



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

FOURTH QUARTER
NEWSLETTER – 2023

"from past generations to future generations"

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The "winds are changing" as the expression goes, and with each new season approaching there seems to be anticipation in what is to come. For the historical society, we are looking to the November Christmas sales event (see inside information) as well as featuring displays on local families, businesses (past and present), organizations, school life in this area, and much more. To make this come together we look for folks to have an interest and desire to keep their history relevant as a treasure to preserve for the following generations. We believe that many folks have a story to tell and perhaps even a historic piece that aids in that story.

Labor Day and summer programs are now in our rearview mirrors. We are thankful to Rodey Schwark for driving his beautifully restored 1917 vehicle as a representative for HAHS. Folks visited our museums over the weekend and at the annual parade, a historic display (featuring ol' Abe) was set up on the corner of 2nd and Maple (the parade route) to hand out older copies of CDs and DVDs which had videos of past Labor Days. A newer and updated brochure was created and distributed during the parade along with small flags for the children.

We would encourage you to invite your friends to visit our website to view displays that are coming and to join us in this journey in preserving our local history.

Hoping you all will enjoy the seasonal change coming and anticipate all it will have to offer!

Mary Kirstein
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.

LABOR DAY 2023

HAHS MEMBER LEADS THE WAY



Herscher Area Historical Society member and volunteer extraordinaire, Carol Webber, was honored as the **Grand Marshal** for this year's 2023 Herscher Labor Day parade! Carol has worn many hats for the community and volunteered for HAHS in a variety of roles and for our events. You may have read one of her interviews in our quarterly newsletters. This is a well-deserved honor indeed!

FROM 1917 TO 2023

Rodney Schwark drove his 1917 vehicle in the 2023 Herscher Labor Day parade promoting the Herscher Area Museums. Rodney has restored historic vehicles, including tractors, and HAHS members are very grateful for his willingness to help us out.



OL' ABE ON THE PARADE ROUTE

This display table was set up along the parade route on the corner of Maple and 2nd Street for the Labor Day event. The cardboard cutout of Abe Lincoln's actual size definitely captured attention. Mary Kirstein (pictured on the left) assisted in handing out CDs and DVDs about local history and past Labor Days along with updated brochures, information cards, and small flags to curious folks passing by. It turned out to be a good marketing corner.



MUSEUM HOURS

MAIN STREET MUSEUM

190 S. Main, Herscher

Open Fridays 9-11 AM and the First
Sunday of Each Month 1-3 PM

ANDERSON HOUSE

161 W. Myrtle, Herscher

Open the First Sunday of Each
Month 1-3 PM

Museum Board Meetings take place at the Anderson House on the Fourth Monday of each month at 6:00pm in the spring and summer and at 4:00pm in the fall and winter. 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.

PLOW DAYS at the SCHWARK FARM

by Judy Witheft



The Annual Plow Days were held September 16th at the farm of Rodney Schwark. As in the past years, many tractors with plows attached were visible breaking the ground of the Schwark Homestead south of Herscher. It was a beautiful day to just sit in your truck and watch the tractors and plows move through the field at a gentle pace - realizing the time that was needed to till a field years ago was so different than today. All colors of tractors could be seen in Mr. Schwark's field, and you could also see the many people on foot and in ATVs and four-wheelers enjoying the site. Life is grand in a farm community.



FROM PARISH HISTORY

by Bob Voss

Just the other day, I was reading the Parish History book (copy is at the Museum). There is a paragraph on page 14 that reads, "When our first settlers came to the district west of Kankakee they met an Indian tribe. In Pilot Township section 11, there was years ago a deep hole in which were found Indian weapons and arrows. These Indians were hunters and fishermen, and we yet find occasionally arrows along the Kankakee River. They had a reservation at Bourbonnais with Shabona as their chief. They stayed at Bourbonnais during the spring but in the fall moved to the place called Shabona in DeKalb County. They wore buckskin and deerskin and only the younger generation could understand the English language."

What do we know from this paragraph:

- Section 11 is the section just south of Goodrich.
- Shabona was chief of the Pottawatomie. So, the Indian tribe mentioned would have been Pottawatomie

What we don't know:

- What year are we talking about?
- Who found this deep hole?
- Why Section 11
- Why would the Indians be burying weapons and arrows?



Christmas Collectables & Décor Sale
with
Bake Sale on Saturday



November 11, 9am-3pm
November 12, 10am-2pm

161 W Myrtle St. Herscher, IL. (Corner of Oak & Myrtle)

Tour the Anderson House Decorated for the Holiday Season
Shop and Support Your Local Museum!
All proceeds go to HAHS Museum

Visit our Farm Annex Filled with Christmas Trees & Wreaths
all sizes and styles at bargain prices!!!

Thank you to all the members and friends who have donated Christmas décor for our sale. We love it all - New, used, old, vintage, dusty, needs a little TLC! We just brought all the décor up from storage. It is quite an adventure opening all the boxes and totes, not knowing what treasure we will find. Thank you to all that help in this process and I invite you to join us.

WHERE THERE IS A NEED...

This past summer, at the very hottest spell, we incurred an unexpected expense as our older central air conditioner unit at the Main Street Museum gave out. Understanding the importance of maintaining the temperatures during the summer and winter months to protect documents and certain artifacts, the board voted to have the unit replaced as soon as possible. This gave us an additional operating expense of \$5000 that had not been anticipated nor in our budget. I mention it now to offer the opportunity to anyone who would want to help us out with this project. Herscher Area Historical Society is a 501 3(C) organization so your donation is tax deductible. Your support here is very much appreciated.

CARDIFF IN THE FALL

Judy Witheft and her grandson, Aidan Knobloch, decorated the Cardiff Plaza with beautiful fall décor.



PURCHASE A PAVER

Paver Stones at Herscher Area Historical Plaza and/or Cardiff Plaza (9 miles west of Herscher) are available for purchase. If you would like to have a paver stone added to one of our plazas please complete the correct form below designating which location. Your granite paver stone can memorialize a departed loved one, celebrate an event, a person, a business, a sports team, or yourself as a donor, or contain a beloved quotation. It can observe just about anything you wish.

I/We would be interested in helping the Herscher Area Historical Society by purchasing the following:

HERSCHER Granite Pavers:

I would like _____ 4 X 8 pavers at \$100 each / Total = _____
 (13 letters and spaces per line with 3 lines available)

I would like _____ 8 X 12 pavers at \$200 each / Total = _____
 (13 letters and spaces with 6 lines available)

Information to be etched on the pavers as follows (please print clearly):



Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Phone # and Email: _____
 Signature: _____

I/We would be interested in helping the Herscher Area Historical Society by purchasing the following:

CARDIFF Granite Pavers:

I would like _____ 4 X 8 pavers at \$100 each / Total = _____
 (13 letters and spaces per line with 3 lines available)

I would like _____ 8 X 10 pavers at \$200 each / Total = _____
 (13 letters and spaces per line with 3 lines available)

Information to be etched on the pavers as follows (please print clearly):

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____
 Phone # and Email: _____
 Signature: _____



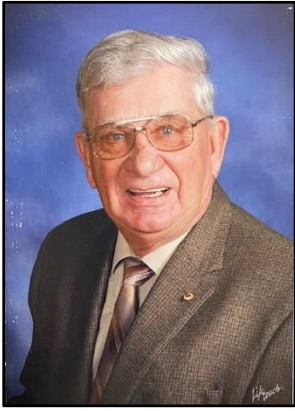
Please return your completed form along with a check made out to **Herscher Area Historical Society** to the address below:
 PO Box 403, Herscher, IL 60941

The Herscher Area Historical Society is a tax exempt (501c3) organization. Any donations made to HAHS are tax deductible.

We thank you for your support and donation to the Herscher Area Historical Society memorial garden.

RALPH GROB

by Jenny Cochran



Every Sunday morning at my church, there is a man sitting in his regular pew, talking about the weather and the crops, and telling a joke or two to those around him. He is kind, funny, and dependable and his name is Ralph Grob.

Ralph Grob was born July 7, 1938. His parents were Vernon Grob and Lucille Jensen Grob. He is the oldest of four children with two brothers, Robert “Bob” Grob and Richard “Dick” Grob, and one sister, Ronda Grob Wenzelman. Dick passed away on January 28, 2020. Bob passed away on November 27, 2022. Ronda and her husband Stan live in Bonfield, Illinois and have three children.

Ralph’s brother Dick was deaf and went to a school for the deaf in Jacksonville, Illinois. Ralph remembers traveling the 180 miles with his parents to attend Dick’s football and basketball games. He also recalls how Dick would mail his laundry home and his mom would wash the clothes and then when they took them back to Dick, they would all have a picnic. Ralph liked the school because the students there learned a vocation and were taught how to work and live a normal life. Dick lived in Joliet for 40 years and worked at Caterpillar.

Ralph says he is “old enough” that he remembers going to a single-room schoolhouse for his first three years of school. He recalls walking three quarters of a mile every day to Oberlin School for First, Second, and Third Grade. He then attended Herscher Grade School and Herscher High School. He played the tuba and clarinet in grade school and high school. He played softball with the 4-H team and the Farm Bureau team. The 4-H team would travel to Champaign for tournaments. His team won the tournament two times, and they won all-county once. He continued to play softball into his 30s. During his sophomore year of high school, Ralph attended the FFA convention in Kansas City where he remembers President Eisenhower riding by in a car and waving at him and others attending the convention. Eisenhower also gave a speech. Another high school memory Ralph has is that on the night of his junior class play, there was a pipeline explosion in Herscher. He graduated in 1956 and he served in the United States Army from 1961 to 1963.



Growing up, Ralph’s family raised chickens. They would sell the chicken eggs to the A & P grocery store and then buy their groceries with the money they received for the eggs. Ralph says 30 dozen eggs would be enough to buy their groceries. On their way home, they would stop on the west edge of Kankakee where the Speedway Gas Station is now to buy chicken feed. Ralph remembers that his mom would make shirts for him and his siblings out of the colorful bags the chicken feed came in. Holidays were always fun. He enjoyed having oyster stew for Thanksgiving and Christmas with the family.

As a teenager Ralph remembers milking cows. He and his friend Paul Emling both had Holstein cows. He also recalls planting soybeans and getting paid 75 cents an hour to bale hay. Ralph says he can remember thrashing oats when he was as young as six or seven years old. He enjoyed pitching oat bundles into a thrashing machine at a Herscher Labor Day celebration.



*Ralph Grob and Kenny Emling
fishing on Lake Erie*

After high school, Ralph farmed and, in the winter, worked at VanVoorst. He and some friends went on fishing trips to Canada for 22 years. Some of the places he enjoyed visiting over the years include California, Alaska, Yellowstone National Park, the Grand Canyon, and New York City. While in New York City, he was able to see the World Trade Center and visit Ellis Island. Ellis Island was especially important to him because his grandfather, Ingvar Jensen, traveled from Denmark to Ellis Island. He also enjoyed visiting state parks with Russell Mau.

Ralph has attended many Herscher football and basketball games over the years, and he is a Chicago Cubs fan and a University of Illinois fan. He has played many rounds of golf in his lifetime. According to those he played

with, he always knew what stroke each person was on and he had a keen eye for finding lost golf balls on the fairway and in the woods.

Ralph currently lives between Bonfield and Herscher on the farm he grew up on. He has been a member of Grand Prairie United Methodist Church his entire life. He was the Sunday School Secretary/Treasurer for around 20 years, retiring from that position at the end of 2022. Often times in Sunday School, when asked what he would like to sing, he would reply "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," showing both his love for sports and his sense of humor. He attends church every Sunday and he participates in almost every event the church hosts. For many years he would arrive at church early to make sure the coffee was hot and ready to serve in Sunday School. He has been and continues to be an important part of the Grand Prairie church family. For 20 years, Ralph was the President of the Board for the Grand Prairie Cemetery Association. During those years, he worked hard to always keep the cemetery looking great. He recently retired as President but continues to support the cemetery association in any way he can.



One thing from the past that Ralph is glad he no longer has to do is remove clinkers from his family's coal furnace. When asked if he had any words of advice or words to live by, Ralph replied "This too shall pass."

So, if you are ever at Grand Prairie United Methodist Church, just look across the sanctuary and you will be sure to see him sitting there in his regular pew, talking about the weather and the crops, and throwing in a joke or two to make everyone laugh. He is one of the kindest men you will ever meet, and his name is Ralph Grob.

Contact Us:

Herscher Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 403
Herscher, IL 60941
1-815-426-2627

Email: herscherareahistory@gmail.com

Follow our Facebook Page: Herscher Area Historical Society

Join our Facebook Group: Herscher Area Historical Society/Kankakee County West

Website: herscherhistory.org

**REMEMBER HERSCHER AREA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN YOUR ESTATE
PLANNING**

Your legacy is important to us and our community. Please remember the Herscher Area Historical Society in your final wishes and estate planning. Your gift will ensure that the work of capturing and preserving the history of Herscher and County West continues for future generations. If you have questions, please contact the museum at 815-426-2627 and we will direct you to our legal advisor.

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