



Hinckley Historical Society News

Fall 2019 Issue

Hinckley Had 11 Gas Stations—Part 1

Editor's note: Jerry Bahl is a name that has become synonymous with Hinckley since the 1940s. A graduate of Hinckley High School, he has been involved in just about every aspect of the community and named Hinckley Citizen of the Year in 2013. What follows is his personal story about making a difference in the community.

I was born on August 14, 1931, in Aurora. My family moved several times before settling in Hinckley in 1941. By that time, I was already an ambitious youth who sold Saturday Evening Post Magazines for 10 cents a copy in Aurora. The Post was a highly read weekly magazine with feature stories and news that was delivered to subscribers by Saturday evening. The concept of the paper dated back to Benjamin Franklin.

The Post distribution in Hinckley was already taken by someone else, so I had to look for other opportunities to stay busy and earn a few dollars. While in fifth grade, I landed the job of setting pins at the bowling alley beneath the variety store on Lincoln Avenue. There were four lanes and I set pins for one of them on Friday night and sometimes Saturday and Sunday.

To fill my time, I mowed lawns and by eighth grade worked at the Pogue Greenhouse on Oak Street.

Ralph Pogue was the son of businessman James Pogue who was a founder and President of the Hinckley State Bank, owner of the Pogue Lumber Company, and Secretary-Treasurer of the Hinckley Grain Company.

Ralph learned while he was in college that he was going blind so he developed skills in how to grow geraniums and other plants by touch. He built two large greenhouses near his home.

Working with Ralph was a real



Gerald Bahl, ~ Marines - Korea

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Looking Back in History

Jan 2, 2000: Hinckley United Methodist Church holds first service in new building

Nov. 8, 1979: State Board of Education orders school district not to use any remaining portion of the 1925 high school building for elementary classes

Nov 20, 1969: The new DeKalb Ogle Telephone Company promises direct dial calling next year

Nov 26, 1959: George Hubert Ford has grand opening

Jan 23, 1941: Raymond Nehring acquires sole ownership of Hinckley Farm Equipment Co. and will use the Loptein Building which had been occupied by Amil Baie's Blacksmith Shop

Upcoming Events

- ◇ Board meetings on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the museum
- ◇ **October 19** - Fall Fest at Bountiful Blessings Farm north of Hinckley
- ◇ **October 23** - HHS Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser from 4:30-to 7 at the United Methodist Church. Dine-in or carry-out.
- ◇ **October 26** - Halloween party downtown at 11 a.m.
- ◇ **December 6** - Community Christmas tree lighting and open house

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experience because he used senses other than sight. He taught me a lot I've used throughout my life.

He would feel the geranium plants—his biggest profit center for Memorial Day—cut off the tips of the shoots with his fingers and place them in his apron. My job was to put the tips in flower pots and water them as they grew. One time when I needed more dirt for the pots, he took me to the basement where he had a dirt bin next to the coal he used for heating the house. It was dark and I stumbled around until Ralph realized I needed some light.

One day I saw a crew painting a house next door and offered to help. The next summer I began painting houses but the work was not very steady. So I contacted another painter, Miles Easterbrook, who had a lot of work painting houses, barns and interior decorating. I remember painting the upstairs rooms at what is now the Hinckley Historical Society Museum building. During this time, I learned how to finish furniture as well.

Baseball and basketball were the primary sports when I was in high school. I was selected basketball captain during my junior and senior years which was a great lesson in leadership but not in winning many victories. In my senior year, I began working for Tom Lewis's Texaco Station at the corner of Sycamore St. and Rt 30. He operated two milk routes and ran the two school buses for Hinckley so he needed someone to watch the gas station while the busses were out. After I graduated from high school in 1950, he wanted me to work full-time but I was still working as a painter.

Mr. Eastbrooks advised me to take the job since he couldn't guarantee me full-time work painting. Come January 1952, I received my draft notice from the Marine Corp to serve during the Korean Conflict. I was stationed at a navy base which had two large hangers built to house blimps during WWII. The base was converted to training helicopter pilots. The military was a growing part of my life. I learned skills working in the Special Services Unit that I have used repeatedly in later life.

When my tour of duty was over in 1954, I considered staying in California and finding work there but Tom Lewis desperately wanted me to return to Hinckley and work at the station. I was glad I did because he was ill and died just three months after my return.

I had to borrow money to buy the Texaco Station but with the help of a guardian angel (friend), I had it paid off in three years. Competition in selling gas at that time was fierce. There were ten other businesses selling gas in Hinckley. (See chart of competition.)

I quickly learned that extra attention to my customers paid off with increased business. My team and I would not only wash the front vehicle window while we pumped the gas but also the back window. We offered engine repair service, sold tires and batteries, and even installed a car wash bay. We could wash and dry cars in about three minutes.

(Part II of Jerry's story continues in the winter museum newsletter.)

Hinckley Businesses Selling Gas and other vehicle accessories in 1954

- Corey & Rokop Store (West of Hinckley on Rt 30) —Texaco
- Bartel's Station (NE Somonauk Rd & Rt 30)—Mobil
- Carls' Oil (Somonauk Rd)—Pure Oil
- Valentines' Station (SW Wahlgen St & Rt 30)—Texaco
- Spears' Service (NE Garfield St & Rt 30) —Sinclair
- Christensen's Garage (NW May St & Rt 30)—City Service
- Hank Kuester (SW May St & Rt 30)—Standard Oil
- Phillips' Garage (SE May St & Rt 30)—City Service
- Jerry Bahl's Texaco (NW Sycamore St & Rt 30)—Texaco
- Voss Motors (NW Maple St & Rt 30)—Mobil
- Hampton's Station (NW Rees St & Rt 30)—Standard Oil



Hampton's Station, restaurant and motel in the 1950s on the east entrance to Hinckley

Stations in business in 2019

- Jack and Gina's BP (535 E. Rt 30) —BP

Museum Building Update

The HHS Board's multi-year plan to repair our 1946 historic museum building and make it suitable for preserving and presenting artifacts takes another step this fall. The Board has approved work to tuck point the chimney brick and install a new chimney liner. The brick mortar was cracking and crumbling while the tile chimney liner was flaking and failing to protect the building from potential gases and fire.



Earlier work included a street-side brick resurfacing, museum quality windows, larger electrical service, air conditioning, storage shelves, basement lighting, and roof liner. Your donations and participation in fundraisers are essential to making these improvements. Thank you.

Wins Pickle Jar Full of Cash

The happy winner of the HHS raffle at the Big Rock Plowing Match was Matt Harding, Hinckley. He received \$400 in cash and a jar good for pickling from board member Deb Appleby. Thanks to all who helped raise funds for the museum.



Hunt for High School Yearbooks

As we approach the centennial celebration for our high school, the museum would like to fill-in a few missing yearbooks. Please check your bookshelves and closets to see if you have any of the following years that you can share with us. 1951, 1952, 1965, 1966, 1971-76, 1981, 1987-2003, and 2013-2016. Ask your neighbor if they can help in this search too.

We Are Making History

Some people may think that "history" only documents things that happened long ago. However, we are recording memorable events now that will be remembered by future generations. The building of a new high school baseball field is one such current event.

Baseball has been a form of entertainment and sport in Hinckley since the 1800's. The merchant teams gained a state-wide reputation in the early 1900's. So many people followed the teams that a large amphitheater was built in a park behind what is now the elementary school. The new field continues that spirit and opportunity for youth to learn, grow and have fun.



1903 Merchant's Team

According to the School Superintendent Travis McGuire, a new baseball field was needed to improve drainage and playability of the current diamond. The old field will still be used for younger players.

The high school teams had been using Kenny Field, built in 1967 in Big Rock. McGuire said by having the baseball field on the high school campus, travel to practices and games will be reduced and safety for students will be enhanced.

The field, estimated to cost \$432,644, will be funded by a \$100,000 anonymous donation and school operating funds. It will be ready for play by March 2020.

Another noteworthy event was the recent ribbon cutting for Royal Estates on the north side of Hinckley and the first subdivision for our community in over a decade. Developer C.J. Johnson (shown on the left) named his first model homes after noted pioneers from our community. The Hollenbeck home is named for the explorer who

made the first land claim in the county and called the area Squaw Grove. The Sebree house is named after John Sebree, the first settler in Squaw Grove and upon whose land Hinckley developed.





"Preserving the past for the future."

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Volunteering: If you would like to become more active in the HHS, contact Julie 815-739-4721

Don't miss the HHS Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser on Wednesday, 23 October from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at the United Methodist Church

Time to Renew Your Membership

Your membership in the Hinckley Historical Society helps achieve our mission of preserving the history of our area and interpreting it for future generations. By collecting stories and artifacts before they are lost, HHS is able to help answer questions about ancestors, community life, businesses and organizations.

The board appreciates your membership, support and volunteering. Please send your renewal by the end of the year to: P.O. Box 486, Hinckley, IL 60520.

Individual member	\$15	Business/ Organization	\$30
Family member	\$25	Lifetime member	\$500

New Treasures at the Museum

We welcome artifacts related to Hinckley and our surrounding townships for the museum collection. A recent gift was the wedding dress of Mary Coster Evans, descendent of one of the town's early settlers. Tucked in the box were some pictures of the family that will help make a wonderful display. This was a generous donation from family members in Freeport, Illinois, and Terre Haute, Indiana.

Long before cell phones, Twitter and Facebook, many residents used Citizen Band (CB) radios as their social media and communication tool. Dorothy Myers gave the museum a list of CB "handles" for many local residents. Our talented curator will be crafting a window display with these handles and some CB equipment.