

Franklin Historical Society

August 2013 Newsletter

Barn-Raising Social

Included in this newsletter is a flyer detailing the FHS Barn-Raising Social on **Saturday , August 24** from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM in our historic village. Please plan on attending for there will be important information about the barn project, refreshments and a lot fun.

Delikat Smokehouse Dedication

On **Saturday Sept. 21** from Noon to 2 PM the FHS will dedicate the opening of the Delikat Smokehouse in our historic village. The smokehouse has been dismantled from its original Drexel Ave. location and rebuilt in Lions Legend Park in our historic village. Our other buildings will be open for touring. There will be a raffle, free food and refreshments. Everyone is invited!

Also there will be an “White Elephant Auction”. We would request donations of anything that you no longer need to auction off. All funds from the auction and raffle will go towards the barn project.

Now please read some comments from Steve Gyuro, pictured here, the man who rebuilt the smokehouse, about the dedication. (It will be interesting to see if Steve performs the last song).

There'll be music, merriment, delicious beef brisket and



homemade apple pie. Music will include Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, On Top of Old Smokie and A Hunk of Burning Love.

The following smokehouse story is written by Doug Schmidt whose idea started the smokehouse project, and told by Steve Gyuro on how he built it.

A House of Granite Added to Legend Park

Franklin's historical village in Lions Legend Park continues to evolve. Preservation of historical buildings began some 40 years ago with the relocation of the Sheehan-Godsell Cabin, Whelan School, Old Town Hall and St. Peters Chapel. In 2012 the Historical Society undertook another reclamation project, a smokehouse built by Herman Delikat in 1891.

The granite smokehouse was discovered in 2011 hidden behind a young spruce tree set back from Drexel Avenue, just west of 51st Street. Once an important segment of farm life in Franklin, it was now the final vestige of that bygone era. The dormant farm property is now owned by Payne & Dolan, which granted the Franklin Historical Society permission to dismantle the smokehouse and transport the stones to Legend Park.

But moving blocks of granite is easier said than done, so board member Doug Schmidt contacted lifetime Franklin resident Steve Gyuro, who enjoys the challenge of applying his skill, knowledge and creativity in restoring structures of historical significance.

“Moving a stone structure is a big deal,” Steve noted. “Walls that are two feet thick, and individual stones weighing as much as 400 pounds is a handful. The front facade consisted of two stacks of geometrically cut stone, on each side of a weathered old door. A grand, massive stone lintel bridged the door, and along with it, the two stacks supported the gable stones.”

Adding historical integrity to the structure was a carved identification

stone saying, “18 H.D 91.” That signified when it was built and that it belonged 19th Century farmer Herman Delikat.

Steve Gyuro found the project intriguing. “A smokehouse was crucial for survival in the preservation of meats of all kinds. This structure would make an excellent addition to the other historic buildings at Legend Park, the City of Franklin’s historical park,” he said.

In July, 2011, Gyuro began dismantled the face of the smokehouse, stone by stone. “I backed up my trailer to the smokehouse face and systematically removed the beautiful cut stone,” he said. “I started at the top and worked my way down. It was actually quite easy to disassemble because the mortar was loose after 120 years, but the stones were not any lighter.

“I took pictures and numbered each of the stones, then transported them to Legend Park. The face stones are where the value of the structure lies. Those being secured, I went back to remove the roof and the old door. A fire had burned a good portion of the roof and a substantial amount of roof was not original, but. I saved the old trusses and roof boards, just the same, as a valuable resource in the roof system re-construction. “

The remaining stone walls (other than the cut cornerstones) were mortared in a random pattern, unlike the front façade, so exact placement was not necessary. Payne & Dolan supplied a a backhoe to knock the walls in, then loaded them into a dump truck furnished by the City. Two loads of stone were hauled and dumped in a pile in Legend Park next to the Old Town Hall. This “man-handling” of the stones helped jar off most of the old mortar, leaving relatively clean stones.

After Jim Luckey, president of the Historical Society, obtained a building permit, a decision was made to shorten the smokehouse by two feet. The front would remain 10 feet wide, however, to accommodate preservation of the front façade that featured the carved granite stones numbered by Gyuro. Thus, the reconstructed smokehouse would measure 10 feet x 10 feet instead of 10 feet x 12.

“The freedom to change the building size and disregard parts that were plain worn out, such as the smokehouse door, made things easier,” Steve noted. “I felt the best and strongest footing would be to dig a 10 foot x 10 foot perimeter trench, 30 inches wide and four feet deep, then fill it with concrete. We ordered 10 yards of concrete and saved a lot because a four bag mix was all that was required in this instance. We were heading into January by now, so we covered the foundation and let it set until spring.”

“Next, the focus was on finding a mason,” Steve explained. “I’ve dabbled in masonry, but this was too big of job for me. One problem was finding a mason who knew how to build what was essentially a two foot thick barn foundation. From several masons came the idea of building an inner block structure, complete with wire ties that would provide a “base” to lay the stone against and tie the stones to. The purist would say no, but the pragmatist said yes.

“The inner block wall could be back-plastered with mortar and interspersed with cultured stone to give the illusion that the walls were solid, two foot thick mortar and stone so that is what we did. One fellow we consulted offered enough blocks for \$50 and the services of a mason to erect this inner structure. Based on the old truss dimensions, I made a template for

the gable shape. Once the walls were erected, the template was set on the walls and block was cut and laid to that shape.

“During the concrete block inner wall construction, I worked on building the door jamb. This needed to be coordinated with the walls because its anchoring had to happen as the wall rose. I had kept all the parts of the smokehouse, including the worn out old door, and got the specs for the jamb, and the technique that was used for the joinery. The jamb stock was an odd size -- three inches by seven – but fortunately I had an old timber that was the precise size required!

“I added one thing the original did not have, namely, a green treated threshold. This tied the frame together and since it was nailed to the bottom of the jambs, rotting of the jambs will not occur. “Franklin’s building inspector wanted a two inch margin of footing showing both inside the wall and out. We obliged, as the walls would be two feet thick and the footing was 32 inches wide.”

The Historical Society had budgeted \$2,000 to complete the mason work and Gyuro was able to find someone who agreed to do it for that price. “I didn’t think it was nearly enough for all that work, but he and a sidekick got the job done in about a week’s time, so it wasn’t a bad wage after all.”

With the face stones numbered and photographed in the original structure, they were ready for installation. “I provided an engine hoist for some stones that were too heavy for two guys to lift,” Steve said. “The mortar joints on the original face had a protruding, convex shape to them and. the masons masterfully created the same look.

“A set of pockets were required on the inside near the top of the gables so that 4 x 4’s could be inserted for hanging meat and sausage to be smoked. There were also two intake ports located in the middle of each side wall to draw in air for the fire, then allow it to escape through another port at the top of the rear gable.”

Recreating the roof was another task. “The original roof system did not have a ridge board, but I thought it best to add one and create a straight roof line,” Steve said. “It would also prevent sagging years later so I fashioned the rafters after the original ones and stick-built the rafter system. Peculiar to the rafters was a skinny 2 inch x 10 inch tail that would later become the overhang.”

Gyuro also began reconstructing the smokehouse door. “The old door was pretty much beyond repair,” he said. “A great bit of luck was that the barn we were demolishing had a very similarly built door on the lower level, complete with vintage hardware. I had to skinny it up, then clean and paint the hardware and stain the door itself. When it was finished it looked great.”

The roof sheathing was next. “We were under budget so I wanted to install a cedar shingle roof instead of using asphalt shingles,” Steve continued. “Cedar roofs require boards that are gapped an inch apart so that the cedar can breathe. The boards came from the barn project so they were weathered nicely. They protruded 10 inches past each gable end truss to become the soffit and fascia.

“The ridge cap was a bonus from the barn job. It was metal extruded in a tubular fashion, the rounded tube ending in a flat lip that was nailed to the peak of the smokehouse. The cap was rusty and dented so I pounded out

the dents and painted it with Rustoleum.”

The Historical Society will dedicate its newest addition to the historical park in the fall of 2013. “Short of a nuclear blast, the Delikat Smokehouse should stand for 1,000 years,” Steve prophesized.

Fourth of July Surprise Wedding

On the 4th of July Mary Demotto and Neil Verburgt were married in the FHS St. Peters Chapel. Neil and Mary host an annual 4th of July picnic for family and friends. Other than their children the wedding remained a secret to everyone until their guests arrived for what they thought was just a picnic.

There was a wonderful wedding service performed by Reverend Roger Boesch who leads our non-denominational Christmas services in our chapel and Marian Luckey played the chapel’s antique pump organ for the service.

Judy Scherrer wrote an interesting story about this in her Historically Speaking column in the July 25th Chronicle.

Mary & Neil

FHS 4th of July Open Houses

During the City of Franklin’s 4th of July celebration over 400 people toured our historic buildings an all time record for us. Many of these people were seeing our historic village for the first time. Many also purchased raffle tickets during the tour for the benefit of our barn project.

On the same day the NOW newspaper had a great story with pictures about our barn project. I am sure this greatly enhanced the number of people that toured our buildings. I want to thank the reporter Scottie Meyers for writing this great story. Scottie described himself as a history nerd, so I gave him a private tour of our buildings.

Pathways, Lights, Electric & Bridge Project Update

Some real progress has been made on our PLEB project. We have estimates for paving the pathways. Position of the street lights have been staked out, and routing for the electrical wiring to



the lights and the cabin and chapel have been marked out. Diggers hotline has been out to flag everything. Planning has begun for the stone bridge. Much or all of this will be accomplished this year. Exactly how much depends on the results of our Labor Day weekend parking dollar results.

Labor Day Weekend Parking

On Sunday Sept. 1 and Labor Day Monday Sept. 2 at the County Dale school the FHS will have its annual Labor Day Weekend fundraising. This is by far our most important source of income for the year. The parking requires 28 hours of coverage over the two days. We need 25 to 30 volunteers including the boy scouts that have helped us in the past. I have been planning for this for sometime and have volunteers scheduled for the late morning and early afternoon prime hours. I really need some help from the hours from 6 AM to 10 AM & 2 PM to 7 PM both days. Anyone that could help with this please call me at 414-421-6539 or e-mail luckeyjim@yahoo.com. Also anyone that has any connections to Franklin boy or girl scouts or any volunteer organization that might want to help and receive community credit please let me know. Thank You.

Mayer Family Story

The following story on the next page is the next of a series stories Judy Scherrer's our FHS historian is writing about the founding families of Franklin. Judy first wrote this story in her Historically Speaking articles.

The Mayer family continues to this day to be greatly involved with the City of Franklin community and politically. Family members have significantly contributed to our barn project. Dan Mayer is the alderman for the second district in Franklin.

THE MAYERS -- LEADERS IN BUSINESS AND POLITICS

The name of "Mayer" has been prominent in the history of the Town of Franklin and in the City of Franklin for well over 100 years. That name has been a part of the local business scene and it has been associated with local

politics and community service.

The first generation of the Mayer family, Ignatius Mayer, came to America and to the Town of Franklin where he owned and worked several farms in the area. His son, John Mayer, was a tavern and storekeeper, in addition to doing masonry work. He helped build Sacred Hearts Church in 1858 (now St. Martin of Tours). John Mayer and his wife Catherine had 13 children and of those 13 children, Robert (R.A.) would develop a business in St. Martins that was significant to the economic development of Franklin. In the beginning R.A. sold and repaired Dodge automobiles. Later he added the Auburn, Stars and Durand to his car dealership.

In 1928 however, R. A. decided to change his auto dealership to an Allis Chalmers and farm machinery business. The first tractors that R. A. sold were steel-wheeled, but when Allis Chalmers introduced tractors with rubber tires they also became part of the inventory. The local farmers were ready buyers, also liking the new Harvesters, a forerunner of the combine. Eventually threshing machines used by many farmers in the area would be replaced by the combine, which made grain harvesting more productive. When R.A. sold tractors, the Allis Chalmers company would supply silent cowboy movies and a portable screen on which to show the films. They would show the movies in Market Square in St. Martins on Friday nights. People would bring lawn chairs or sit in the grass to watch these movies. Of course Allis Chalmers also showed advertisements for their tractors, not wanting to miss an opportunity to sell their products!

Part of running a business was providing the customer what they wanted --- which is what R.A. felt was his responsibility to do. He would take livestock in exchange for farm equipment and service during the Great Depression. He would fatten up the newly acquired stock and then either sell it or butcher it for meat. If he got horses, he would usually trade them. The R.A. Mayer Company also had a long tradition of repairing what they sold -- even providing replacement parts for the old Allis Chalmers tractors. On occasion the business had some very interesting individuals come in as customers. One such person who would pass through St. Martins on his way up north was Al Capone, the Chicago mobster. He would stop at Mayer's to get gas and coffee on his way to Big Martha Lake in Mercer. Capone was always in a black Cadillac situated between lead and trail cars that were full of his bodyguards. At one of those stops in St. Martins, Dave Mayer (R.A.'s son) had to install a headlight on Al Capone's car!

Capone, however, was not the only famous person to stop in St. Martins at the Mayer establishments. Many years before when R.A.'s mother was in their dry goods store and saloon, Buffalo Bill rode into the store on his horse! So upset about how he had entered the store, R.A.'s mother went after him with a whip! He shouted, "Lady, do you know WHO I AM?" and she said, "I don't care who you are. Get that _____ horse out of my building!"

As the years passed, the R.A. Implement Company made some changes. In 1946 it built a new facility on the site of where the family home once stood. While the demand for farm tractors lessened, suburbanites that moved to Franklin after WWII were looking for ways to mechanize their outside work chores. So then R.A. and his sons ---Robert, David and Gordon --- began to sell lawn and garden tractors. A few years after that, changing lifestyles and the need for recreational vehicles brought another new line to the company - that of snowmobiles.

In addition to the business, R.A. answered the call to serve his community by being elected as a Town Supervisor in 1934 and being re-elected for seven more consecutive terms until he retired in 1948. When R.A.'s son Dave returned from serving his country in the US Navy during WWII, he followed his father's example by being elected as a Town Supervisor in 1948. David Mayer continued to serve Franklin for a total of almost 40 years, first as a Town Supervisor and then as a City Alderman. Among Dave Mayer's achievements were bringing the stock fair from Hales Corners to St. Martins in Franklin and the development of the Franklin Fire Dept. Since 1865 Hales Corners had held the monthly stock fair, but as traffic increased it was no longer feasible to have it there. So Mayer and other Franklin officials and businessmen began a campaign to move it to St. Martins where it eventually located and is still held today. The establishment of the Franklin Fire Dept. is also credited to Dave Mayer and the Town Board Chairman Tom Godsell. They both went to Union Grove to buy a used fire truck with their own money so that Franklin could provide their own fire protection and not have to pay Hales Corners for each call they answered. They felt that Franklin should have their own volunteer fire department and should no longer rely on Hales Corners for fire protection.

R.A. Mayer died in 1950, but the business continued in operation on St. Martins Rd. run by his 3 sons -- Robert, David and Gordon. In 1975 R.A. Mayer Implement Company hosted the 125th Anniversary of St. Martins.

By the time the three brothers retired in 1987, the business had served Franklin and the nearby area for over 70 years. The building remains in use today and at the present time houses a heating and air conditioning business. For his over 40 years of service to the Town of Franklin and then to the City of Franklin, Dave Mayer was honored by having the city's Public Works Facility named for him. Located on Ryan Rd. the sign on the building reads "David R. Mayer Public Works Facility". It is testimony to a hard working public servant that made a strong impact on the development of Franklin.

Ring that School Bell!

Through the efforts of Ken Gawrisch and Steve Gyuro the Whelan School large bell on the roof will be ringing away at the start of our grade school program this fall.

A special thank you to the current teachers of the Whelan Educational Experience - Barbara Pforr, Luanne Burdick, Sue Gawrisch and current assistants Sheri Coulter, Ginny Dekker, Cathy Lange. Del Lester, Judy Scherrer, Anita Nickerson, Kathy Milanowski, Dale Pforr & Ken Gawrisch.

Barn Update - 2013 Fall Barn Raising

This barn raising is not another fundraiser. This is the real thing! The FHS will begin the stage two reconstruction of the historic Wendt family barn this fall.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved and supported this project. I want to give **special thanks to Mayor Tom Taylor** who has supported the FHS in so many ways, and to the City of Franklin.

There is still much work to do. Stage three the internal design of the building and the displaying of the farm equipment, tools and artifacts will be started in the early spring of 2014. Our goal is to have a grand opening during the city's 4th of July celebration.

Some Final Notes

Welcome new member Mary Janes. Mary has volunteered to help us with special events and cataloging collections and photos. Thank You Mary!

On July 13 Joan Thompson, Judy Scherrer, Barbara Pforr, Marian Luckey

and myself attended the Wis. Historical Society annual Metro meeting hosted by the Greenfield Historical Society. We hosted this event last year. It is always interesting to meet and learn what other societies are doing. I believe during my time to speak about our activities everyone was quite impressed with everything we are doing.

The clean up of the upstairs of the St. Peters Chapel has been completed. We can now use this for storage. In the future it may be possible to use it for displaying our many artifacts to the general public. This was made possible by Bennett Hoefft's Eagle Scout stairway project this past year.

On your envelope for this newsletter the renewal date for non-life time members is on the address label.

Our Christmas services will be on Saturday Dec. 14. The children's Christmas program Saturday Dec. 7. Details in the next newsletter.

Please visit our website www.franklinhistory.net. There is good information about our activities including the barn project, pictures and some great stories of Franklin's history.

In memorial of our loss of a valued member Pearl Schultz. Pearl was a founding member of the FHS and an active volunteer and a board member of the FHS. Pearl greatly helped make the FHS what it is today. Thank You Pearl.

Jim Luckey
President FHS