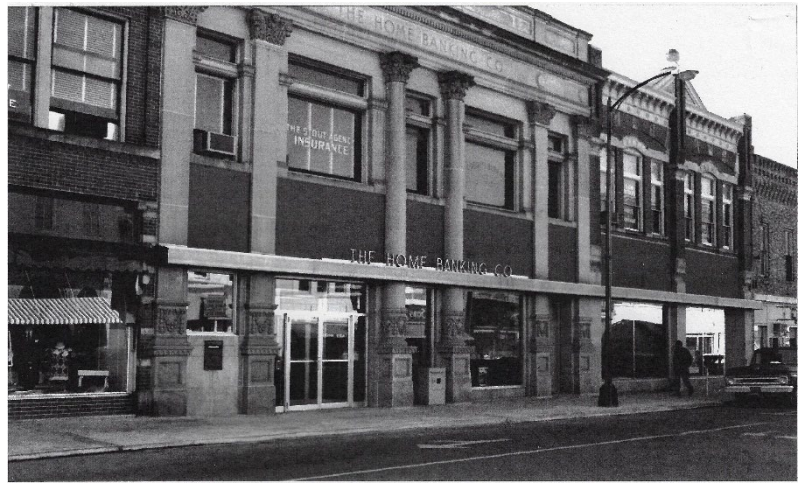


Local History Round Table August 2022



The August 23rd Local History Round Table was well attended with a variety of topics covered, questions asked and answered. Introductions took place with Becky Davis relating her and her sister, Sandra Clausing's, family history. Their mother Lois (nee Miller) Engel graduated from Spencerville High School in 1929. She married Bill Engel in July of 1937 and started the business, Lois Miller's Beauty Shop in April of 1937 on Spring street. In 1940, they built Lois Beauty Shop on the corner of High and Front streets. Bill Engel grew up in St. Marys across from the High School. Sandra Clausing was excited to start high school so that she could eat lunch at her grandmother's house, unfortunately her grandmother died while she was in eighth grade and she could not go there for lunch. Bill Engel worked at Goodyear for a couple of years, he then started a kid's clothing store in the Huber building which he ran for 5 years. Becky Davis said that he would yell at her running her hands across the clothing when she went to the shop with him. After that he went to work at the Woolen Mills. He was called to serve during World War II but because of what he did for a living he was exempt from going to war. He retired when the Woolen Mill closed. He then helped his wife with the shop and especially with the Merle

Norman Cosmetics that they sold there. In 1959, they added onto the salon and her dad told her that each window cost \$1000. Sandra Clausing worked at the salon for 52 years and she says, "that she misses the customers the most but not standing on her feet all day."

Bill's brother Robert "Bob" Engel married Geraldine "Jeri" Rees from Mendon. Jeri was a school teacher for a number of years. She then came to be president and secretary of the St. Marys Nursing Home at 518 Jackson Street which was owned by her parents. She later went on to be the administrator of Auglaize Acres for 20 years.

Doris Cook came to Noble Township with her parents in 1948 when she was in third grade and has lived here ever since. Bill Huber related that he has practiced law in St. Marys for 54 years. Bill Grunden's mother, Aileen Grundish Grunden, taught second grade for 30 years mostly at Bunker Hill but also at East Elementary. Bill Grunden is working on the restoration of old photographs.

Gladys Stroh remembers trucks delivering meat to the Fortman Meat Market and then going there at 8:00 am to buy meat. Prior to the advent of disposable diapers, they bought cloth diapers. Gladys remembers that sometimes there was a shortage of diapers. Sometimes she had to stand in line to buy a dozen cloth diapers. Sometimes you could not get diapers so she had to buy the cloth and make her own. A dozen cloth diapers did not go very far.

Bill Grunden has been doing research on the Home Bank building, now the Wishing Well Clinic and Spa. He found out that the marble was added to the Home Bank in 1965. The building was originally built in 1891. Berry Kemp started his law practice there in 1961 and Bill Huber joined him in the practice in 1968. Bill Huber remembers that the nickname of the building was the "Marble Mausoleum." It was related that Ben McIntire Sr. had his store in the building until the bank bought out the whole first floor forcing him move to another location on Spring St. A number of businesses were located on the second floor of the Home Bank Building: The Stout Agency (Albert F. Stout), District office of Prudential Insurance Company, Western & Southern Life Insurance Company, Noble & Montague attorneys at law, Barrett "Barry" Kemp attorney, and Kishler investments (Willis J. Kishler). Gladys Stroh remembers that Al Stout had a dog and it always went with him to Koch's Restaurant, when it was upstairs. It was the only dog allowed to come into the restaurant. Bill Huber remembers Al Stout putting a folder of papers on the top of his car and then driving off with the papers flying everywhere.

Becky Davis recalled that her dad ran the projector at the theater and Bob Hurm said that he also ran the projector.

Bill Grunden gave a tour of the bridges, canal and river in St. Marys to the great-great-granddaughter of a lady who drowned in the canal. She had a copy of an article from the St. Marys Argus and Democrat dated October 19, 1899 which told the story, part of which is related here: "The opinion seemed general that she had plunged into the canal. The water was let out of the level between locks 11 and 12, and a thorough search of the canal bottom was begun which continued until nearly noon when the ghastly discovery was made. The remains were found just south of the South street canal bridge." Lock 12, which was located on South Chestnut street at one time had an iron bridge over it. This is where the kids would jump off into the canal. They also used it for a swimming hole. When the flume was installed over the

race, the kids would swim through the flume to the other side. Gladys Stroh said that her husband would canoe down the canal.

Gladys Stroh also remembers the interurban, "street car" that ran once a day in Minster. You could take it to other towns, like St. Marys and Wapakoneta. They would take the "street car" to the New Bremen Speedway located south of New Bremen. When she moved to St. Marys in 1944 or 1945 it was still here. Bill Huber said that Spring Street was wider in front of the Grand Opera House because this is where the interurban cars would stop to drop off and pick up passengers and also the location of the ticket office. Bill Huber can still remember the tracks running down the middle of the street. Mike Homan remembers that in the 1980's when the city redid Spring Street they dug way down and the tracks were still there. Bill Grunden has seen several photographs of the power house for the interurban, located behind St. Marys Trucking, sometimes it with seven smoke stacks and sometime with nine smoke stacks.

Gladys Stroh remembers the fountain that was outside of the Fountain Hotel. Her husband related that they would go fishing there and put the fish that they caught in the fountain and people would come along and take the fish out and take them home. Bill Huber said that there was also a fountain inside the hotel. There were a lot of natural springs downtown and that is where the Fountain Hotel got its name. The natural springs attracted people to the area. Bill Huber related that when St. Marys was originally laid out Front street was along the river with Main, Wayne, and Perry running north and south parallel to Front Street and South, Spring, High and North Streets running parallel east and west. The St. Marys River was much wider before the canal was built. During the War of 1812 General Harrison would send flatboats down the St. Marys River to Fort Wayne. When the canal was built the canal took 60% of the watershed, making the river narrower than it once was.

When St. Marys was the county seat of Mercer County the courthouse was located between Court and Wayne Streets when the Wayne Street United Methodist Church parking lot is today. During the Canal era, canal boats would go down the feeder to the bulkhead at Grand Lake. The group discussed how that cargo was taken across the Lake to Celina, since they could not be pulled by mule. The thought was that prior to steam boats the cargo would have been transferred to another type of boat such as a sail boat and taken to Celina.

Bill Huber learned that his fourth Great Grandfather who lived his whole life in Delaware County, Ohio, and was a veteran of the War of 1812 bought 600 acres of land on the eastern part of Auglaize county. He owned the land between 1830 and 1836 in Union township. Bill believes that his fourth Great Grandfather was speculating that the canal would go closer to the Auglaize River but since that did not happen he sold the land. The 1913 flood ruined portions of the canal but there were still portions that were used up until 1937. The canal was used by farmers to ship their products to market. Bill Grunden asked what the difference was between a feeder and a dry feeder. Bill Huber said that a feeder feeds water into the canal while it is thought that a dry feeder, such as the one located along State Route 219, was used for the overflow of water and/or flood control. Canal boats had a speed limit of 5 miles per hour, anything ever this speed limit would ruin the canal banks. The boats were timed between stops and if they exceeded the speed limit they got a ticket. Early on the canal was under the control

of the Ohio Public Works Commission. Huber also shared that there is an eight-foot rise or fall between locks and there is an 88 foot fall from New Bremen and St. Marys. When Minster built their sewage plant they diverted water from the canal thus making the canal bed dry.

Bill Grunden asked where the Linseed Oil factory was located. Beth Keuneke using the Sanborn maps available via the Ohio Web Library and located it north of High street and east of the canal, somewhere close to where the City of St. Marys yard waste dump is now located. Mike Homan asked where linseed came from and what it was used for. It was learned that it comes from the ripened seeds of the flax plant, and according to World Book advanced it is "used primarily in printing inks, paints, varnishes, linoleum, and other industrial products."

Mike Homan asked what the building and stones located north of the pump house in mill park are or were used for. It was thought that the stones might have been remnants of the railroad bridge. At one time there were two depots in Mill Park one for passengers and one for freight. Mike Homan remembers there being a Quonset hut located there, perhaps used by the city. There was also a generator that used diesel fuel because he remembers Al Waterman delivering fuel to this location.

The group talked about a lot of different topics and many stories and remembrances were shared. The next Local History Round Table will be on Tuesday, September 27, 2022, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. For more information about this or other Library programs call (419) 394-7471 or visit 140 South Chestnut Street. We are on the web at smcpl.org. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep up with all the latest library news.