



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

THIRD QUARTER
NEWSLETTER – 2022

"from past generations to future generations"

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”
Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities

The quote above may be one many of us can relate to at this time in world events. That said...

I hope everyone is enjoying the start of summer and experiencing more best times rather than the worst. Our board members and other volunteers had some of those best times recently. I believe you will see in the following pages of this publication that many of us were able to enjoy the visits from the intermediate classes from Herscher Grade School. It was fun to be with the students and teachers, but most adults were a little tired. Our hope is that many of you will take the opportunity to be a child again and experience some of the same things these young people did and then declare as I overheard more than one of them say, “This is the best field trip ever.”

We thank the Kankakee County Museum for the generosity of the framed pictures from the book *Growing Seasons*. If you are not familiar with this book, it is the memories of Elsie Lee Splear as compiled by her daughter Carolyn Pratt and illustrated with paintings by Ken Stark. Personally, I think the paper mâché cow that came with the exhibit is worth stopping in to see.

The *Growing Seasons* exhibit is not the only area of history you will experience on your visit. Military, school, church, family, businesses, and more are included in our collection. This is a good outing for individuals, friends, family, or class reunions.

Carol Desch
HAHS President

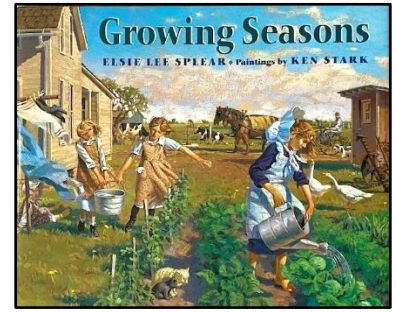
MISSION STATEMENT

Herscher Area Historical Society's purpose is to capture and preserve history and artifacts related to Herscher and the surrounding area from past generations to future generations.

GROWING SEASONS DISPLAY

submitted by Mary Kirstein and Judy Witheft

All of our museums have followed the theme of the locally written book, *Growing Seasons*. This book was written by Elsie Lee SplEAR and the paintings illustrating the book were done by Ken Stark. The book is about a farm family of four young girls just after the turn of the century. Recently, over three hundred 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders toured the museums over three days. They began at the Main Street Museum and then moved on to the Farm Annex located beside the Anderson House. They finished their tour inside the Anderson House.



All students enjoyed the “hands on” experience of planting potatoes and viewed various farm scenes from the book that were set up in displays. At the Main Street Museum, they viewed childhood games that the girls might have played, saw how they cooked and washed clothes, and even saw how they took trips to an outdoor privy. Students then toured the military section as well as the old schools, churches, and Cardiff.

From the Main Street Museum, they moved to the Annex where they tried their hand at the art of milking and learned about farm tools and techniques. They finished their field trip at the Anderson House where they were able to try a butter churn, victrola, sausage grinder, and more. Students also enjoyed the early century wardrobe.



1913 AUCTION
submitted by Mary Kirstein



This newspaper article and the framed photo below give information regarding an auction that took place just south of Herscher in 1913. We received this poster right about the time we set up our displays of *Growing Seasons*, and we thought it could even be possible that “papa” from the story could have attended

this auction. These were donated to the museum by Melanie Holmes.

The following is from the framed photo:

*Mary LeVasseur Costigan (1878-1943)
Daughter of Michel LeVasseur (1800-1886)
Great-niece of Noel LeVasseur, founder of Bourbonnais
Wife of Daniel Costigan Jr. (1871-1912) of Herscher
Mother of Elsie May Costigan Lemenager (2.18.1900-1.1.1955)*



When Mary’s husband, Dan, died in December 1912, she auctioned off animals, etc., and bought a home on South Fourth Avenue, across from St. Mary’s Hospital. There, she took in boarders – the children of her husband’s many siblings who still lived on farms in Herscher (Collins, Olson, Costigan, etc.), so that the kids could attend Kankakee schools. She and daughter Elsie attended St. Rose Church.

Mary retained ownership of the Herscher farm, and willed it to her daughter, Elsie (Costigan) Lemenager, who later willed the farm to her two daughters, Eilienne (Lemenager) Tallman and Nedine (Lemenager) Bowman.

Auction poster donated May 2022 by the daughter of



Nedine Bowman – Melanie (Bowman) Holmes, author of four books, including The Secret Life of Postcards: Tracing Art & History Through One Woman’s Collection (vintage collection of Elsie Costigan Lemenager, dated 1906-1930s).

A PAUPER

by Bob Voss

While going through some old minutes from meetings of the Pilot Township Board, I found this:

N.A. Chester, Supervisor, S.T. Comstock, Poor Master, and W.A. Throop, Town Clerk, do this day declare B. Flint a pauper.

March 17, 1860

Attest: Wm. A. Throop Town Clerk

You have to wonder, what constituted being a pauper back in the day?

Why would the Board do such a thing?

Also, what was the position of Poor Master?

Maybe you needed to be declared a pauper to receive some kind of benefits? There was a Kankakee County Poor House back then. Maybe you had to be declared a pauper to get into it? The Township had burial lots at Pilot Center Cemetery for paupers. As far as I know, none were ever used for that purpose. This is the only place where I came across having declared someone a pauper.

HISTORICAL PLAZA

Our Historical Plaza project located next to the Herscher Village Hall will resume when a craftsman is found to etch the pavers. For information, call the museum at 815-426-2627.

WE HAVE A WEBSITE!

Visit our new website at herscherhistory.org to learn more about the Herscher Area Historical Society and see some of the interesting things we do.



SURPRISE

by Bob Voss

On Sunday, April 3, 2022, the Herscher Area Historical Society had guests from Round Lake, IL. They were Jim and Cheryl Penna.

The Pennas had called first saying that they had a Bible that belonged to John Herscher and wanted to donate it to the HAHS. This was really EXCITING news except for the fact that there were four John Herschers in the area (not all spelled alike). Could it possibly be our Town Father's Bible?

Indeed, they did have a Bible with the inscription Presented To: Mr. John Herscher by his wife December 25, 1883.

There were numerous family pictures in this Bible. We think that they are members of the Wesemann family. (John's wife's name was Caroline Wesemann) Also in this Bible, was a handwritten obituary of John Herscher (author unknown). What a find for the HAHS.

But that was not all. John and Caroline were married on November 25, 1868, and in 1883 moved into their new house at 101 N. Main Street (currently owned by Jim Ridings). John didn't get to live there very long in that he died on May 7, 1885. They had no children. Caroline moved on with her life and married Louis Dieke on November 21, 1887. The Diekes lived in Cook Co., IL.

Caroline did come back to Herscher in 1909 to donate ground for the new Lutheran Church.

In the packet we were given was:

- A program from the first service at the Lutheran Church dated February 13, 1910 that was written in German
- 1910 Christmas program from the Lutheran Church
- A newspaper obituary of Caroline Dieke who died on March 3, 1914. Ironically, the obituary did not mention John Herscher but talked about her life with Louis Dieke.
- Other items donated were numerous Bibles owned by Dieke family members and newspaper clippings.

How did the Pennas come to have all of this? Jim is a demolition contractor in the Chicago suburbs. Many years ago, he was going to tear down a house which had been owned at one time by one of the Diekes. In the house was a Tupperware tub with all of the above in it.

Jim asked the owner if he wanted these items before he demolished the house. He did not, so Jim saved it. Somehow in searching through these items, they were able to locate the HAHS.

What are the odds of all of this happening?

Become a **MEMBER**

Our Memberships run from January to January and are available as follows:

Individual/Family: \$20

Business/Civic: \$50

Lifetime: \$200

Be sure to watch for a membership form in our First Quarter Newsletter in January! You may also contact the museum to request a form.

Membership dues help us to
Preserve the Past for the Future

MUSEUM HOURS

Main Street Museum

190 S. Main, Herscher

Open Fridays 9-11 AM

and the First Sunday c

Each Month 1-3 PM

Anderson House

161 W. Myrtle, Herscher

Open the First Sunday of

Each Month 1-3 PM

Labor Day Weekend Hours:

Sept. 2 – Main Street Museum Open 9am – 11am

Sept. 3, 4, 5 – All Museums Open 1pm – 3pm

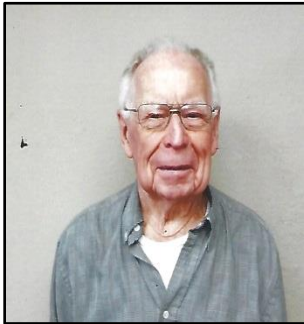
(including the Annex)

Museum Board Meetings take place at the Anderson House at 4:00pm on the Fourth Monday of each month. Exceptions will be posted at 190 S. Main and on our website at herscherhistory.org. All members are welcome to attend.

Call the Museum at 815-426-2627 to visit the museums at a time convenient for you.

DANIEL PATRICK HOFFMAN

by Carol Webber
with Dan, Doug, and Dean Hoffman



Daniel Patrick Hoffman was born on March 16, 1935, in a 15-room Victorian-styled farmhouse that was built by Dan's grandparents in the late 1800s. The home was sited near a branch of Horse Creek, located two miles east of Essex by "Hoffman Bridge" which was named after the family. Dan adds, "With nine kids, my parents needed a big home!" His father is Orland George Hoffman. He was raised on the family farm where Dan was born and raised. His mother, Emily Marie, was raised on a farm in South Dakota. Dan explained that his grandfather would take Orland with him to pheasant hunt on the property in South Dakota owned by Emily Marie's family. When Orland and Emily married, they moved into the 15-room farmstead.

Dan is the youngest of the siblings who are James Alden, Anna, Irene, Violette, Waneta, Marie, Helen, and George. Only Marie and Helen survive with Dan. Marie lives in South Wilmington, and Helen lives in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

As was typical in the 1940s and later, Dan attended a one-room school just a mile north of his home for grades one through six. "We seemed to have a new teacher every year," Dan remembered. For grades seven and eight, he attended Essex Grade School, which today is the village's historical museum.

Dan joined 50 high school students at Reddick High School where he played football for his freshman and sophomore years. "I was #27 and a right guard," he explained. Irma Unz was there along with Principal George Main. "Principal Main had a unique way of disciplining," Dan remembered. "Let's just say that it did not take long to learn how to behave."

Dan said, "At the end of my sophomore year, I decided I would not return to school; my father told me that the bus would be at our house at 7 a.m., and I had better be on that bus. I graduated in 1953 from Reddick High School."

He reported that he just did not like school, but he really enjoyed working with engines. "People would give me engines to fix, and I would take them apart,

and work on them. I still enjoy tinkering with engines," Dan said. "Usually, I was working on a car engine so that I could get it to run for a trip to Kankakee for a date on Saturday night at the movies." His first car was a 1941 Studebaker, blue coupe. He did enjoy the free movies held at several small towns, plus the sock hops after games, and square dancing.

The Hoffman farm with nine children had many things going on. On the 360 acres, crops of corn, oats, and beans were grown, with Dan driving the tractor, baling hay, and helping with the livestock. "We raised 100 cattle and sold them to a person who had a stock yard in Joliet. I earned \$1 for each cow I helped round up for sale. We had all breeds, including ten milk cows. I milked cows twice a day, every day, and helped with butchering." The family sold the milk and the cream. The family also raised pigs and chickens. "We sold the eggs at Veronda's store in Essex."

Dan said, "We had a large garden, but that was my mom's domain. We would till the soil, but she planted, weeded, and harvested the vegetables, plus canned the produce. She had a long row of flowers on one side of the garden." When the apples were ripe, the family made cider and vinegar.

With all the food and supplies available on the farm, the lean years were not so bad. However, Dan does remember times of books of stamps which rationed sugar, flour, gasoline, tires, cars, farm equipment, and even clothing. Dan recalls exchanging boxes of clothing with other family members to save money.

With all that work, Dan commented that there was still time for fun with lots of kids to play with at home. "We played hide and seek, hopscotch on our sidewalk, and rode our bicycles. One of my favorite things to do was ride the cattle!" That is, when he wasn't working on an engine.

Dan and George would help at the Buckwalter elevator with unloading coal. "We earned \$5 a day to unload a train-car filled with coal. It took the entire day to do it." Dan had three or four part-time jobs to earn money.

Dan reported that he met his future wife, Madonna Emling, on a blind date. Madonna

lived southwest of Herscher on the Wilcox farm with

her parents Lawrence and Genevieve Emling and



siblings Jerry, Mike, Pat, Kenny, Mary Lou, and Tom. “My friend Rose Brunner is the one who set up the date,” Dan smiled. “She was dating Donna’s brother, Jerry, so I was convinced to go on a double date with Donna. I drove, so I picked up Rose in Essex, drove west of Herscher to pick Jerry and Donna, and then drove to Kankakee to the Luna Theater to sit in the balcony to watch the movie.”

Dan said he and Madonna dated for a while and then stopped seeing each other. “Two months later, both of us were at the Herscher Park watching a free movie. There she was sitting on her blanket watching the movie,” Dan remembers. “Our dates were usually movies in Kankakee, but I had to have her home by 10 p.m. on Saturday night. There were no Sunday dates since she had to get up early for school on Monday.” Madonna’s dad enforced these rules.



The couple was engaged for a couple years, and then was married June 30, 1956, at St. Margaret Mary Church on Main Street in Herscher. “My best man was my brother, George; Donna’s maid of honor was her sister, Pat. The wedding reception was in the church basement. Our first home was rented for \$50 per month from George Clodi at

5000 S 11000 West.”

Dan became a laborer for the Natural Gas Pipeline Company on November 3, 1953, so he was living close to his work; however, in 1958, he and Madonna built their own home at 225 North Elm in Herscher, where Dan still lives today. “Our neighbors were the Cotters, the Haebichs and the Essingtons. There were no other homes nearby and there was a field behind the house until the high school expanded by building its sports facilities there.” Madonna and Dan enjoyed their lives on Elm Street. “We were married almost 64 years until Donna died March 19, 2020, just a couple days after my birthday.”

While working for the pipeline company, Dan also worked part-time for Harold Patterson at the Herscher Lumber Yard. “I would unload lumber from the train car for \$1.25 per hour. Wendell Lambert was there too. I helped Ray Ramsey on Main Street with his table top company, where Herscher Auto Parts is today.”

During his 43 years of working for the pipeline company, Dan earned his way through the ranks,

beginning as a laborer and ending as a Supervisor of Operations. “I worked from November 3, 1953, to February 29, 1996, working an extra day because of leap year. I’ve worked with some wonderful people.” Dan enjoyed his work with at the company, and those he worked with appreciated his dedication and continued good efforts.

Dan was and is an active participant in Herscher activities. “I helped put up the ‘Welcome to Herscher’ banner on Labor Day for many years and also organized the parade line up. I helped with the church’s float, the Emling float, and the Fritz float, plus served chicken dinners when our church served.”

For 60 years, Dan has been a member of the Pilot Township Fire Protection District (Herscher Fire Department). “I was Chief for three or four years, but with all the paperwork I had with my regular job, I did not need all that PTFPD paperwork too.” The fire house was on Main Street when he first began and then moved to Walnut Street later to a great new facility. Dan was chairman of the grounds Committee of St. Margaret Mary Church for 15 years.

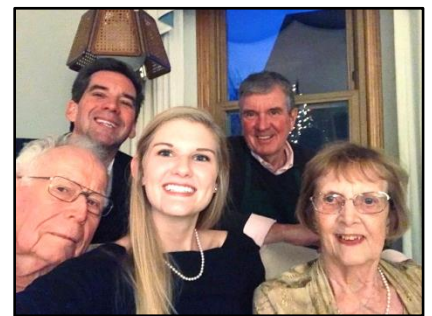
Perhaps Dan’s greatest impact on Herscher, at least in the way it looks today, is the result of his 12 years of service on the Village Board, where he was Chair of the Streets and Alleys Committee, Assistant Chair of the Water Committee, and a member of the Ordinance Committee. During 11 of those 12 years, the Village installed curbing and rebuilt streets throughout the older parts of town. The Village, at Dan’s suggestion, suspended the street and curbing project for one year so it wouldn’t have to borrow money to drill a new well and install a mile long line to bring the water into town.

Dan’s community involvement also includes serving as Chair of the Herscher Townhouse Association during the time it built the two buildings at the east end of the development and as Chair of the Legion Community Center. During his time there, the Center installed a generator through a grant obtained by his wife, Madonna, and Butch Lambert.

“Donna loved to decorate for Christmas,” Dan remembers.

“Everywhere in our home was decorated, and it might take until July to get it all put away.

I always helped her, and we enjoyed it.”



Other activities the couple did were to square dance at the Community Building at the Gas Plant. The building was moved into Herscher onto Second Street and is now the Village's Community Building, housing the Village officials and Police Department. "The building has not changed much since it was located at the Gas Plant, and we would square dance regularly with other couples such as Paul and Jean Kroll, Alex and Loretta O'Connor, and Bill and Elsie Fritz. Great fun. We also played cards. One time, Donna and I were playing at Paul and Jean Kroll's home. When Jean left the room, we set up her cards for a perfect pinochle hand. When she returned, she played the cards and was amazed at how great they were. I don't think she ever realized what we did, nor did we want to tell her!"

Dan smiles with great joy and pride as he speaks of his sons Doug and Dean and his granddaughter Hayley.

His older son, Doug, graduated from the Herscher schools; he went on to become a lawyer. "He practiced



international business law," Dan explained. "Donna and I were able to travel to several sites where he was working.

My favorite was London. Doug had several friends living there at the time. An Australian friend of his took us on a tour of Buckingham Palace, the houses of Parliament, and other locations. Another friend of his is the music director at Westminster Abbey. He took us on a behind-the-scenes tour there. Doug has had a wonderful career, and he retired a few years ago and lives in Chicago."

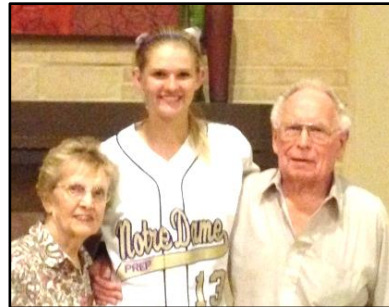
"The best trip I have made was two weeks in Alaska with Donna, our sons, and their families. We spent two weeks, one on land and one on the water, experiencing the beauty and grandeur. We saw whales, went white water rafting, and flew in a helicopter over the glaciers. It was July, and we still had to wear sweatshirts sometimes."



His other son, Dean Hoffman, graduated from Herscher schools and from Illinois State University in

Normal, IL, with a business degree. He is the Chief Executive Officer of a healthcare company and lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

"Dean's daughter Hayley is 24 years old and graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, with a degree in Accounting and Information Systems. She attended high school in Arizona. She is 6 feet 2 inches tall and has been a star pitcher of fast pitch softball. We attended all her tournaments, and one was



especially exciting. Her team was losing 4-6, but Hayley was up to bat. As a pitcher, she was not the best hitter, but the bases were loaded, with two outs, and two strikes. Hayley hit a

grand slam home run to win the game. It was so exciting! And I'm glad I was there to see it," Dan smiled.

Dan's words to live by are "always be fair, and if you say you're going to do something, do it!"

Fortunately, Dan traveled to Arizona to visit with Dean, Doug and Hayley for his birthday March 16. While there, he was able to enjoy the warm weather and time with his family.

Contact Us:

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Website: herscherhistory.org

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