



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

FOURTH QUARTER
NEWSLETTER – 2022

"from past generations to future generations"

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Be proud of your hometown. It’s a big part of what makes you the person you are.”

Quote from internet, *The Random Vibez*

The year 2022 is quickly becoming history. As for me I find I am finding changes all around locally and internationally. It reminds me of the ripple effect that each action no matter how small effects something else along the way. We continue to collect and preserve artifacts and stories from many different contributors. Our purpose comes more relevant as our lives change. Those who have made the effort to document the life they have experienced in Kankakee County West and what brought them to the area whether in writing, photos or personal collections are to be praised for doing so. So much of our history is lost from one generation to the next due to the throw away philosophy of today.

I am pleased to report that the historical society has enjoyed the visits of numerous persons and families throughout the summer, some from far away others from down the street. All are like that pebble so to speak that starts the ripples going. One person causes another to take an interest in local history when their story is told. In the same way one item sets the stage for another exhibit. We look forward to a visit from you soon. Come and share your story.

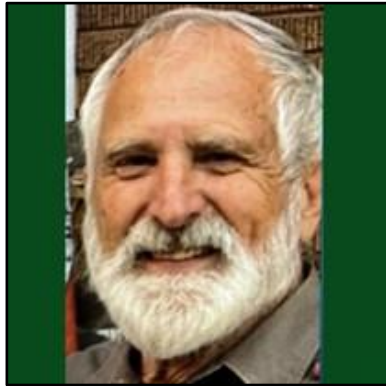
Carol Desch
HAHS President

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.

TRIBUTE TO DR. KENNETH W. KIRSTEIN, DVM

We at Herscher area Historical Society are feeling the loss of Ken Kirstein who died peacefully of natural causes August 14th. He was the husband of our secretary Mary Kirstein. It is impossible to adequately honor this man for his contribution of wisdom and skills to our organization. There are few places at the Main Street museum, the Anderson House, the Annex and even the lawn that he has not left his mark by making things work and look good. His knowledge enhanced our military collection, his time and talent of making shelves, hanging pictures and other artifacts are only a few ways that he impacted the museums while working behind the scenes never drawing attention to himself. The contribution of his time and talent is especially notable as his family history is not of the Herscher Area but his gift to preserve the past for future generations is without measure.



Thank You Ken on behalf of HAHS.

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

MEMORIAL AND HONORARY GIVING

HAHS has recently been gifted with two significant memorial gifts both in memory and honor of loved ones who had been loyal supporters of the efforts to make our historical society outstanding. These gifts were in memory of the following individuals: Kenneth Kirstein and Greg Skarstad. The gift honoring Greg was designated to be used for upgrades to the downtown building. Though memorials are often given at the time of death, honorary giving can be appropriate at any time.

The WABAC Machine

by Bob Voss

I don't remember this cartoon very well but it was "Mr. Peabody and Sherman" and it was on the "Rocky & Bullwinkle Show" (my brother used to watch it). Mr. Peabody was a super intelligent beagle and Sherman was his young adopted sidekick who was a male child. Mr. Peabody invented this very large contraption that he called the WABAC (Way Back) machine. With this machine he could transport himself and Sherman back into the past.

Now what if we could just get Mr. Peabody to take us on a little journey. How cool would it be to transport us to the middle of Main Street, Herscher, IL, in the year 1880. And our tour director would be none other than John Herscher. Think about all the questions we could ask him. What was his vision of the community he was building? How was he going to attract new residents? Where was the Presbyterian Church going to be built? Who was going to clean up the horse poop? And we could go on and on. How would that be for an interesting trip?

HAHS BRIDAL SHOW

Have you saved that beautiful wedding gown from your mother/grandmother/great grandmother? The Herscher Area Historical Society will be hosting a Herscher Historical Bridal Show in February and would like to feature local love stories and these beautiful bridal gowns. If you have a gown from 2000 or before and would be willing to share it for the day - please email a picture of the bride (and groom) in her wedding dress, with a short love story of the couple along with their name and anniversary date. We will select up to 15 to be featured at our show.

Email Kelly Knobloch at kknobloch1@gmail.com or contact her with any questions.

MUSEUM HOURS and HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Main Street Museum 190 S. Main, Herscher Open Fridays 9-11 AM and the First Sunday of Each Month	Anderson House & Annex 161 W. Myrtle, Herscher Open the First Sunday of Each Month 1-3 PM
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Saturday, November 12 and Sunday, November 13

Christmas Treasures Sale at Anderson House

Saturday, December 24 – Museums Closed
Saturday, December 31 – Museums Closed

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. All members are welcome to attend.

If you would like to visit at another time, please call one of the following numbers and we will do our best to open the museum or Anderson House for your visit.

Museum 815-426-2627
Carol Desch 815-426-2292
Bob Voss 815-426-6642

LABOR DAY IN HERSCHER



Dennis Schwark (above)



Terry and Joyce Goodwin (above)



Keith Berger and Dan Hoffman (above and below)



HERSCHER 1878 – 1883

by Bob Voss

Important dates:

- 1878 - the Kankakee and Southwestern railroad was built.
- 1878 - Herscher was platted.
- 1882 – Herscher was incorporated
The limits of the new Village was all of Section 29, the south half of the south half of Section 20, the east half of the east half of Section 30, the north half of the north half of Section 32, and the west half of the west half of Section 28. The limits were not to exceed two square miles and there needed to be at least 300 people. So where did these 300 people live?

John Herscher and his wife probably lived in the hotel he built at the corner of Main and Kankakee. Philip Karcher and his family probably lived in their hotel on Kankakee Ave. Shopkeepers having a two story building probably lived upstairs. They may have included R.J. Griffin, Philip Vollman, August Krause, J.H. Spricher, John Wheeler, John Stowits, Dr. M. Caldwell, J.J. Oberlin, and J.A. Fetterly.

Those signing the incorporation papers were John Herscher, Fred Herscher, James Lee, Chris Schelling, Henry Beckman, and 56 others.

- 1883 – John Herscher house built

From the Herscher Centennial Book - “By 1883 the population was about 300. There were (11) stores, (3) elevators, (1) hotel, (3) blacksmith and repair shops, (1) wagon shop, (1) livery stable, and other businesses.”

Herscher really sprang up during those five years. Businesses were booming. I have never thought about it much, but I would not have guessed that there were 300 people. They must have all lived in houses in what is referred to as “Original Town” which is Elm St. to Park Road, and Kankakee to south of Myrtle.

So, what was it like to live in 1883 Herscher? Well let's see:

- You didn't have running water. You had a well or cistern.

- You didn't have electricity. You had kerosene lamps.
- You didn't have a gas furnace. You had a wood stove. You may have also heated up bricks for your bed, especially if your bedroom was upstairs.
- You didn't have a car. You had a horse and a buggy. The horse would be housed in a carriage house or barn. Or you could rent a rig from the livery stable.
- You had a smoke house and a root cellar
- You canned everything in your garden. Or pickled it.
- You may have owned a cow. Or some chickens.
- And last but not least, you had the outhouse.
- This list can go on and on, but you get the idea.

One of the projects for the HAHS is to research when the houses in “Original Herscher” were built. This will be a monumental endeavor, but it can be done.

If you can add to this article, please email me at robertlvoss@aol.com

CHRISTMAS DÉCOR SALE AND BAKE SALE

We will be holding our 4th annual Christmas Décor sale, on November 12 and 13. We have been blessed again with many donations. This year you will see some changes. We will now be placing all of the artificial Christmas trees and wreaths we have for sale in the farm annex. In addition, we are adding a bake sale. We will have scrumptious pies and breads. Watch our Facebook page, website, and the Herscher Pilot for more information.



SUNSET MARCH

by Bob Voss

My brother and sister-in-law recently toured Belgium and The Netherlands for 30 days. They had some great adventures including visiting the town where my grandfather lived and meeting a cousin. They did not know it at the time, but the Netherlands celebrates “Operation Market Garden” every year. They got caught up in some of the celebrations.

Operation Market Garden – World War II
September 17 to 27, 1944

In the summer of 1944, the Allies came up with an ambitious scheme to cross the River Rhine and advance deep into northern Germany and shorten the war. Code named “Market Garden” this plan involved the seizure of key bridges in the Netherlands by the 101st and 82nd US Airborne Divisions and the 1st British Airborne Division who would land by parachute and gliders. Then the British 30 Corps could advance over the bridges and cross the Rhine and its tributaries. The bridges were at Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnhem. If successful, the plan would liberate the Netherlands, outflank Germany’s formidable frontier defenses, the Siegfried Line, and make possible an armored drive into the Ruhr, Germany’s industrial heartland.

At the Nijmegen bridge, both ends were occupied by the German’s. In order to get to the north end of the bridge, boats were needed to cross the Waal River and attack the German’s there. Boats ordered by the 82nd Airborne under command of General Gavin failed to arrive as scheduled and a hasty daylight crossing was ordered. This unit had no training on the British made boats. A shortage of paddles required some troopers to paddle the craft with rifle butts. Before the day was over, the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion crossed the Waal five times while ferrying across two battalions of the 504th Parachute Infantry Division. The surviving paratroopers then assaulted across 220 yards of open ground on the far bank and seized the north end of the bridge. **48** soldiers didn’t survive the crossing. German forces withdrew from both ends of the bridge thus securing the bridge.

Dutch children still learn about the World War II operation in school, and when the Overseek Bridge was built in 2013, the officials in Nijmegen remembered it too, incorporating 96 street lights (**48**

pairs) in the bridge design, one for each American soldier who died in the crossing.

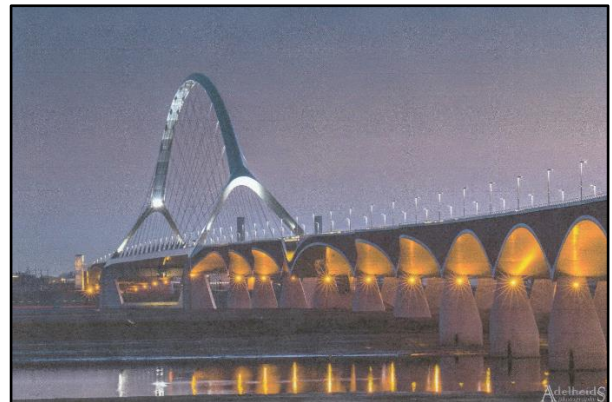
Every night at sunset, the lights on the bridge illuminate pair by pair at the pace of a slow march, starting on the south bank of the river and heading north, the same direction the soldiers frantically paddled in canvas dinghies. And every evening since Oct. 19, 2014, a veteran has walked across the bridge.

There is just one rule for walking the bridge – “We walk in silence, dignified and respectful.” Even the name of the bridge (Overseek means “the crossing”) is a tribute to the paratroopers. The bridge was inaugurated by the last surviving veterans of the battle to retake Nijmegen and by Barbara Gavin, the eldest daughter of General James Gavin, who let the US troops in the assault.

When the Sunset March first began, a veteran would walk alone across the bridge. But word spread and, at first locals, but gradually people from all over the world spontaneously joined in or contacted the organizers of the march, asking if they could walk in silence alongside the veteran.

Isn’t this moving that the Dutch people remember the sacrifice of young Americans every evening. As one observer said, “These American soldiers were 18, 19, or 20 years old. They probably didn’t know anything about Europe when they came here, but they came and fought for us and were killed in action in Nijmegen. They gave their lives to give us the way of life we have now. We have our freedom because of those **48** young men”

What a moving story.



EUGENE AND DARLENE BERTRAND

by Janet Boyer

Who has spent most of his life in Pilot Township, living either in the house where he was born, or one-half mile south in their new home? Eugene (Gene)



Bertrand was born June 2, 1936 to Harvey and Mary (Schmidt) Bertrand. He had one brother (Duane) two older sisters (Donna and Elmere) and two younger sisters (Linda and JoAnne) all who are deceased.

Gene attended Bertrand one-room school for six years and St. James school in Irwin for 2 years having graduated in 1950. Then on to Herscher High School for 2½ years and graduating in 1½ years from St. Patrick's in Kankakee in 1954. One thing he remembers is, it seems like when he was in high school you could put 1 or 2 gallons of gas in your car and it would last a long time. Not so today.

Gene's Dad had pigs and when Gene was 3 or 4, there was a runt pig and he took care of it, feeding it



every few hours. The pig grew big and then his Dad butchered it. That was Gene's start in the hog business!!!

A neighbor asked Gene, age 14, if he would drive the tractor for baling the hay and straw. The

neighbor paid Gene \$2 a day and he thought he was rich. But this job might have its rewards. He saw his future wife for the first time with her mother and sister as they brought lunch out to the field. Gene thought this is very interesting!!!

Gene's Mom was a good cook and enjoyed having everyone over for the holidays. On Thanksgiving, they would go to his sister's Donna McGregor's house in Rockford.

Darlene Harvey was born July 3, 1937 to parents Dale and Anna (Jenkins) Harvey. She has one brother, Jack, and one sister, Marilyn Emling who is deceased. She attended Buckingham and Herscher Grade

Schools and graduated from Herscher High School in 1955.

Darlene was born in Newton, IL, and when she was 5 moved to Herscher. Her Dad ran the Wisner Dairy in Herscher. Later they moved on Buckingham Road to a farm that had a dairy. Darlene and her sister went to a one-room school where they were the only girls. Darlene (Gross) Hendrix was their teacher.

When Darlene was in the 5th grade, they moved east of Herscher to a farm on Road S8000W, which is now J&A Mitchell Fabrication. While in the 8th grade she was riding the bus and met freshman Gene Bertrand. That was that and they were high school sweethearts.

Darlene Harvey and Eugene Bertrand were married in 1955 after Darlene graduated.

Then started the family of 4 kids. School years were busy with activities, studying, and friends. Summers were busy also, with a garden, and getting fair animals ready. There were FFA projects and meetings, marching band practices and contests. These were the years that the HHS marching band was at it best and Darlene and Gene enjoyed the contests and the camaraderie with other youth and parents.

For many years Gene farmed, raised and sold pigs. Gene framed and raised and sold pigs. He was also very involved with his children



and Herscher Hustlers 4-H Club as he was leader for 11 years and Darlene was co-leader for 10 years. When you have animals you want to show them at the Kankakee County Fair and other fairs. For 25 years, Gene was Swine Superintendent at Kankakee. By being at the fair a lot, Darlene says they met many good kids and their parents. It was interesting to watch these kids/youth improve from year to year. Besides farming and raising pigs, Gene was a feed dealer for Nutrena and Hubbard Feeds (known as the Feed Man)!! He also sold seed corn and equipment.



On Labor Day they liked to go to the parade in

Herscher, usually HHS band was marching and someone was surely on a float. Sometimes they went to the beer tent and visited with friends and neighbors. At the park, Gene managed the hamburger/hot dog stand for a few years. Darlene and Gene always enjoyed the Herscher Style chicken.

Darlene and Gene tried to have family gatherings but after the children got married and lived in Limestone, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Arizona, it was hard to get everyone together same place, same time. The Bertrand family now consists of:

- Jeffery and Pamela Bertrand – Limestone
 - Eric Bertrand
 - Ginger and Lola
- Larry and Chris Bertrand – Indiana
 - Margaret and Adam Lang
 - Connor
- Michelle and Dan Meyer – Arizona
 - Kyle and Mandy Meyer
 - Branden and Maria Meyer – Maryland
 - Logan, Braden, Addison, and Finn
- James and Tiffany Bertrand – Pennsylvania
 - Andrew Bertrand
 - Alex and Olivia
 - Bryce and Taylor Bertrand
 - Skyler and Rhett
 - Chase and Erika Bertrand
 - August
 - Alysa Bertrand
 - Emma
 - Brittany and Jeff LeRoy
 - Jackson

When all the children were gone, Darlene thought she needed something different to do, so for 7 years she worked for Dunlap Vision in Bourbonnais.

Just when Gene had retired and he and Darlene had moved into their new ranch home with attached garage in 2000, he got a call from his sister Linda Regnier that she had lost her husband and needed someone to help her run their paint store. Would Gene help her for a while? So much for retirement as Gene helped at the store for 3 years. Then FS on Herscher road was looking for an employee and Gene was hired. What

he thought would be a part-time job ended up full time for 11 years.

This past summer, Gene had a job he enjoys which is a mentor for great grand daughter Ginger. She is a Sophomore at Herscher High School and is taking Horticulture classes. Gene has a garden in the back yard and he has helped Ginger plant, weed, and harvest veg tales, and flowers.

Back to retirement for both Gene and Darlene. If you don't get something done today, there is always tomorrow. They don't have to hurry. Gene always enjoyed working with his neighbors and friends. But we don't visit with neighbors like we used to, some of them we know in name only. Two words to keep everyone happy, "Yes Dear".

WE HAVE A WEBSITE!

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

Contact Us:

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