

Hinckley Historical Society News

2023, volume 1

Sportsplex is Big Attraction

What started out as a simple baseball practice area for two boys in an unused building has grown into a major attraction for Hinckley. The Midwest Sportsplex at 212 Woodlawn, south of the railroad tracks in Hinckley, is a 5,000 square foot area indoors and another 2,000 square foot area outside for a variety of sporting activities.

Nikolas Nelson and Tyler deRama pestered their dads, Ronn and Chris—who are part owners of Midwest Facilities and Construction—to bring in a pitching machine and a batting cage so they could improve their skills in the off-season for baseball and soft ball. Ronn said it seemed like a good idea since a training facility had just closed in a neighboring town. The building was located on the property of Midwest Facilities & Construction and unfinished on the inside. When the dads got through dressing it up a bit for their boys, other friends wanted to practice too.



“We added artificial turf to cover the floor and padding for the walls, then came more netting, extra lighting, two rest rooms, a snack area and outside practice space,” continued Ronn. Team coaches and instructors were soon contacting the Sportsplex for available times to bring their teams and students too.

Cornhole-bag enthusiasts who had been looking for space to practice and hold regular tournaments were calling as well. “We now have tournaments several nights per week and attract 50 to 60 people,” according to the



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The Joy of Giving

As a child, it’s difficult to think of Christmas as something other than a time for receiving gifts. After all, didn’t the Christ child receive gifts from the magi? But at some point in most of our lives we evolve to finding more satisfaction and joy in giving rather than receiving gifts. Such was evident in Hinckley this past Christmas as dozens of individuals and several organizations presented gifts to children, families and even older residents.



Food Pantry. Perhaps the most basic of gifts is food and the Hinckley Area Food Pantry was able to pass out hams, turkeys, boxes with side dishes, and bags of food staples. Items are donated or purchased from the Northern Illinois Food Bank. The temperatures were cold on the third Saturday in December but seeing the smiles on the workers as they passed out the items warmed the heart. An efficient team of volunteers orders and collects items from donors, organizes the items on shelves, packs them in bags and then carries them to the recipient’s car. Such a process happens every month and includes working with the schools to send food items home with needy students over holidays and weekends.

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(Big Attraction continued from page 1

owners. They allow pros to play and team them up with less experienced players.

The adult customers wanted refreshments, so vending machines, tables and a beverage counter were added. Since Midwest also has a 22 foot movie screen and projector, there is talk about holding a monthly family movie night on Saturdays like Hinckley used to offer their residents many years ago. Others have been asking about Euchre tournaments, venues for parties, sports clinics, and a food truck to offer more than vending machine snacks. As if that wasn't enough activity, the Plex will soon be a retail dealer for Marucci baseball products.



The mission of the Sportsplex is stated clearly on their Facebook page: “to provide a sports training facility that encourages members to diversity their skills...to promote teamwork...to help.” What isn't stated, but very apparent, it is also for people to have fun and bring visitors to town to enjoy other attractions in Hinckley. Since there is little competition in the area for this type of sports facility, the possibilities are promising.



The Sportsplex has gotten to the point of needing a general manager to schedule all the

events, promotions, logistics and sales. Juliana Murphy is excited to fill that role and to accept the challenge of taking the “plex” to the next level. She lives in Waterman with her husband who has strong ties to Hinckley.

The Sportsplex has door key cards for members so they can come and go as they desire, camera security, and adult supervision. Memberships are attractively priced for what is offered and the amount of time members can use the facility.

Those who think Hinckley needs a major attraction to bring visitors to town or more activities for families and youth, don't have to look farther than Woodlawn Street.

Find out more about the Sportsplex on Facebook or at its website: Midwestsportsplex.com



Endowment for Good; Forever

The HHS board has created an endowment to help with long-term programming, research, new displays, guest performances, and much more. Several members helped to start the endowment in memory of family members. Funds are managed by the DeKalb County Community Foundation and are tax deductible. Join in remembering a loved one with a gift to the Hinckley Historical Society Endowment, P.O. Box 486, Hinckley, IL 60520.

(The Joy of Giving continued from page 1)

Library. The Library's Giving Tree was another Hinckley tradition that goes back more than a decade. Residents are asked each year to adopt a wish from the



Giving Tree. In partnership with the Hinckley Area Food Pantry, the library collects wishes from local families. Each heart showed the needs of one person and the library suggests spending \$50 to add some holiday cheer to your shopping list.

Librarian Rylie Roubal oversaw the distribution to some 56 individuals and 17 families.



Toys. The Marine's Toys for Tots Foundation seeks individual and corporate donations each year to provide toys for children. There were toy drop boxes around town including at the Christmas tree lighting ceremony and



the public response was amazing! School Resource Officer and Hinckley Village Policeman David Brian and his wife Tina coordinated the distribution through the Toys for Tots organization. The more than 250 toys and stocking stuffers designated for Hinckley were taken to the community Building and arranged by age grouping. With the help of school social worker Mallory Wassmann, families in need were identified and invited to stop by to select gifts for their children. Officer Brian said "I wish the whole town could have seen the effects of the generosity from the public and companies. Every item found a home and the gratitude of the recipients was overwhelming."

Lions. Hinckley Christmas giving went beyond children and families in need. The



Hinckley Lions Club each year prepares, assembles and delivers gift bags to older individuals in the



community to let them know they are not forgotten. According to the chairman for the event, Lion Scott Hankes shown on the left, the Lions with the help of the churches identify about 100 recipients each year and stuff bags with calendars, snacks, fruit and gift coupons for businesses in town. Coupons this year were sponsored by the Half Moon, the South Moon, The Pub, and Hometown Barbershop. Sorry, the donuts shown in the picture never made it to the gift bags. The Lions needed energy before delivering the gift items. Giving brings joy to the season.



Counting Days to Reopen Museum

If you looked in the windows of the museum in January, it may seem in a little disarray. Museum cases are empty; there are piles of pictures and clothing; a mannequin sits alone; and soda fountain stools are waiting for a counter.



However, there is a lot of thought, story preparation, and selection of historic items going on in preparation for our reopening this spring.

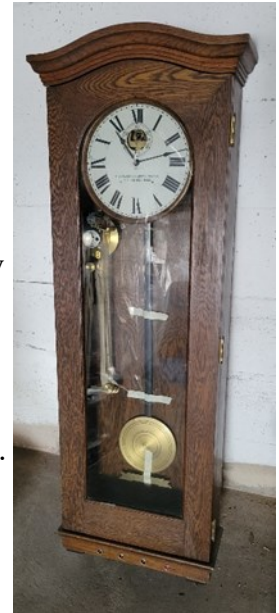
Under the leadership of board member Cathy Bartels, who retired after 40 years as a senior retail executive, is enjoying using her visual creativity along with the board members as they curate items by

decade to display for the community to view. They are starting in the 1830s and traveling to the 2020s and curating “what was significant, unique, memorable, and enjoyable.”

One side of the museum will be called the Post Office Room and the other side the Hinckley Review Room. Each of these rooms have their own history, the Hinckley Review where news was printed for our community to read for 103 years and the Post Office where mail was delivered to your mailbox...and conversations delivered informal news, person to person, while people paused to sit on the window benches which remain today.

Within these rooms, however, exhibits will tell lots of stories about our community. There will even be a mini theater for viewing clips and movies Hinckley starred in. But I don't want to spoil the suspense of seeing the new displays.

Among our artifact collection is the former high school clock for ringing the class periods. We are looking for someone to help program the bell and restart the electric clock. It appears to run off a paper roll like the old player pianos. The clock used to hang in the library/study hall of the school built in 1926 and located where the HBR elementary school is today. When the high school was demolished, the clock was moved to the office in the elementary school and now the museum.



Time to Renew Your Membership

Don't miss the newsletters and interesting programs planned for HHS members in the year ahead.

The HHS Board is scheduling three more summer band concerts, panel discussions about former businesses and historic homes, a second cemetery walk, viewing of Hinckley films and pictures, and presentations for school children.

To join, send your name, address, and email to HHS, P.O. Box 486, Hinckley, IL 60520. Dues are still \$15 for individuals, \$25 for families and \$30 for businesses.

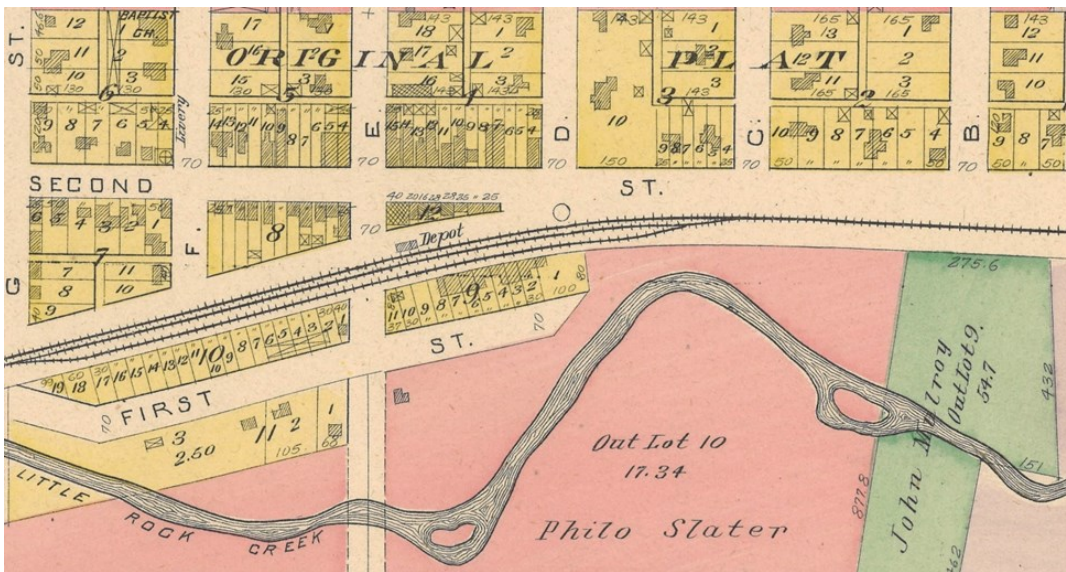
Where Were They Located?

As time passes, we tend to forget the Hinckley businesses that served us and helped to meet our needs. The Dairy Joy has created some of their logos and displays them on one of their buildings. HHS would like to go further and is planning a panel discussion about favorite businesses next month that you won't want to miss. The panelists have special stories and insight into how our town businesses developed.



The first businesses to develop in what was called "Squaw Grove" along Somonauk Road were meant to serve the early settlers. John Sebree's cabin south of the railroad tracks on Somonauk Road soon became a de facto hotel for travelers. A log cabin school was built in 1842 south of Sebree's cabin. As more settlers arrived, Sebree built a general store north of his house that also served as the first post office. The Methodists were meeting in their homes until they built a church in 1869 near what is now Step 1 Stairworks. Other businesses by 1870 included a blacksmith, a shoemaker, and a tavern.

When the Chicago and Iowa Railroad decided to lay tracks through the area, they breathed new life into the town and more businesses started. A temporary depot was built south of the village. The railroad president, Frances Hinckley, had a vision for a new town. He designed where the streets would be, businesses and a permanent depot just at the south edge on Sycamore Street (or E Street as he called it). The operators of the Sebree store, Frank Merrill and Hiram Wagner, were quick to build a new and larger store on Second Street (soon to be called Lincoln Avenue). Other businesses followed and constructed wood buildings also along the main road. It would be after the 1900s that most of these building were replaced by brick buildings.



By 1860 Squaw Grove Township reported 795 residents, Pierce Township had 950 and the county 19,000.

The original Village of Hinckley with buildings as they were in 1892.

Circle your Calendar for March 25

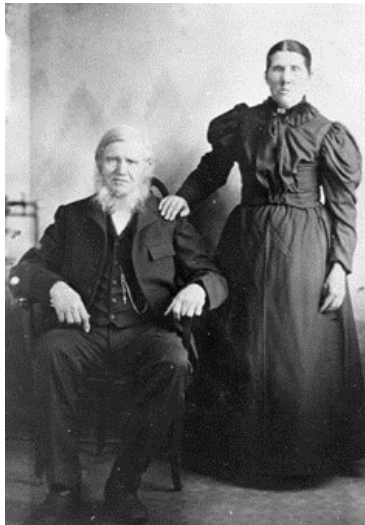
A panel discussion will share stories and memories of the businesses that made our town what it is today. Join us at the Community Building auditorium at 3 p.m. The Historical Society has assembled a directory of businesses in Hinckley from 1835 to 2022. Copies of the directory will be available at the meeting and at the museum after it opens.

Legacy Farms

This story is the first in a series about farms in Squaw Grove and Pierce Townships that have been in the same family for over 100 years—some for over 150. The Illinois Department of Agriculture is the source of the designation and recognizes them as Centennial or Sesqui-Centennial farms.

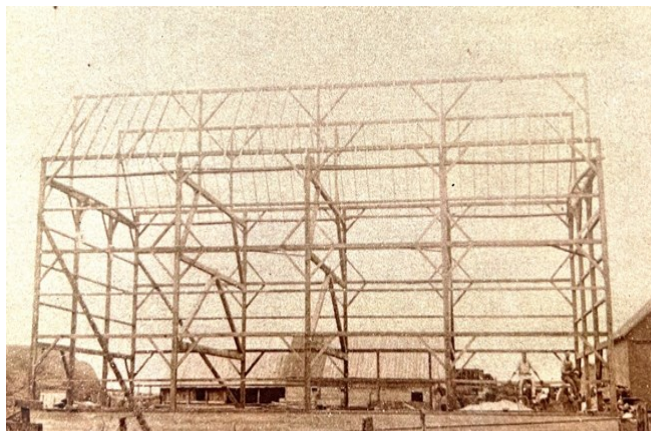
Dienst-Bartels Farm, Owens Road, Pierce Township

Pierce Township did not see its first settlers until the 1840s and like many of the early farmers in the area, they emigrated from Germany. Henry C. Dienst came with his parents and two brothers in 1849 from the Weilberg area. The ocean crossing was difficult, and Henry's mother died. The family stopped for a brief time in Pennsylvania before settling in DeKalb County. Henry soon met Henrietta Kaus and after they were married, they bought 120 acres in Section 21 on Owens Road in Pierce Township from John Schule in 1864. Horses were the source of power for plowing, planting and harvesting and of course their eight children helped. They grew wheat, corn, oats, and hay which helped Henry to be able to buy the adjoining 80 acres in 1875.



The church was an important part of the life of the Dienst family and they helped build the German Evangelical Church a short distance from the farm in 1872. The children attended the school at Pierceville, on Somonauk Road. Both the school and church were named after the rooster weathervane on the roof. The church eventually joined with St. Paul's Evangelical Church in Hinckley and the Rooster Church was closed in 1911.

When Henry died in 1905, his son George and wife, Mathilda, bought the farm from the estate. They decided to erect a new barn in 1908. Barn raisings were a neighborhood affair and the men helped with construction while the ladies prepared the meals and baked the pies. Going to town in their buggies or wagon was an adventure. When it rained the roads became a sea of mud and deep ruts developed that could break an axle. George and Mathilda had three children and the family prospered. When the adjoining 80 acres south of their farm came for sale in 1920, George was able to buy it bringing the farm to 280 acres.



George and Mathilda eventually decided to move to Hinckley, and let their son Roy Clayton and wife, Gladys, take over the farming. He was young and well respected in the community. Unfortunately, Roy developed spinal meningitis and died suddenly in 1934. His father continued to manage the farm until his death in 1954. The farm was then acquired in 1958 by George's other son, Ray Dienst and wife, Irene, shown here. They lived in Hinckley and ran the farm they bought from Irene's parents.



They rented the Pierce farm to the Donald Nehring family for many years. When Ray passed away his son Norman and wife, Marilyn Stahl Dienst, who were already farming on the south edge of Hinckley, took over ownership in 1981.

This Sesquicentennial farm has been in the Dienst family since 1864. It is now owned by Norman and Marilyn's daughter, Cathy, and her husband Frank Bartels since 2017. They have two adult children and live in her parent's farmhouse in Hinckley.

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(Legacy Farms continued from page 6)

Stahl-Dienst-Bartels Centennial Farm, Squaw Grove Township

This farm lies just at the south edge of Hinckley and was part of the original claim of Philo Slater, one of the town's founders and Village President. Before his death, Philo separated about 140 acres on the east side of his farm for his son Cyrus T. Slater. Cyrus' farm was located at the intersection of Sections 14, 15, 22 and 23. He farmed it until moving to Aurora. The farm was then purchased by Richard Stahl who had emigrated from Walderback, West Prussia, Germany in 1865. Richard and his wife, Mary Dienst Stahl, settled in the Hinckley area after their marriage in 1896 and raised their six children. They had been looking for a farm to purchase and bought the Slater land in 1913 for \$23,000. The farm was located south of the Little Rock Creek and a new bridge had to be constructed on Sycamore Street in 1918 so they could access the farm.

When Richard and Mary passed away, their daughter Irene and husband Ray Dienst bought the farm in 1930. Ray had purchased a house and moved it to the farm where he added several rooms and a bathroom. Ray and Irene raised dairy in their large barn, hogs, chickens and horses for the field work. They also raised corn, oats, and alfalfa. The family did their own livestock butchering and smoked the hams and bacon in the smoke house. They cooked beef and packed it in jars with lard.



In the early years, the neighbors all worked together to harvest the crops. The Dienst family had a wash basin and bench by the house for the men to wash up before eating. That bench is now in the home on the farm. When their son Norman was drafted into the

military, Ray sold the dairy. Norm was stationed in Germany and he took his bride, Marilyn Tuttle Dienst, with him. While in Wurzburg, Germany, they had a daughter, Cathy. Norm's family returned to Hinckley after service, and farmed with his parents finishing cattle, raising hogs and chickens, and growing corn, soybeans, oats, and alfalfa.

Norm was an only child, as was Cathy, who is seen in a three-generation picture with Ray and Norm. After Ray passed away in 1978, Norm and his mother continued farming together. After she passed in 1991, Norm and Marilyn inherited the farm. Being so close to town, Norm got involved with the FFA and 4-H students, and held classes for them in equipment repair and judging his cattle and hogs. He also served as a Hinckley Fire District trustee for 25 years and with Marilyn was active in the St. Paul's United Church of Christ.



As Norm and Marilyn passed away, their daughter Cathy--who grew up in Hinckley--and her husband Frank Bartels inherited the Centennial Farm in 2017. Cathy retired in 2019 and returned to her childhood home to live and rent the land to a local farmer. The Bartels have two sons, Rusty and Tyler.



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HinckleyHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

Facebook: Hinckley Historical Society

Website: Hinckleyhistoricalsociety.com

Phone: 815-761-4058

Events:

Membership Renewals are due

March 25: panel discussion about
businesses 3 p.m., Community
Bldg.

April: Music Artists in Residence
Program at grade school

June 29: Brass Band Patriotic
Concert, 6:30 p.m. Community
Bldg. lawn

Follow us on Facebook for
comments, pictures and events.

Officers Leading the Society

With a new year starting, the Board of Directors has elected Tammy McQueen to serve as Secretary and Jennifer Klambauer as Treasurer. Jenn had been Secretary and Pat Bastian had been Treasurer. The Board thanked Pat for her two years as Treasurer and respected her request to focus on other museum tasks. Bob Pritchard will continue to serve as President, and Cathy Bartells as Vice President. Other board members include: Pat Bastian, Shawn McCrea, Rebecca Nickels, and Ardith Trumpy.

The Board thanks all the donors who helped us meet the special year-end challenge of a \$2,000 matching gift. The next matching gift challenge will be on May 5 during the DeKalb County Community Foundation Giving Day.



Pritchard



Bartells



McQueen



Klambauer