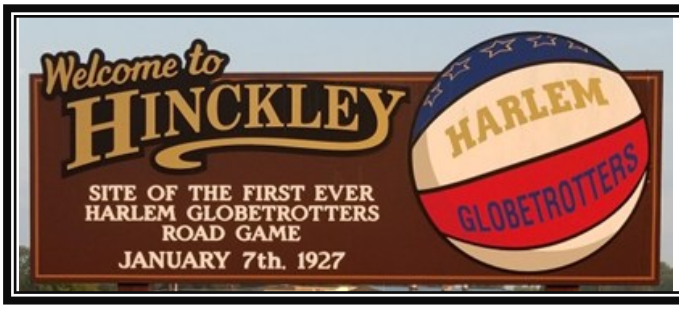


Hinckley Historical Society News

2026, volume 4

Getting to Know the Town Advocate

By Janet Lagerloef



When Donna Kramer Kimpan moved to Hinckley in 1975 from Downers Grove, everyone in her new eighth grade class already had established friendships. So she kept busy with her horse Dreamer; they competed all over Illinois in English hunter jumping, and she entered barrel racing in the junior rodeo.



And she raised Muscovies: a duck that doesn't quack and is known for its tasty red meat. One year Donna sold a thousand of these rare birds. But what Donna really wanted was to be a part of her new town. Her parents suggested she sign up for anything she could when she got to high school.

So Donna worked with the yearbook staff, kept the stats for the boy's track team, helped organize homecoming festivities, sang in the musicals, and joined FHA. She taught Sunday School at St. Paul's Church and helped serve fundraising dinners. She delivered meals made in her Home Economics class to a shelter in Aurora.

And she wasn't shy when she wanted to take shop class with Mr. Ignelzi but was told it was only for boys. She made her case with Superintendent R.G. Meyers and with her determination Mr. Ignelsi was happy to have her.

After high school Donna got a degree in horticulture at Kish College and a job in a greenhouse. But when the greenhouse closed its doors, she needed any job to make her car payment. So she walked into Dick Edmeier's grocery store and asked Dick if she could stock shelves or run the cash register.



He replied "How about you open your own flower shop?" He owned the empty building across the street which had been a gas station. He offered free rent for a year and Donna jumped at the opportunity. So Donna opened DMK Ltd. and the locals they came: St. Paul's Church placed orders for its sanctuary. Teens bought corsages and boutonnieres for dances. Brides streamed in. John Nash sent customers over from his funeral home.

And all the while she was a member of the Hinckley Junior Women's Club, helped launch the town's first ever fireworks committee, served on the church council of St. Paul's, and acted as its Sunday School superintendent. She married Mike Kimpan and they had a son, Sam. When he joined the Boy Scouts, Donna fundraised for his troop and helped Sam earn his Eagle Scout award.

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(Advocate, continued from page 1)



"I love this town," says Donna. "It supported my flower and gift shop for 25 years and I have the best friends. The rewards for my service are amazing." But Donna would like to see more people in their 20's and 30's volunteer. "It's an endless cycle in small towns: Someone has to be the coach, on the council at church, fundraise for the July fireworks. You can't be a part of a small community if you sit at home," she says. "Get involved."



These days, Donna remains active in St. Paul's Church and is involved in the final phase of the FFA Alumni building project. The building will be used for agriculture education classes and perhaps retail sales of items the students grow. She even makes wreathes for the FFA fundraiser at Christmas.

The eighth grader who moved to Hinckley from Downers Grove in 1975 and just wanted to "fit-in" has done much more than that. She has been honored as Hinckley's Citizen of the Year and has become its unofficial "town advocate."

Final Summer Band Concert Ends with a Blast

The last of our summer music programs will feature Pete Ellman's Big Band on the lawn of the Community Building (100 Maple Street, Hinckley). Bring your lawn chair and refreshments ready to hear great big-band and jazz classics!



Pete Ellman comes from a music family and formed the big band when he retired from the Illinois Air National Guard.

Since then, the band has played regularly in the Chicagoland and Western suburbs.

The Historical Society has organized summer music concerts for the past four years as part of its mission to keep the Hinckley tradition of summer music performances alive and bringing the community together for a free family event. The concerts are made possible with your support and donations.

Board Members:

President - Bob Pritchard; Vice Pres. – Cathy Bartels;

Secretary – Jennifer Klambauer; Treasurer – Barry Morsch

Other members –Shawn McCrea, Rebecca Nickels, Stephanie Shelton, Ardith Trumpy, and Jay Yaggie

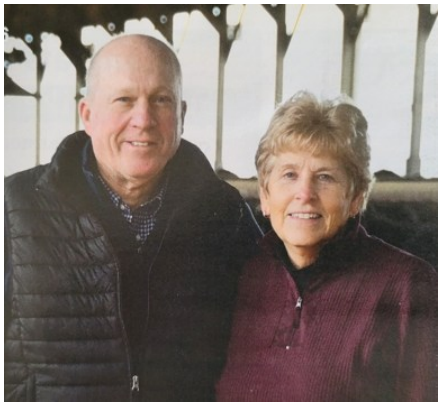
Newsletter published by Bob and Mary Pritchard

Local Couple Named "Master Farmers"

The following story is reprinted with permission of Prairie Farmer

Prairie Farmer Magazine created the Master Farmer Program in 1925 to recognize "hardworking, salt-of-the-earth farmers for doing what they do better than anyone else." The program has become a hall of achievement for Illinois farmers like no other, because it honors farmers who do it all, combining top agricultural production skills with community service, grassroots achievement, and dedication to their families.

Mike and Lynn Martz, from their farm in Pierce Township, were selected for that honor earlier this year.



They describe their operation simply as we raise corn, that feeds cattle, that produce manure, that fertilizes corn. The folks that know them best say the Martzes are true partners, running a business that hinges on both their skills and the team they've cultivated.

They farm with Lynn's parents Ray and Carol Larson who started the operation; their son, Justin, and his wife Jamie Martz; and Lynn's brothers Norm and Dave Larson. Ray was honored as a Master Farmer in 1970, making Ray and Lynn the first ever father-daughter to be named Master Farmers.



Ray passed away in July

Mike manages cattle and Lynn manages crops. Larson Farms Partnership (LFP) finishes 7,000 head of beef cattle a year with a 3,300 head capacity feedlot, including both their animals and others they feed for other owners. LFP owns one-third interest in an ultra-sound company that measures each animal to determine its finishing capacity. The animals are then divided into feeding groups which earn a premium price from packers because the animals are more uniform.

The grain side of the operation is known as Larson Grain Farms. Lynn manages the 7,100 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, and food-grade soybean business including handling all the farm financials, marketing, and more. They use a manure management plan and soil testing every three years to balance available fertilizer for the crops' needs. She says weeds have become harder to manage so they use a see and spray practice and exact apply technology. All of their practices have reduced costs, improved yields and reduced operator fatigue.

The Martzes were early volunteers with the Illinois Farm Bureau program to bring urban groups to the country to learn about farming. Mike and Lynn are natural teachers with Lynn explaining the crop machinery and Mike showing the difference in meat cuts. Mike has been in leadership positions with the Illinois Livestock Development Board, Illinois Beef Association, Beef Checkoff chair, State Fair Advisory Board, Indian Creek FFA Alumni group, and his church.

Lynn is an officer on the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation board, panelist for U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Food Talk, served as school parent-teacher organization president, and church leader. When Mike was away for association meetings downstate, Lynn stayed home to run the farm. That allowed Mike and others to pass the Illinois beef checkoff from cattle sales to fund beef promotion, research and consumer education.

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(Farmers, continued from page 3)

What Others Say About Them
Josh St. Peters, Illinois Beef Association, nominated the Martzes for the award saying "Mike and Lynn are the epitome of exceptional human beings, not just great farmers."

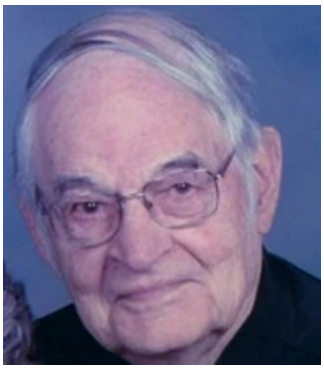
Stephen Nicholson, Rabobank, added "Equipment manufacturers and seed companies routinely select Larson Farms for field testing of new technologies and traits. Their custom cattle feeding operation is so well regarded that there is a waiting list of customers eager to work with them."

The Martzes join two dozen other producers in DeKalb County and 350 statewide who have received this recognition in over 100 years.



The family welcomes visitors to their farm: *Mike, Lynn, grandson Jaxson, daughter-in-law Jamie and son Justin. Grandchildren Justis and Jaedyn are perched on the tire.*

Research Project Continues to Benefit us all



Ken Bastian's search for information about his family ancestors turned into indexing tens of thousands of obituaries of people who have lived in the Hinckley and Sandwich areas. "I was looking for some general information at the library and they referred me to the old newspapers on microfilm," he said. "It' one of those things that kind of grew."

His work is invaluable to researchers and the cemetery walks provided by the Hinckley Historical Society. The next walk is planned for October 4 at 3 p.m. in the East Pierce Cemetery, Owens and Pritchard Roads, Maple Park.

Bastian had to develop an indexing system and then gathered thousands of obituaries from newspapers dating back to 1878 and filed them in notebooks and on computer. His work from over a dozen years is available at the Hinckley museum. Bastian grew up on a farm east of Hinckley with his brother Harley. After military service he continued his interest in aviation as an instructor at the Sandwich Airport and was active with the Flying Farmers Association.

"I undertook the project primarily because it needed to be done," Bastian said. "I want to share my work with people." He passed away at the age of 101 in 2020. Gathering obituaries has become harder since the local newspaper closed. The Historical Society is looking for volunteers to continue the work Bastian started and help collect obituaries of area residents.

Local Residents Served on the Supreme Court

This article is about "We the People" who have shaped our democracy over 250 years.

DeKalb County has had only two judges who eventually served on the Illinois Supreme Court. The first was William Fulton, who grew up in Waterman, and served as a judge from 1923 to 1954. He practiced law in Sycamore before serving as a Circuit judge in DeKalb County, then Appellate Judge, and finally in the Supreme Court. He was elected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1944.



The other judge elected to the high court was John Nickels, who lived in Pierce Township. John grew up on a dairy farm near Sugar Grove, loved farming; and continued to farm during his legal career using methods to conserve the land and create a wildlife sanctuary.

Following his service in the Army and marriage to Merita, John earned a Business Administration degree from Northern Illinois University and his Juris Doctorate at DePaul University. Nickels was involved in his community serving on the Kane County Zoning Board of Appeals, and Waubonsee Community College Board of Trustees among other civic groups.





He loved working with his 7 children and helping them with their 4-H projects of cattle and horses. Nickels practiced law for 20 years in DeKalb, Kane, DuPage and Kendall Counties before being appointed to serve as Circuit Judge in DeKalb and Kane Counties in 1982.

Nickels was elected to the Appellate Court serving Northern Illinois in 1990 and the Illinois Supreme Court in 1992 where he served until 1998. When asked if being a judge was different than the normal practice of law, Nickels said "You stop being the strong advocate you were trained to be. You interpret the law and focus on fairness, justice, and what's right."



He said "We have a larger responsibility to acquit the not-guilty person than we have to find guilty the guilty person. Some prosecutors lose sight of that." Nickels never lost sight of where he came from, his rural experiences, or the values he learned in life. "As a judge, I hope when they look at me, they see something of themselves." John Nickels died in 2013 leaving his wife, Merita, 7 children, 23 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

We the People of DeKalb County

The DeKalb County History Center opened a new exhibit earlier this year to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States. It was based on the premise that history is not only shaped by famous names and national events, but also by everyday people in villages and cities living their normal lives and supporting their families. The exhibit celebrates a small sampling of those stories and directs the viewer to visit their local history museum for more stories as we reflect on our pursuit of a more perfect union. What follows are two of those stories.

Voss Motors Provided More than Transportation



Martin and John Voss ran a successful General Motors dealership from 1940 to 1996 and made a lasting and memorable impact upon Hinckley.

As many local businesses closed during the 1970s and 1980s, Voss Motors was growing and it helped to support local government and community services.

Their customer base extended across DeKalb County and to Chicago because of their service philosophy and focus on customer satisfaction. Martin and John both served on the school board and supported church, school, and community activities. Shown are John, Lolly, Ione and Martin Voss being honored by General Motors.

Wagner Was a Builder, Banker and Financier



Hiram Dodge Wagner was closely associated with the growth of Hinckley from 1865 to 1921 and he made a lasting and memorable impact upon the town.

After serving in the Civil War, he became a partner in the town's first mercantile store, started the first bank, and with his brother-in-law added four subdivisions to expand the town.

He served as mayor for eight years and helped to build the grain elevator and bring telephone service to the area. His financial advice benefited many and he donated his house and large city lot to the Township to build a community building and library.



With the library moving to new space on Lincoln Avenue in August, the future of the Community Building will likely change. It has served as a theater, meeting space, office for the Township, place for voting, and much more.

HBR Wins Sectional Track & Field Competition



The boys Track and Field team brought home the Sectional Trophy from Oregon, IL after scoring more points among 16 other schools.

Four Place Well in State Competition

In the State Track and Field Competition at Eastern Illinois University, four Royals placed well in their division. Left to right: Gavin Pickert, sophomore, placed 9th in Triple Jump; Marshall Ledbetter, Junior, placed 3rd in High Jump; Caden Hageman, Junior, placed 7th in 3,200 meter race; and Alex Casanas, Senior, placed 5th in 400 meter race.



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Come Join Us:

- ⇒ Museum is open Saturdays 10-Noon
- ⇒ August 12, Town Ice Cream Social Get Acquainted Event, 5-8 p.m.
- ⇒ August 20, Big Band Concert in the Park, 6:30 p.m.
- ⇒ Watch for details about the HHS Annual Meeting at the new library
- ⇒ October 4, Pierce Cemetery Walk at 3 p.m.

Walking Sacred Spaces in Pierce Township

The area north of Hinckley possesses mainly farms and residences but also a Township Building, a church, and two cemeteries. The next Historical Society Cemetery Walk will introduce you to the East Pierce Cemetery on October 4 at 3 p.m. It's located at the corner of Owens and Pritchard Road, Maple Park.



The cemetery was created in 1850 shortly after settlers arrived in the township. According to the book Early School Journeys, a log cabin school was built in 1853 next to the cemetery at the southwest corner of Section 24.

The residents held church services in the school and formed the Emmanuel Evangelical Society of Pierce. By 1856 the settlers were able to build their first church building just east of the cemetery and the school was replaced by two schools a mile north and a mile south of Owens Road.

In April 1925 the Emmanuel Society of the Evangelical Church gave a warranty deed for the cemetery to the East Pierce Cemetery Association. Today it operates separately from the church and relies on lot sales held in an endowment to cover cemetery expenses.

The church attracted many of the large families in the neighborhood. When they died, they were buried in the cemetery next to the church and their names are etched in stone throughout the cemetery. Come and hear their stories during our cemetery walk on October 4 at 3 p.m..