

February 2022  
Local History Round Table

A group of 10 met in the Local History room at the St. Marys Community Public Library on Tuesday afternoon, February 22, 2022, to discuss local history. The discussion started with the St. Marys Theater. Joy Sibold shared that for a short time her grandmother, Margaret Abe Hollman, played the piano for the silent movies. She could not read music but could play music in relation to the movie on screen. Joy Sibold also remembered the Christmas parties that took place at the theater. The children formed a line and went on stage to select a gift. The children were given candy and shown a movie. After a time, this activity was moved to the high school. Charlotte Duncan and Ann Hudson remember going to the movies on Wednesday afternoons. The downtown businesses sponsored the showings which cost the children nothing although they received a ticket. They were Disney films, films about nature or westerns. Hudson remembers her mother telling Ann to take her younger brother and sister to these movies.

The discussion turned to the St. Marys Woolen Mill/Cotton Mill and Rupert's Blanket factory. Linda Koons stated that St. Marys Woolen Mill was very well known. She was in New York and when asked where she was from, they were familiar with St. Marys Woolen Mill. There was a television game show at one time called "Queen for a Day" that was sponsored by the St. Marys Woolen Mill. Linda Koons remembers that you could even get a miniature St. Marys Blanket box for your miniature house. There was discussion as to the location of the Blanket factory near the intersection of South Ash and Greenville Rd. After the discussion Beth Keuneke, Adult Services Coordinator, did some further research on the St. Marys Woolen Mill and the blanket factory on Greenville Rd. According to the directories on hand, the St. Marys Woolen Mill became the St. Marys Cotton Mills between 1957 and 1961. At 600 Greenville Road was located Luxury Blanket run by the Rupert family. Luxury Blanket was originally located at 122 Nagel Street and moved to the Greenville location around 1969. Prior to that St. Marys Packing Company and St. Marys Foods Inc. managed by CC Swonger was located at the 600 Greenville.

The discussion turned to remembrances of the Sesquicentennial in 1973. Doris Cook remembers working in a food stand that was situated in front of the Bank One/Chase bank building. They served BBQ beef and pork and did a lively business. Joy Sibold and Doris Cook remembered receiving wooden nickels and Charlotte Duncan remembered the men growing beards and if they did not want to grow a beard they had to buy a badge.

The raising of Spring Street was discussed. Participants remember the Koch's Ratskeller which was a bar in the basement of Koch's restaurant/cafeteria when it was located near the river on the south side of Spring Street at 101 W. Spring. Koch's Cafeteria was for formal dining whereas the Koch's Ratskeller was informal. The swinging bridge that crossed the river between memorial park and South Street parking lot which was just North of where the Covered Bridge is now located was fondly remembered. People would get the bridge to swinging which could be a little scary. The swinging bridge was replaced in 1951 with the black iron bridge which goes from Spring Street to the South Street parking lot. Ann Hudson recalled that her grandmother who lived on Walnut Street boarded her horse and buggy in a stable which was located on property now occupied by Memorial Park.