



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

SECOND QUARTER
NEWSLETTER – 2024

"from past generations to future generations"

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

April is with us and "THE THING ABOUT SPRING" isthe sun seems brighter, we welcome the birds' arrival, take notice of the new buds, and smile at the flowers emerging. All of this is a reminder for us to "get up and get going," and that is exactly what the Herscher Historical Society is doing!!

In January, our Vice President of HAHS, Bob Voss, was recognized as Herscher's Chamber of Commerce "Citizen of the Year!" It is such a well-deserved honor to a man who gives many hours to the village and, fortunately for us, a good number of those hours are for the historical society as well.

In FEBRUARY, the Museum on Main changed the central display from "Century of Sports" to HATS from the early 1900s through the 1970s. In this latest display, we have included a black lace umbrella, documented and dated back to the Civil War.

MARCH followed up with a Mad Hatter's Tea to complement our impressive display of hats and caps. APRIL has been an opportunity to showcase the accomplishments of the historical society over the past 20 years until now with an event to say "THANK YOU."

We hope you enjoy seeing and reading about these past months' events and interviews that are enclosed in this Spring Newsletter. Be sure to drop in and see what treasures your Herscher area Historical Society has for you to see.

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.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR



Bob Voss, Vice President of the Herscher Area Historical Society, received the Citizen of the Year Award presented by the Herscher Chamber of Commerce. Bob and his wife, Jackie, are shown attending the banquet in the photo to the left. Bob has held various offices including past President for the museum, and he spends hours researching the history of the area and its families. He is a frequent contributor to our newsletters, and he also works with Ron Shank on our supplementals. Bob is a perfect choice for this award, and we are grateful for all his efforts.

We at HAHS consider it a bonus that he really appreciates history and works to make this a stronger organization!

THANK YOU!



Many thanks to Marla Edwards for setting up our Century of Hats display. We have been fortunate to have her experience as well as a couple of retired teachers who all make it a great reason to drop in at the museum.

5 YEAR PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

Player Piano Repair \$500

Main Street Museum Interior Updates \$1000

Paint Entryway

New Flooring in Entryway

Technology Updates \$2800

* New Printer

* Research Laptop

* Office Computer

* TV for Picture Presentation

Main Street Museum Roof Repairs \$5000

*** Anderson House & Annex
Roof Replacement \$40,000**

*These updates and improvements are the top projects that the board would like to complete, with an estimate of cost, if there are extra funds available.

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.

Email: herscherareahistory@gmail.com **Website:** herscherhistory.org

See last page of newsletter for additional contact information

MAD HATTER TEA PARTY

by Mary Kirstein

“HATS OFF” to a successful “Mad Hatter Tea Party!” The tea party was held on March 24 to kick off our new display, *Hats Through the Century*. In this display, information about each decade is provided to help us understand what events might have prompted the different styles of hats. There are even many hats available to try on so you can see what you might have looked like in those times. High school students, Kelly O’Connor and Aidan Knobloch, helped us out by modeling a few of the historic hats. Many thanks to Marla for setting up our Century of Hats display. We have been fortunate to have her experience as well as a couple of retired teachers who all make it a great reason to drop in at the museum.





HISTORY HAPPY HOUR
by Kelly Knobloch

Members of the Herscher Area Historical Society enjoyed a "History Happy Hour" on Thursday, April 19th at the Anderson House. Members were invited to stop by for a glass of wine and snacks as they viewed spring updates to the Anderson House display. Board members also shared about recent improvements to the historical society and displayed some of the programs that have been provided over the last 20 years. There were also displays that shared our 2023 cash flow and showed the 5-year Planned Improvements for the museums. Approximately 65 members joined the event. The board plans to continue hosting this member appreciation event annually to provide the members with an update of HAHS and give an opportunity for members to share ideas.



ONE OF OUR FIRST VILLAGE BOARD MEMBERS (FRANK GROSSE)

by Bob Voss

The first Village Board members in Herscher back on May 20, 1882 were:

President: John Herscher

Members:

F.B. Whittum

John Wheeler

Henry Amidon

Phillip Karscher

Frank Grosse

Jacob Diefenbach

Most of these are old Herscher names that lived in Herscher for many years, except for Frank Grosse. So, who was Frank Grosse? This very question was asked recently to Ron Shank and myself by John Adams. John is a respected farmer near Chebanse and a friend of the HAHS.

Frank Grosse was born on January 1849 in Baden, Germany. The Grosse family immigrated to Ottawa, in LaSalle County, IL in 1865. Then in 1871, Frank moved to Chebanse, IL and in 1872 opened his first general store. He operated this store until 1878 when he sold his business. Frank married Aurelia Agnes Fanning on February 27, 1873 in Kankakee, IL. The Grosses had five children.

After selling his business, Frank and family moved to Herscher in 1880. Here Frank opened a department store that sold dry goods, groceries, clothing, and shoes in the building built by John Herscher. In 1885, the family moved back to Chebanse.

An entry in the Kankakee Gazette on May 5, 1885 said: *At the recent election, three new trustees were elected and one re-elected.* John Herscher's resignation and Frank Grosse's removal caused the vacancies. John Herscher was very sick at this time. We are not sure what Frank's removal was all about. John died on July 23, 1885 at the age of 36. He is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Chebanse. His death was due to Mother Nature as the following obituary tells.

Obituary from the Iroquois County Times from August 1, 1885:

Frank Grosse was instantly killed by lightning Thursday about 12:20 o'clock while lying on a sofa at the residence reading a newspaper. The family were all in the same room on the opposite side at the time and his wife called him twice to come and eat his dinner but as he was suffering with a severe headache, he did not care for dinner and complained of the heavy thunder and expressed a wish that it would cease as every loud report greatly annoyed him. The electric bolt struck the southwest corner of the building, tearing off more than half the siding on the west side demolishing several windows and knocking nearly all the plastering off the ceiling of the room. Mrs. Grosse and the three children were more or less shocked, but not to insensibility. Frank ultimately died of a broken neck.

What a gruesome and unusual death.

There must have been a connection between John Herscher and Frank Grosse. Not only did Frank move to Herscher and open a business in John Herscher's building, but also John had Frank on that first Board with him. This is just speculation on my part.



Alice L. Buckley

by Marjorie Chorski (daughter)

Alice Lucille Crawford was born July 22, 1924 at the Crawford homestead near Buckingham, Illinois. Her parents were Thomas and Estella M. (Cart) Crawford. She was the eldest of four children. Born to this union: Emma Mae (Mickey) (Crawford) King, Mable Myrtle (Crawford) Saffer, and Thomas Leo Crawford.

Alice attended the one-room Nutt School just North of the homestead. She graduated from Herscher High School in 1942. During high school she participated in the band playing the French horn. She especially enjoyed the participation of the band at the summer celebrations in local towns. Following graduation, Alice attended St. Mary's School of Nursing in Kankakee, Illinois receiving her RN. She was employed by St. Mary's Hospital and worked for Sister Mary Angela Carabin

in the Obstetric and Pediatric nursing department.

On July 9, 1949, Alice married Viator A. Buckley at St. Patrick Church, Kankakee, Illinois officiated by Father Eugene Sullivan. Following a short residence in Kankakee, the couple settled on the Buckley farm near Buckingham, Illinois. There they raised five children: Timothy Viator, Thomas Leo, twin daughters Marjorie Ann and Mary Alice, and Terrance Michael. While raising children, she actively participated in the farming enterprise, St. Mary's Hospital Alumnae and Associates Organization, member of the Historical Society of Herscher, the St. Mary's CCW Reddick, and the Lions Club monthly Sunday breakfasts in Union Hill.

Viator died May 17, 1996. There has also been the loss of a grandchild (Brian Buckley). Alice resided at Heritage Village in Kankakee where she thoroughly enjoyed the art department. It had been discovered that she had a hidden talent in art and had put it to canvas for family to enjoy. She was also delighted with visits from grandchildren (Scott (Alison) Buckley Lisa (Matt) Patchet, Michelle and William Chorski) and great grandchildren (Austin and Addyson Buckley, Halie, Kade, and Allie Kohl).

Alice L. Buckley died February 17, 2023.



Elsie Fritz

by Jackie Eberle

Elsie Roe Fritz was born June 28, 1931 to Irene Bertrand Roe and Howard Roe in Essex, along with 1 brother and 2 sisters, during the depression. Elsie's mother gave the doctor (for the home birth) her last \$30 that she had been saving for 24 years. Elsie's dad raised tomatoes to ship to Chicago until the depression, then later drove a school bus until they moved to Reddick, where he worked as a janitor and her job was to empty waste baskets and later help clean school rooms. Her mother always made homemade bread, but her friends bought theirs at the store for 10 cents plus a small store token.

In her teen years, she mowed grass at the school, went to free Cabery shows, and went roller skating in Reddick, where she met her future husband, Bill. Other early jobs included 50 cents per night for baby sitting and working in a restaurant for 25 cent tips and a low hourly wage. At Christmas time, her aunt from Chicago always brought gifts. The children would sit under the tree and count their gifts. There were always stockings hung for oranges and candy at home.

Elsie was a good student and was editor of the school newspaper and annual. She and Bill were engaged her senior year of high school and after graduation were married July 2, 1949 at St. Margaret Mary Catholic church in Herscher.





Their first home was a house trailer in Union Hill. In 1950, they built a home on Elm St in Herscher. In 1956, they purchased an electrical business from Art Bartchenfelt. Children born to Bill and Elsie are daughters; Karen Stam (Jerry), St. Anne; Mary Kay Obrien, Wilmington; and Alice (David) Scott, Arizona. Other family members are 9 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

Bill and Elsie moved to the farm in 1989. Bill was born on the farm and, when his mother died, they purchased the house. The crib was converted to a tool shed and Fritz and Grandson's Electric was established there.

Bill and Elsie opened a restaurant, Friends Inn, in 1988 with other Herscher couples to have a meeting place for coffee in the morning (especially for the men). Elsie always worked with Bill whether it be the business or building floats for the Labor Day parade. Bill was always busy with the electricity on Labor Day,

so Elsie would be with the girls. They always saved the cotton candy for last when they walked home.

Bill and Elsie are long-time active parishioners at St. Margaret Mary. She taught religious education and was coordinator of the program for many years. Elsie misses coffee and rolls after mass and getting together with friends for cards and visits. She is an excellent seamstress. In the summer of 1997, she was not to be seen as she was sewing bridesmaids dressed for three weddings in addition to mending and repairing clothing.

Fritz Reunion.....The infamous Fritz reunion was initiated in 1990 to 1999 having close to 500 attending from 8 families, each wearing different colored clothing. Preparation included food and cleaning the tool shed for the museum displaying pictures and letters from service men and green stamps.

Bill died in 2019. Elsie has had losses and illness but has continued to be strong and faithful to the business, her family, and her church. Her advice is to work together as a family or as husband and wife. They were married almost 70 years, Elsie, you are awesome!!!!!!



SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US

We are excited to have been able to put the above two interviews in our spring newsletter. Our readers enjoy learning the history of others. Do you know someone we should interview? Call the Main Street Museum at 815-426-2627 and leave your name, phone number, and a convenient time to call you and we will return your call within a few days.

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.



HERSCHER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

SUPPLEMENTAL NEWSLETTER #19

MAY 2024

"from past generations to future generations"

HERSCHER 1880 to 1884

By Bob Voss

Supplemental Newsletter #16 from December 2023 dealt with Herscher 1878 & 1879. Herscher was just getting a start in those years. Moving on from 1879, we get to the years when Herscher was really beginning to grow both by businesses and by population. Hopefully you will find these clippings interesting. Once again these are clippings from mostly the Kankakee Gazette that were scanned by Jim Ridings.

- 1/29/1880
A new sidewalk from the business part of town to the depot is a great improvement. Formerly it was mud knee deep.
(This was not a very long sidewalk. It must have been from the National Bank of Herscher to the depot located between tracks on the east side of Main Street)

C.W. Penfield of Eldridgeville has moved into the Fred Herscher building.

A Mr. Whithum, we believe, has charge of the railroad business at our station now.
(He was the depot manager before Henry Herscher)

- 3/25/1880
New Store in Herscher. Bowlby & Penfield have opened a new Hardware and Agricultural Implement Store.
- 4/1/1880
A.W. Ewing has opened up a meat shop in a building of his own.
(The town is filling up with new businesses)

John Herscher has bought an eighty of land joining the village of Herscher belonging to Mrs. B.W. Cowles for \$35 per acre.
(Became know as the Cowles subdivision which is north Elm Street.)

- 7/15/1880
John Herscher busy improving the looks of the town very much by planting a row of shade trees on each side of every street. Three car loads of soft maples were required.

Two of our townspeople were abused in Cabery on the night of the fifth by having their horses stolen. Thor Thorson lost his cream colored saddle nag, and Kankalberger a black mare. Thorson's was found near the Vermillion swamp with one foot disabled. No trace of Dankelberger's as yet.

- 1/20/1881

St. Germain Hall a new place for public entertainment in Herscher will be opened probably next Wednesday evening or a day or two succeeding with a grand ball for which preparations are now in progress. The ball will be under the immediate charge of the Herscher Dramatic Club.

(So far the location of St. Germain Hall remains a mystery as to its location)

- 7/19/1881

Our new school house looms up well. It will be an ornament to the town. If the church was located on the west side of south Main Street across from the high school building, it would be a great improvement. It was a foolish piece of business putting the church as far out of town as it is.

(The school was located where the Senior Apartments are located today. The church in reference was the Presbyterian Church that was built near present day Grade School. It was quite a hike out there from downtown)

- 11/10/1881

The roads near the station are in a bad condition, still there are some small loads coming in occasionally.

The Norwegian Lutheran church, under Rev. A.C. Oleson, are erecting a house of worship on the corner near S.L. Eastwoods. They intend having services in it next Sunday, I understand.

(This church would have set in the Norwegian Lutheran Cemetery which is located at the NW corner of intersection 6000S and 13000W)

- 11/28/1881

A Thanksgiving party was held in St. Germain Hall on Thursday evening. Although the attendance was not large, a pleasant time was had we are told.

(Another reference to St. Germain Hall???)

A nice lamp post was placed on the corner by Karcher's Hotel last week

(The Karcher Hotel was located at the SE corner of Kankakee & Maple).

They say the old Decatur State Line Railroad will be built next summer. The old line of survey runs through the west part of Herscher. We doubt its construction very much.

(This railroad was started but never finished. The proof is the stone piers just downstream of Warner Bridge)

- 8/27/1883

Everybody that comes into the village admires the new school building. It is fine structure and well located. In fact Herscher contains many large and neat dwellings and business houses. The "father" of the town, Mr. John Herscher, has taken great

pains and spared no expense to make the place neat and attractive. The first thing that greets the eye of a stranger is Mr. Herscher's magnificent residence on the north side. It is worth of a place on one of Chicago's stylish avenues. A large number of trees are set out along the streets and parks arranged on the north and south sides, and in a few years we'll have on the prettiest villages in the West.

- 9/24/1883

During the rain storm on Sunday the lightning struck the new school building in the Village shattering the cupola, tearing down through the roof, ripping up the shingles, splitting the rafters in slivers, running down the east and south sides destroying the studding and clapboard breaking the windows and doing much other damage. Great destruction was caused, the whole building being badly shattered. It is a great pity as the building was a new one and just about completed and was a credit to the Village.

A painful accident occurred on Monday of last week by which Joel Menard, the proprietor of the livery stable, had a leg broken. He was at work about the stable when one of the horses kicked him. Dr. Caldwell attended him. He is now doing well.

- 11/5/1883

The sheriff was out on Saturday and closed the doors of August Krause's saloon.
(Wonder what that was all about?)

The large window in the front of the church building received a charge of shot at the hands of some individual who is a mean fellow, if he did it on purpose. Nothing less than \$10 will repair damages.

(The church in reference was the Presbyterian Church)

- 11/20/1883

The number of scholars now enrolled at our school is sixty five, an increase of twenty in two weeks. It is thought that there will be twenty five more in several weeks.

Charles Bowlby is going to start a writing school in town. We hear quite a number are to become members of the class.

(Cursive must not have been taught at the school?)

While Mrs. Youman, J. Fetterly's mother-in-law, was going to church last evening, she fell from the sidewalk near the depot and broke one of her legs. The limb was set and she is resting as easily as could be expected..

- 9/18/1884

The Presbyterian church was dedicated Sunday. The attendance was not as large as it would have been had the weather been pleasanter in the morning. Only fifty dollars was needed to free the church from debt, and that was raised. Some needed improvements have been made lately which make the church more attractive. We notice the new plank walk, street lamps, and enlarged steps, the matting in the aisles, the new pulpit, and carpet, and the pulpit chairs, the last being the gift of Mr. C.H. McCormick Jr., of Chicago, and are a very nice present.

- 11/13/1884

Azariah Buck raised in his back yard what he call a Jumbo pumpkin. The vine grew up close to the path and was run over and trod upon by all the Bucks, big and little, but still the vine grew and at last "Az" picked an 87-pound pumpkin, and is now giving the seeds to his farmer friends for them to experiment with. Az is going to let Ed Stowitts have the shell for a hen house. It will accommodate nicely all the hens Ed has got.

(Now that is a big pumpkin. Their house was located where Maggie Nofke's house now sets)

It is quite probable that next spring will see the erection of a new church edifice to be located on John Vicker's farm 3 ½ miles south and a half mile east of Herscher. Committees have been at work raising funds for the purpose and at a meeting held at the Hubbard school house on Wednesday evening it was decided to build. The material will be put on the ground during the winter

(This church would have been located on the south side of the County Line a half mile east of the Herscher blacktop in Milks Grove Township. We do not know why this church was not constructed nor what denomination it was.)

Hopefully you enjoyed these clippings. One of our future newsletters will continue on with the years after 1884. One surprise coming.