



# Sainte Marie Foundation News

To celebrate our very special hometown's winter season 2013

Volume 6, Issue 1

## Winter in Sainte Marie

As I write this newsletter in early January, Sainte Marie (SM) is snow covered (at least 4") and cold.



St. Mary's in snowstorm Dec. 28. (Photo by Tammy Frye)

Residents have been somewhat on edge about the fate of the Sainte Marie (SM) Post Office. A packed public hearing was held in early December with USPS officials, and the result: **limited hours start on Jan. 14 with the post office open 12:30 – 4:30 p.m. weekdays and 8 - 10 a.m. on Saturdays.** Those needing service in the mornings will have to go to Newton, Olney, or Oblong. Though relieved that the post office will not close, people know that there will be a year-to-year evaluation of the status. According to station manager, **Leda Geltz**, the evaluation will be based on "profit" (though what that means is not quite clear). The Foundation will continue to mail our newsletters from SM and buy as many stamps as we can!! We do NOT want to lose our post office.

## Flower Baskets for 2013

Yes, we are continuing the very popular flower-baskets! Please consider sponsoring one for the summer season. **Order form is on back page.**

People question HOW the baskets looked so vibrant all summer long, despite great heat and drought. The answer: lots of watering! Thanks to **Maxine Calvert, Ron Kirts and Bob and Tammy Frye** who have taken week-long stints of daily watering (sometimes twice a day) with a special formula, devised by Maxine and Tammy.

Cost is \$100 for the season and the sponsors will have their names listed on the old bank windows – for all to see! Call **Maxine Calvert** 618-455-3227 for further information.

## Time Capsule Reburied

Remember how we all sweated through the opening of the time capsule on Friday, June 29 when temperatures were near 100 degrees? Four months later, SM residents met to rebury the copper box, and winter coats were the order of the day (see picture below). **Father Al** led us in prayer, and committee member **Mike Hartrich** (who is also VP of the Foundation) announced that many of the items from the capsule would NOT be reburied. "The Community Club committee," said Mike, "decided that since the SM Foundation is creating a museum, that that is the place for many items to be held and displayed." So when the museum opens officially in 2014 (after our agreement for use of the Foundation House by DCA ends), watch for a special display of many of these items.



Bundled-up SM residents at the Time Capsule reburial on 10/ 28.

## Historic Buildings Demolished in Late Fall

Three building were demolished this past fall in the SM area. Two were historic:

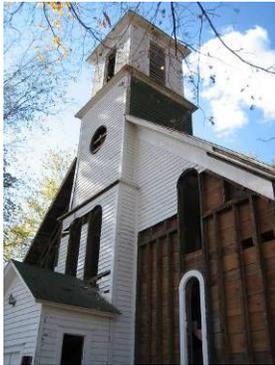
1. The old St. Mary's **Parish Hall** had been a centerpiece of the village for many years. Riddled with termites and no longer safe, the building had to go.



Demolition of the old Parish Hall in early November 2012.

An auction was held in September, and recycling firms snatched up the tin ceilings, the dance floor and the decorative entrance canopy. By the time the picture (previous page) was taken, all that remained was the basement of a building that once housed parties, wedding receptions (mine, in fact!) and joyous dances. I most remember the *schottische*, the German dance where couples facing-forward circled around the room to the beat of a polka-like tune. Created in Europe in the 1830's, the dance was most impressive in execution and very much Sainte Marie's own.

## 2. St. Valentine's Church



was much beloved by the people who lived in the Bend. Owned by the Springfield diocese, the rural church had not been used for many years, except for an occasional wedding or funeral. Deterioration set in. The diocese sold the windows and other religious items to a southern firm that recycles church items. An auction disposed of the rest.

The picture above shows the front of the lovely old church, with siding stripped off and ready for demolition. The Parish Center remains, and former parishioners hope to reconstruct the bell tower (at top) in the adjoining cemetery as a reminder of their beloved church.

3. The small yellow house (built by Cletus Litzelman) across from the old Parish Hall was also demolished. Acquired by the Sainte Marie Foundation in a tax sale (which took over three years to complete), the abandoned house was no longer livable. The Foundation has not announced plans for the property.

### We Get Letters

(More responses to the 175<sup>th</sup> celebration): From **Jerry Schuch**, Forest Park, IL, & **David Wiltshire**, Spencer, IN - *We want you to know that the E.A. Spitzer family enthusiastically turned out for this once-in-a-lifetime event! Present were 79 Spitzer family members who traveled from nine states - California, Nevada, Idaho, Texas, Florida, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and upstate Illinois - to participate in this celebration and the recognition of our Spitzer/Houser ancestors who were among the pioneer settlers of Ste. Marie in the 1830s and 1840s. Families of seven of the ten children of Mon and*

*Mathilda Spitzer were present including four generations in some families. All family members wore antique tan color t-shirts featuring the E.A. Spitzer blacksmith shop photograph circa 1900. As family members still own property in Ste. Marie, a couple of lots were readied and used as a gathering point and parking, as well as providing comfort conveniences for the family.*

*To sum up - and as a younger family member aptly proclaimed - "It was awesome!" Best Wishes to all Ste. Marie for a job well done!*

From **Janet Faltemier Sitkewich**, Los Gatos, CA. *The Faltemier family all enjoyed the 175<sup>th</sup> so much. It was just wonderful seeing so many SM residents from age 6 to age 90 volunteering to work. I saw 13 (out of 27) of my SM grade school graduation class of 1963 and taught 65 excited Western Line Dancers Saturday afternoon. Of the 372 Name Tags that I designed and made, I had 12 that were not picked up (I sent them to their owners as souvenirs!). I loved visiting with the 43 brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and cousins of the Faltemier clan, including those who marched in the parade as the Faltemier Kazoo Band. The food, the quilts, the Centennial Book, the Foundation's museum exhibits, the opening of the vault, -- it was all so great. Thank you to all who made it possible.*

From **Evelyn Radke Null**, Joliet, IL. *My daughter Kathy and granddaughters Erin and Molly and I attended the 175<sup>th</sup>. So hot, but so enjoyable! The town was beautiful - made me proud. I'm still enjoying the book, reading every word. Thanks to all who took the time to recall their school memories and summer fun. I'm so impressed with so many who grew up in SM and went on to travel the world. I, too, remember the nuns and the best teacher I ever had, Miss "A". Thanks to all for a great 175<sup>th</sup>.*

From **Dorothy Helregel Mathious**, Burbank, CA. *I heard the 175<sup>th</sup> was fabulous. Sorry I could not be there. I am in speaker training to become a community educator for the L.A. Opera. It is great fun and very rewarding. Jen and I will be bringing opera to thousands of school children, senior citizens, veterans, libraries and so on.*

### **Wanted: 1962 Quasquicentennial Books**

We need these for our historical records at the Foundation House. Contact any Foundation board member or Pat Reis [patreisprpr@yahoo.com](mailto:patreisprpr@yahoo.com) if you have one you want to donate or sell.

### New Storage for St. Mary's

With the old Parish Hall gone, St. Mary's needed new storage space for all of the picnic tables, chairs, tents, and other paraphernalia that the Parish uses on occasion. The new building is located just south of the current Parish Center. Roll-up doors all around the



outside of the building allow easy access for storing many items. Also, at the Labor Day Picnic, the doors were all rolled up, allowing for a huge, dry space (yes, it rained most of the day!) for Bingo. We compliment the building designers. It is a very adaptable space.

### Transitions

-**Freda Keller Swisher**, 87. Condolences to her daughters, **Patti Bunten**, Robinson, and **Carole Connor**, Olney. She is also survived by one sister, **Dorothy Keller Hahn** and many nieces and nephews.

- **Joan Marie (Huber) Cunningham**, 84. Born in rural SM, Joan married James Cunningham, son of Ralph and Mary Cunningham, and taught school in the SM area and for 20 years in Olney. She is survived by many nieces and nephews.

-**Lawrence Michl**, 99. His daughter, Judy Barrett, wrote, "In 3 more months, he would have been 100." He and his wife Sophie lived at the Newton Nursing Home for many years. See his unforgettable picture in the 2012 book on p. 60 -- when he owned an auto repair shop in SM.

-**Rita Logan**, 65. The last surviving member of the founding Picquet family *still living in SM*, Rita was very supportive of the Foundation's work, allowing us to copy many old Picquet family pictures that she owned. We will miss her.

### Thanks

- To "**Ste. Marie Open**" Golfers – Thanks to the guys who participated in this annual summer golf outing and decided that the money they had left over should go to the Foundation. We received an envelope full of cash that added up to over \$300! Thank you, golfers!

-Thanks to the many people who provided artifacts for the Foundation's museum display during the 175<sup>th</sup>. We had to take down the display because the DCA workers were staying at the House for the summer and fall while working on a construction project nearby.

-Thanks to **Shane Kerpiel** for a donation of historical magazines.



-Thanks to **Kevin Ochs** and son, **Cole**, whose lift truck enabled **Ron Kirts** and **Maxine Calvert** to hang Christmas lights on the big pine tree next to Village Hall. The tree looked beautiful for the

holiday season. (Maxine Calvert photo)

### Foundation House Update

The bathroom on the first floor will be updated in the early months of 2013, thanks to a generous \$2500 gift from **Judy Alblinger Brangeon**, Paris, FR. Also, we are planning to redo the roof. Thanks to all who responded to our request for donations to fund these two major projects.

### To Book the Foundation House

Plan ahead, if you and your family wish to stay at the Foundation House. Make reservations with **Ron or Carolyn Kirts 618-455-3153**.

### New Foundation Board Member

**Donna Keller** of rural SM was appointed to the Foundation Board at the fall meeting, replacing **Annette Hahn Kirts** who had served on the Board for two terms.



Donna is well known in SM for her extensive work with the American Legion Auxiliary and at St. Mary's. She served as chair of the 175<sup>th</sup> Parade (and also the 150<sup>th</sup>!) and co-owns the very successful Simple Rewards Day Spa & Salon in Newton. She and husband Bob play an integral role in the family business, **Keller Grain & Livestock, Inc.**, founded by her father-in-law, **Art Keller**. We know she will be an asset to the Foundation Board of Directors.

Sainte Marie Foundation  
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**Mike Hartrich at the Time Capsule reburial, with (l-r) 175<sup>th</sup> Chair Julie Warfel and Father Al. Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> was COLD!**

The Sainte Marie Foundation newsletter is published quarterly. Send comments to writer/editor Pat Reis, [patreisprpr@yahoo.com](mailto:patreisprpr@yahoo.com). The Foundation is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization, duly recognized as an Illinois charitable corporation. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Do you have a Sainte Marie story you would like to share? Write your own and/or contact Pat Reis [patreisprpr@yahoo.com](mailto:patreisprpr@yahoo.com). We reserve the right to edit.

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**Put on your 2013 calendar:**

**”VOICES FROM SAINTE MARIE’S PAST”**

**Saturday, August 31, 2013 (Labor Day Weekend). Time to be announced.**

**Place: St. Mary’s Cemetery**

**Ticket prices to be announced.**

”Voices from the Past” is a guided walking tour of St. Mary’s Cemetery where you will meet a number of residents (ok, ghosts!) from the past who will present you with a fascinating history of the time when they lived and what they did as members of the Sainte Marie community.

This drama-filled event is designed for families and will feature actors recruited from Sainte Marie residents and friends. The actors will provide the history of their subject’s lives in a 10-minute monologue by the grave of the deceased, weaving local, regional and world history with a personal narration. The program will be a little over an hour long, with refreshments to follow.

The Foundation hopes this event will provide a greater understanding of the rich history of our little village. Watch for more details in coming newsletters. And a big thank you to **Maxine and Maurice Calvert** who attended a similar program in Decatur several years ago and thought it would be perfect for a Foundation event.

**175<sup>th</sup> Remembered**

Remember that you can still buy 175<sup>th</sup> items. At the **Sainte Marie State Bank**, you may buy note cards, the 175<sup>th</sup> Book and the DVD of the whole weekend. Call **Kathy Slankard** for info – 618/455/3355. Other items, cups, t-shirts, etc. are available at **The Gas Station**, 618/455/3700.

**Order form - 2013 Flower Basket Participation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print as you want it listed on the bank window. May also be made” *In memory of*” or ”*In honor of*”)

Your name, address and phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
**Enclose a check for \$100 payable to the Sainte Marie Foundation. Send to: Box 186, Sainte Marie, IL 62459**

### **Bonus Pages for E-mail Subscribers**

*Last year at this time, your editor was fiercely at work creating the book for the 175<sup>th</sup>. Below are some excerpts from **Sainte Marie: Stories and Reminiscences 1837-2012**, the 216-page book published by the Sainte Marie Foundation last June.*

#### **From Chapter 4, “A Tribute to my Heroes: The ‘Characters of Sainte Marie” by Don Hartrich, page 64**

.....Another guy I remember but didn't know all that well was **Paul “Mouse” Faltemier**. Isn't it funny how a lot of guys had nicknames in those days? My dad told me that Mouse got his because when he was a young boy, he had a pet mouse, and he would bring it to school in his shirt pocket! Mouse worked up the street as the parts' man at **Kocher Implements**, the local J.I. Case dealer. He had a crew cut, wore black horn rimmed glasses and always seemed to have a half smoked cigar in his mouth, but I can't ever remember it being lighted! He was a cool character. When he'd look up a part number, say it was something like M432887, he would go down the parts' aisles just singing that part number till he found it! Mouse and his wife, **Jeannie**, raised (I think) seven kids and all have done really well.

Speaking of Kocher Implements brings up a couple of other characters. First, of course, was owner **I.D. “Lightning” Kocher**. Lightning got his nickname when he worked as a younger man up the street at **Alblinger & Kirts Chevrolet** garage. He would pump gas when a customer would stop at the pumps, but they kept the cashbox across the street at the hardware store so he would have to run over there and get change. I guess he was so fast at this trek that **Bernard Huff** who also worked there remarked one day, “Irenaeus, you're as fast as lightning.” He was never the same..... Lightning was a joker and was always quick with a smile. He was a pleasure to be around. He ran his own implement business until Case and International merged; then he worked as a salesman for Newton Implement. Lightning was married to **Florence** who still lives here in Sainte Marie. Their kids and my brother and sisters and I all played and ran around together.

One guy that hung around the Case dealership was **Clarence “Sam” Ochs**. Sam always had a big chew in his mouth, and the obvious place to spit was the bucket on the nearest tractor loader. I can remember one bucket in particular that had at least a couple inches of “baccy” juice in the bottom..... P. 64

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#### **Excerpt from Chapter 4, “Walking to Grandma’s: Remembering the Foundation House,” by Terry Kirts, page 154.**

Before it was the Foundation House, it was simply “Grandma’s House.” Before it became a gathering space for community functions or a place to preserve historical documents and cherished relics, it was a big white house where I could while away afternoons playing Scrabble or 7-Up or roaming the vast yard to cut bouquets of irises or Surprise lilies. Back then, I never knew that the house dated to just after the Civil War, that members of the Picquet and Hartrich families had at one time owned the property, or even that its once-brown siding had been covered in white aluminum in the ‘60s. Still, it looms large in my most vivid childhood memories.

In truth, while its wide front porch and pillars are impressive, there isn't much that is so all that architecturally significant about the former home of Harley and Lena Kirts. Added onto so much that it is

more a patchwork quilt than a preserved period piece, it doesn't have the artful grace of such homes as the stately Victorian opposite St. Mary's where Lucille and Josie Spitzer once lived. It certainly is not as grand as some of the old Picquet properties on Embarras Street with their wide landings, stained glass, and marble mantels. Had it still been standing, the old Joseph Picquet property near the Sacred Heart Novitiate with its broad sun porch, basement kitchen, and dumb waiter, would have been ideal for housing a historical foundation, though the renovations would have been prohibitive.

But a house is more than its beams and boards, and the Foundation House owes its personality to the family that lived in it and its proximity to so much of the foundational activity of the town. Practically in the backyard of St. Mary's Church, anyone coming for church picnics, American Legion baseball tournaments, or the famous Fourth of July celebrations would likely drive past the house, noting its demure and well-kept, shady yard. Going back further, the house was in sight of all of SM's three oldest schools, and school children would often romp in the churchyard just steps from the house, wondering what might be going on inside or seeing Harley lounging in a lawn chair on the porch or Lena trimming roses. Many people who have stopped in at Foundation open houses remember seeing the house as school children and are delighted finally to get a look inside.

Flora and fauna were surprisingly diverse on that property, with a pussy willow ushering in spring, followed by fields of Technicolor tulips, Minnehaha irises, paunchy peonies, and lilac you could smell from the porch. Grapevines sprawled lush on a fencerow. and a large side yard included a cherry grove, where many summers, from my dad's boom truck, we picked gallons of cherries for fantastic summer pies. Perhaps no house in town had such a verdant stand of lily of the valley, starts of which thrive on the side of my Indianapolis home. Some of Lena's most prized perennials were her delicate mock orange bush, one of the town's most beautiful magnolia trees, and a spectacular holly tree that decorated the church and holiday tables alike.

In summers, hardly a day went by when I didn't holler a quick "Going to Grandma's" to whoever would hear it, tumble down the hill in our front lawn, and stroll the wide street extending south from the **Joseph Picquet** house, lined with stately ash trees. Coming up on to the porch, I couldn't wait to ring the doorbell, guessing which of the two dozen songs it would play. In Grandma's kitchen with its cheery red and white tile, decals of fruits on the high cabinets watched as we baked cookies or watched birds fly to well-stocked feeders in the back yard. A tiny transistor radio in the back den brought the voices of Jack Buck and Mike Shannon calling St. Louis Cardinals games. And late into the afternoon on hot days, we would sweat on the screen porch, listening to the bugs sing, telling stories, and enjoying the simplicity of life in a grand home that is now the emblem of a town still full of spirit..... P. 154.