

## Local History Round Table September 2022



At the Local History Round Table held on Tuesday, September 27, 2022 at the St. Marys Community Public Library the following items were discussed and stories shared.

Bob Hurm related that his dad who was born in 1909 remembers hearing the news that a horseless carriage was coming to town. People gathered up and down Spring street and a “horseless carriage”, an early automobile, drove through town going from East to West, presumably heading to Celina.

Charlie Cooper said that he was reading somewhere that Charlie Makley and Jim Tully used to hang out together at a bar on Maple Street. The bar was supposedly called the Horseshoe Bar. No one really knew anything about it. After the meeting, Marv Rupert told Beth Keuneke that he remembers a bar on Maple Street called the Bloody Bucket that was located at 105 Maple Street. After the meeting, Beth Keuneke looked through the directories that the library has and found in the 1905 directory a Mrs. R.F. Whitehead had a saloon at 106 Maple St. Her given name was Ida and she was the widow of Ralph R. Whitehead.

Beth Keuneke related that she had learned some of the history of Varsity Lanes. From Marvin W. Bayer’s obituary, she learned that after serving in World War II he returned home in the fall of 1945, after which he met and married his wife Dorothy and they moved to St. Marys, where Marvin started his first business venture, the Varsity Lanes. The obituary continues, “he soon outgrew that first site and in the subsequent years, he was to move his businesses twice, to ever larger establishments. At each, he pioneered the latest in technology which drew many new participants to the sport.” According to the St. Marys Directory for 1946 the Varsity Bowl (the previous name of Varsity Lanes) was located at 111

W. Spring St. Doris Cook recalls their high school class going there to bowl and that it was located on the upper floor. Beth Keuneke showed a picture of the Varsity Bowl in the Regent Theater building located to the West of Koch's Restaurant. Bill Grunden had previously told Beth Keuneke that from Spring Street, Varsity Bowl moved where Fowler's is currently located, this was confirmed by the 1957 and 1961 directories as being located at 1309 E. Spring Street. By 1965 the name was changed to Varsity Lanes and was located at 91 Herzing, its present location.

According to the obituary, Marvin Bayer, later donated to the city of St. Marys the land containing the site of the original 1790's Fort St. Marys, which enabled the city to preserve the site as a community park. The participants of the Round Table believe that he donated about 6 acres near the bowling alley and the Old Lutheran Cemetery.

Another local business that was discussed was Hunter's Grocery located at 807 W. High St. on the corner of West High and Buckeye St. This grocery was run by Russell A and Marie S. *Prueter* Hunter. According to the 1957 Directory, this was also the residence of the couple. Their son, Russell Kenneth Hunter (1928-2022) owned and operated Hunter Bros. Plumbing & Heating and several in attendance remembered seeing the airplanes that he built in his garage.

Hunter's Printing & Office Supply store was also discussed. This business was owned and operated by Robert Gordon Hunter and later his son Richard L. Hunter who was later joined by Joseph E. Meyer. This business was located at 208 W. Spring Street and according to the 1946 Directory was also the home of Robert G. Hunter and his wife, Mary L., and Robert's mother, Matilda. The Meyer family took over ownership and operated the business into the 2000s. In 2011 the building was razed and is now used as a parking lot.

Another family owned and operated business was Buel's Lumber & Supply Co. located at 1220 E. Spring Street. The 1957 directory lists Charles L. Buel as president, Harold L. Buel as vice-president, Marcella L. Buel as secretary-treasurer, and Beven C. Buel as an associate. The 1969 directory list Harold L. Buel as president and Mrs. Marcella L. Buel as secretary-treasurer.

Mike Homan asked about Morris 5 and 10 cent store. Other attendees related that it was located in the Glass Block building. It then became G.C. Murphy's. G. C. Murphy's then built a store across the street. According to the 1939 and the 1946 directory, Morris 5 cent & 10 cent to \$1 Store was located at 130-32 E. Spring St. The 1957 directory lists G C Murphy Co. was listed at 130-32 E. Spring. By 1969 G C Murphy Co. was listed at 109 W. Spring.

Jackson's Market, on the corner of Beech and Canal Streets, was also mentioned. The 1946 and 1957 directories list Wm H Jackson as the owner at 302 Beech St. This was also the home of William H and Zelma E. Jackson.

Marv Rupert came to the meeting and talked about the third grade historical tours that take place in May. During the tours, Marv Rupert talks about the First National Bank, which was located at 139 ½-43 ½ W. Spring. This building was later occupied by Kellermeyer Men's Wear Inc. When gives his talk he also talks about the buildings that were behind the bank. One of the buildings was George Weadock's barn in later years it became Speckman's. Where the Marathon gas station is now located was a blacksmith's shop. Other sites on the tour are: The Armory, The Grand Opera House and St. Marys Theater, Lock 12, Lock 13, the Mill Race, and Fort Barbee.

Bob Hurm related that the barber chairs from his grandfather, who died in 1920, are now being used by Mike Rowen at The Buzz, 109 N. Chestnut St. they had previously been in what is now the Greene Room.

The conversation moved from historical buildings and businesses to the lake. Charlie Cooper was trying to imagine what it took to create the lake and dig the canal. It would have taken lots of men, horses, and equipment not to mention feed and shelter. Beth Keuneke related an article that she read that was posted on the Facebook page, Wild Ohio – Tales Of Life in Ohio before 1850. The article was from a newspaper column by Jim Blount July 7, 1991 in the Journal-News entitled, Haymakers at Fort Hamilton wary Indians. The story relates that “the hay project was part of [General Anthony] Wayne’s insistence on adequate supply and preparation of his army-elements neglected by generals Josiah Harmer in 1790 and St. Clair in 1791... The haymaking had to be done outside the walls of Fort Hamilton...: The hay was made from a 500– to 600-acre prairie a mile south of the fort. The mowers were allowed “one and a half rations per day, and both them and the haymakers half a pint of whisky each.” They received supplies but Captain Armstrong who was in charge of this project “complained about ‘the quality and durability of supplies previously sent from Fort Washington to Fort Hamilton: saying “The whip-saw I have received is not calculated for my wants...and ‘the scythes are subject to be broken,’ even with these supplies he reported that “he expected to harvest 300 tons of hay.” This might give an idea of what was needed to build the lake and the canal.

Julie Graves said that her uncle tended the old wells on the lake and when there was ice on the lake he skated from the East side to the West side. Another person related that the guys liked to go fishing and drinking at the lake. To discourage the women and children from wanting to come along, they told them about the Hodag. Bill Huber said that Phil Herzing told him there was “a cabin on the south side of the lake and that he and other fellows would meet to go out and hunt the Hodag. After the hunt, the successful hunters would prepare a meal from the Hodag. Each year it would taste different,” some years it tasted like chicken, some years it tasted like beef, and some years it tasted like pork. They told the children that the Hodag liked to eat small children and cows. Sometimes the Hodag liked to eat custard pie that was set out overnight to cool. Beth Keuneke is looking for articles about the Hodag. Any articles can be sent to her attention via the library at 140 S. Chestnut St., St. Marys, Ohio 45885 or emailed to [stmaryshelp@seolibraries.org](mailto:stmaryshelp@seolibraries.org).

The next local history round table will be on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 to 2:30 pm.