Schricker memorabilia



Wedding exhibit



School display spotlighting county schools and students from the past

AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM

When looking for a unique gift, consider stopping at the Starke County History Center. SCHS has items of local interest available for sale during regular hours - Thursdays and Fridays 10-4; Saturdays 10-2. Here's a sampling of items available:

Starke County Flags	\$5-\$50 (vary by size)
Starkeopoly	\$30.00 \$25 sale
"The Life of William D. Jackson" (video)	\$20.00 \$15 sale
"Everglades of the North: The Story of the Grand Kankakee Marsh"	\$25.00 \$20 sale
"Starke County Courthouse Centennial 1897-1997 (book)	\$25.00
Pens	\$1.00
Mugs (depot, church, mint still, or boat)	\$7.50 each \$5 sale
	\$25.00 (set of 4) \$15 sale

Spotlight on Starke County History: ALFRED SPHUNG, THE FROG MAN

Starke County had a unique distinction among all the counties across the United States in the early 20th century. Located in North Judson, Alfred A. Sphung, "the frog man," was a distributor and general merchant in frogs especially, but also turtles, clams, crawfish and other species of water animals.



In 1879 Mr. Sphung first came to Starke County. For several years he was a fisher and trapper along the Kankakee River and lakes of Northern Indiana. In 1883 he supplied a considerable quantity of frogs for the market, which was the beginning of his unique industry. Though it was often referred to as the frog farm, Sphung's place at North Judson was only 17 ½ acres of land, situated within the town limits, which housed his home and a large ice house. The Sphung place provided facilities for the handling of his merchandise. No frogs were actually raised at Sphung's place, as he was more a merchant than a frog raiser. From early spring until late in autumn and through the winter his ponds and sheds were full of the animals. One-fourth acre of ground was enclosed. Water was turned into it from the pond near Sphung's ice house. Here the turtles were placed when shipped in from Wisconsin. There were long low sheds built over the ditches in places, which served as protection for the frogs in cold weather. He handled water products by the thousands and by the tons; his place at North Judson had as many as thirty-five tons of frogs at the same time.

Three cities at the top of Mr. Sphung's list for meat were Dayton, OH, Philadelphia, PA, and Pittsburg, PA. As a rule he would ship 2,700 pounds of turtles at a time to Philadelphia. While he furnished frogs and turtles to hotels as edible commodities, his most valuable customers were the scientific laboratories of hundreds of colleges and universities. Sphung shipped thirty dozen turtles at one time to Harvard University, and nearly every large college in the country at different times applied to him for specimens. Some of the largest regular shipments of turtles, frogs, clams and crawfish were sent to Yale, Columbia, Harvard, University of Chicago, University of Texas, Leland Stanford University, University of California, Northwestern University, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, University of Mississippi, University of North Carolina and the Ohio Northern University. Even the United States Government placed large orders with him at different times.

Mr. Sphung died December, 1935, and is buried in Highland Cemetery in North Judson.



2021 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND DONATIONS

Two forms will be mailed to you - your membership renewal for 2021 and the 2021 Memory Tree Ribbons form. Thank you very much for your renewed membership and contributions! These funds help maintain the Schricker home, the History Center and contribute to our overall program of preserving the stories, photos and artifacts of the history of Starke County for future generations.

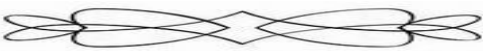
If you are interested in long-range planning, ask us about the Starke County Historical Society's endowment fund or about including the Starke County Historical Society in your estate plans.



ELECTION OF 2021 SCHS OFFICERS & BOARD

As stated in the Presidents' column, the Starke County Historical Society made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 annual meeting. On November 1, ballots for the election of the 2021 SCHS Board will be mailed through the post office. Your membership renewal is vital to our mission.

Your completed ballot will need to be received/postmarked no later than November 30, 2020. Please complete and return your renewal form and ballot to the History Center either by mail or in person. They may be returned in the same envelope. It is important for everyone to return the form - your vote is your voice.



OPEN VETERANS DAY

In conjunction with the dedication at the Starke County Courthouse of the new Starke County Veterans Memorial and Veterans Memorial Plaza on Veterans Day, 2020, the Starke County History Center will be open that day (Wednesday, November 11) from 10-4. Please stop by that day and visit the military exhibits currently on display. The photo below shows one part of the military display in the front room, spotlighting uniforms and memorabilia of local veterans. Visit us to see the rest of the exhibit.



ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS

Do you have an e-mail address? In the past, newsletters were mailed to our membership. Today, most of our members have email. Therefore, newsletters and invitations are now sent electronically to those who have submitted their email address. With the savings in postage, we are now able to have both a spring and fall newsletter to keep you up-to-date on happenings.

Hard copies are still mailed to members who do not have email.

Starke County Historical Society
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