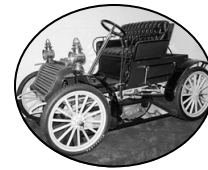


The Towner Tattler

The Boone County Historical Museum Newsletter
September 2011



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Letter from the President

As the days start to get shorter, I look back to our accomplishments over the past 3 months. In June, our own board member, Grant Michaud gave a fine program at our General Membership Meeting on the National Sewing Machine Company. In July, the Society hosted a very informative lecture at the Community Building Complex entitled a "Visit with Ben Franklin". I would like to thank all of the board members, staff, Society Members and volunteers for helping with these programs.

In August, the Society had a booth at the Boone County Fair and I can personally say I met many new faces and had the opportunity to tell them of the great happenings at the museum. On August 23rd at 8:30AM it did not look good for our annual Ice Cream Social, as the rain came down in buckets and electric lines sparked. But by 3:00PM the skies cleared and we had a very successful Social that all who attended had a great time. As I stated in the earlier paragraph I thank you all for all of your hard work at these two events.

This summer we received, through the Boone County Community Foundation, a bequest from the William D. Cummings Estate. We are so thankful to Mr. Cummings for his foresight to help preserve Boone County history through his generous gift to the museum.

In September, the museum will have the next in our Lecture Series the "Beauty of Barns" by Carol Rowe. I look forward to this program on September 8th at the museum. On September 13th, we will have our General Membership Potluck. I hope to see you there early, because I have to leave for another board meeting and sorry I have to go away hungry. In October, we plan to have our volunteer dinner and yes, your President will be doing dishes.

As you may know the Boone County Historical Society has changed its regularly scheduled meeting from the 3rd Monday of the month to the 3rd Tuesday of the month to help accommodate work schedules. Remember these meetings are open to the public.

In closing, I would like to stress that your Board of Directors is working hard to fulfill the mission of the Society.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Banks
President Boone County Historical Society

P.S. Presidential Order #1, dated 08/26/2011: Please bring disposable utensils and plates to the Volunteer Dinner.

SEVENTH ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL SUCCESSFUL

THANK YOU to all members, staff and volunteers for making this year's Ice Cream Social the largest ever. We served approximately 850 attendees.

The weather the morning of the social gave us some anxious moments, wondering if we should plan on extending to the following day—with a lot of media advertising to inform the public. As the sun broke through after noon, our setup crew quickly completed the necessary work to be ready for the our first customers—some of them arriving at 3:30 PM.

This event continues to bring the community to our museum. We can all be very proud of this fun and “tasteful” event for many.

Whether you sold tickets, baked a pie, donated to the fundraiser, or attended, Thank You For Your Support!!!! Every year the Ice Cream Social gets bigger and better.

Carol Rowe
Ice Cream Social Chairperson



Jim, Jack, Don and John make final preparations before scooping ice cream

In Memoriam

James P. Cannell
8-Mar-1919 to 27-Aug-2011



**** Boards and Staff ****

District Board

Teri Keegan-President
Patrick Murphy-Vice President
Lois Ramon-Secretary
Gail Bennett-Treasurer
Jack Wolf-Trustee

Society Board

Don Banks-President
Judy Winter-Vice President
Judy Ernest-Secretary
Dick Stegemann-
Treasurer
Ann Bennett
Grant Michaud
Dr. Dale Drake
Bob Lear
Norma Schandelmeier
Carol Rowe
John Wolf
Steve Anderson
Andy Ward
Marilyn Clanin
Gary Turner

Society Board Meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm and are open to the public.

District Board Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 4:00 pm and are open to the public.

All meetings are held at the Museum.

Staff

Mary Hale-Director
Lonna Bentley-Registrar
Dick Nelson-Maintenance

Board Update



The Society Board Meetings will now be held at 5:30 pm on the third Tuesday of the month.

Please make note of the time change.

Our Mission

“The mission of the Boone County Historical Museum is to stimulate interest in Boone County history through education, research, and preservation of artifacts and archival materials”

SENSATIONAL MURDER IN BOONE COUNTY

In the cold-blooded slaying last evening of Walton Wheeler at his home on Route 76, about 4 miles north of Belvidere, Boone County authorities have on their hands for solution one of the most sensational murder mysteries in the history of the county.

Wheeler, probably the wealthiest farmer in Boone County, was slain by a gang of four gunmen who it is believed were hired to do the job to get Wheeler out of the way. It is known that Wheeler was pressing collection of overdue notes in at least three or four cases. Whether his action in trying to force payment on obligations due him had anything to do with the killing is now being probed by the county authorities.

Other motives are being run down by State's Attorney A. J. Strom, Coroner Floyd Atkins, Mrs. Floyd Smith, the sheriff and some of her best deputies. There are rumors of quarrels over other matters.

The clubbing and shooting of Wheeler took place at about 7:40 last evening .. after the gang of killers had herded Mrs. Wheeler and her eight children in the house. The killers drove into the farmyard at the Wheeler place in a sedan which is described as being of dark color and having a bright and shining coat of new paint, which indicates it was a new car.

CALLED FROM HOUSE

One member of the gang knocked at the door of the house and asked for Wheeler, who had just finished his supper. Thinking his visitor wished to talk over business, Wheeler did not hesitate to go outside. He had hardly stepped off the side porch, located on the south side of the house, when the three killers began beating him over the head with a club. So far as can be ascertained, no conversation preceded the brutal attack.

CLUBBED AND SHOT TO DEATH

Wheeler cried lustily for help as he was felled to the ground under the merciless blows and began crawling in a desperate effort to climb up the porch steps. As he had partially reached his goal, four shots rang out. The gunmen evidently decided to finish the job and make the killing certain. Two of the bullets entered Wheeler's back. Either might have caused his death. The killers fled in the speedy sedan, turning north on State Route No. 76 and were soon lost to view.

GUNMAN HERDS FAMILY IN HOUSE

While the slaying was being accomplished one of the four gunmen held the members of the family prisoners in the house. He was armed with a shotgun. Pointing it menacingly at Mrs. Wheeler and the eight children, one of whom is only 2 years of age, he warned them to keep their faces turned away from him under penalty of being shot. As the four shots rang out the gunman, who had been holding the family at bay in the dining room and kitchen, hurriedly opened the door, said something to his companions and joined them in their getaway

DAUGHTER IS THREATENED

When the gang of killers arrived one member of the family was not in the house. Hazel, 15 year old daughter and the oldest of the eight children, was at the hog pen near the barn feeding the pigs their menu of swill. One of the four gunmen, noticing her under the glare of the electric light, rushed to her side, grabbed her roughly by the arm and commanded her to proceed to the house. He had a shotgun and made threats of shooting the frightened girl.

Continued on page 6

Article appeared in BDR on April 12, 1934

September General Membership Meeting

Our September General Membership Meeting will be September 27th at 6pm. As always, this will be a potluck dinner so bring a dish to pass and come join us for some good food and fellowship. Carol Rowe will be presenting a short interactive program titled “How well do you know your cars”.



New Displays

- ~~ The Beauty of Barns featuring photos by Mildred Banks
- ~~ Jeremy Crandall's items from his detention in China in 2001

*** Watch for some exciting new displays just in time for the holidays*



A Special Thank You...

We would like to thank Helen Huber for making the replica of Judi Ford's Miss America Gown. The dress is done and back in the Judi Ford case for all to see. You did an amazing job Helen!

The replica contains the trim from Judi's original gown.



(continued from page 4)

WIDOW FEARS JUSTICE NEVER WILL BE METED OUT

Doubt that the four men who slugged and shot her husband to death will ever be apprehended and brought to justice was expressed by Mrs. Walton Wheeler as she sat talking to a reporter for The Daily Republican today in the same room where her husband breathed his last.

She was completely bewildered by the whirl of events and the coming and going of neighbors, reporters, cameramen, the curious, and officials.

About her ran the children, all of them wide-eyed and very talkative.

"It all happened in about two minutes," the widow said. She said her husband had just come into the house when he was called out by his assailants and the next she heard was screams. She recounted how one of the masked men had menaced her with a gun and warned her to stay inside the house, of how her daughter, Hazel, had been intercepted by another of the four while swilling the pigs, and threatened with a weapon.

"Hazel," she said, "thought that the men had come to kidnap her and begged them not to take her away."

23 CHILDREN ARE UNITED BY MARRIAGE (*BDR Oct 23, 1936*)

Through the marriage of Mrs. Walton Wheeler and Sigrid Hulstedt, which took place in Rockford last evening, two families of children numbering twenty-three, are joined together in stepbrother and stepsister relationship.

For some time past relatives and friends of the couple have looked for an announcement of their wedding. The happy event was solemnized in Rockford last evening at the parsonage of the Trinity Lutheran Church, Rev. Garfield Beckstrand officiating.

More than ordinary interest will be attached to the marriage; Mrs. Wheeler became a widow on the evening of April 11, 1934, when her late husband, Walton Wheeler, was shot to death by a gang of four bandits whose motive was believed to be robbery.

Wheeler was known to have the habit of keeping fairly large amounts of money around and it was thought by authorities at the time of the slaying that he resisted the bandits when they called from his home and demanded his money. His slayers have never been apprehended.

Mrs. Wheeler, whose maiden name was Florieta Sinnett and who is a daughter of Mrs. Zene Smith, north Rockford road, married Wheeler in 1918 and bore him eight children, whose ages now run from 4 to 17 years. Wheeler was the father of four children by his first wife, whose maiden name was Stella Ramsey.

The groom, Sigrid Hulstedt, became a widower four years ago when his wife died, leaving eleven motherless children. He is a well-known farmer, operating the Rote farm in Bonus Township. All but four of five of Mr. Hulstedt's children are either married or living away from the farm home. Two are attending Belvidere high school.

The newlyweds plan to live on Mr. Hulstedt's farm in Bonus, where six of the Wheeler children will make their home. The Wheeler farm, located 4 miles north of Belvidere on Route 76, will be offered for rent, Mr. Hulstedt stated this afternoon.

Friends of the couple will extend hearty congratulations.

Clip & Save

September 8th 6:30 pm

Lecture Series: "The Beauty of Barns" by Carol Rowe

September 27th 6:00 pm* (date change)

General Membership Potluck Meeting

September 20th 5:30 pm

Society Board Meeting

All Board Meetings at Museum and are open to the public

September 21st 4:00 pm

District Board Meeting

All Board Meetings at Museum and are open to the public

October 6th 5-7 pm

Volunteer Night at the Museum

October 18th 5:30 pm

Society Board Meeting

All Board Meetings at Museum and are open to the public

October 19th 4:00 pm

District Board Meeting

All Board Meetings at Museum and are open to the public

Important Information

Our December General Membership Meeting has been moved to November; therefore, our December Newsletter will also change to reflect the Meeting. You can expect the next newsletter to arrive the first week in November. Remember, this is the issue that allows you to meet the candidates for the Society Board that you will be voting on in November now NOT December! Mark your calendars- November 8th will be the year end General Membership Meeting

~~ Our Business Members ~~

*Alpine Bank
Belvidere Funeral Home
Boone County Auto Parts
Buck-Wheeler-Hyland Funeral Home
Belvidere Cemetery Association
Blackhawk Bank
Eagles Club
Edwards Apple Orchard, Inc*

*Ollmann Ernest Martin Architects
Poplar Grove State Bank
Steam Plant Family Restaurant
Vintage Wings & Wheels
Belvidere School District #100
Jerry Butitta Automotive
Doc's Upholstery & Refinishing*

Boone County Historical Museum
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