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**Marcus Historical  
Center**



**President**  
Julie Sand

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Phylis Rapagnani

**Secretary**  
Maxine Shea

**Treasurer**  
Faith Specht

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# **MARCUS HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER SPRING 2018**

*"The purpose of the Marcus Historical Society shall be to preserve for public benefit and education the heritage of our community."*

Everyone is welcome to visit the Historical Society. Call any board member to schedule a tour for yourself or a group! Our building is full of city, school, and family history!

## **Where was it?**

On October 1<sup>st</sup> Chris Ballard presented a well attended slide show and talk at the Historical Center. This program had its roots in last years "If Walls could Talk : a history of the Barnes Bank Building". Chris told more information about the results of her research into past and present local businesses located on and near Main Street.

An on-going theme during her presentation was "Where is it?" For instance, the local post office had many, many, locations during its existence and today is located just off Main at 108 E. Pine Street. Other entities brought to light were the Marcus Panatorium, various car dealerships, grocery stores, a photography studio, and more too numerous to name in this article. Chris successfully tracked down the location (and photos) of Dorr and Wixel buildings. Seems there was a Wixel blacksmith shop and a Wixel manufacturing building. There were photographs pertaining to many of the locations mentioned in the presentation.



Cathy and Wade Berger lent a framed Wixel brochure to display for the afternoon. This included a detailed drawing of the Wixel hay loader.

Chris wished to thank Chuck Nielsen and Mike Hoover for helping set up the audio and visual parts of her program. Chuck also supplied the large screen television on which projections were viewed. Belinda Leavitt did the recording of the program for which the Society thanks her. Members of the Society served bars, cookies and beverages after the program.

### Chamber Coffee

Members of the Society took their 2017 turn in hosting a Chamber Coffee on Monday, October 2. There was a nice attendance. During the comradery, Steve Smith of Smith Insurance tried a few tunes on the two organs on display in the building. One thing led to another and Steve talked about the possibility of doing a mini concert at the Center during the Marcus Fair!



### Country School Preservation Group

A country school preservation group led by Bill Sherman who represents the organization *Preservation Iowa* toured our facility October 7. The group had attended the Country School Preservation Conference held on the Northwest Iowa Community College campus in Sheldon, Iowa on October 6 and had arranged to make four tour stops in Cherokee County on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Our museum was the first stop followed by Lily of the Valley School Museum on the north side of Cherokee, the Cherokee Sanford Museum and the Grand Meadow School Heritage complex. A barbeque meal was served at Grand Meadow. Of the nineteen people who visited our building, seven were from Iowa, several from out-of-state, one from Switzerland, and two from Australia. The Australians are college level teachers in the United States.

One of the ladies who joined the tour is from Akron, Iowa and is interested in restoring the schoolhouse located on the farm which she and her husband purchased near Akron.

Bill Sherman visited our center in September of 2016 during Grand Meadow Days and included us in the 2017 tour. He and his wife Faith are from Des Moines.

### Marcus Hometown Christmas Parade of Trees

Remember the decks of playing cards with pictures depicting Marcus people and Marcus history, which the Society has been selling for several years? One deck became decorations for the Historical Society's entry in the Hometown Christmas Parade of Trees. Holes were punched in a corner of each card and ribbons threaded through the holes before hanging them on the tree. Bows and red beads were added. Fern Clarkson, Linda Spieler, Julie Sand, Sherree Ogren and Faith Specht did very well trimming the tree



### WWII Closure told at our Center

On Sunday November 12, 2017 Nancy Hier introduced her nephew Matt Botkin and Matt proceeded to tell with words and pictures the story of Carl Heline's death and burial (twice) in the waning days of the War in Europe. Carl was Nancy's brother and his family was informed he was missing in action when Nancy was still in high school. Carl was co-pilot of a B -26 bomber and his plane was shot down.

There is not space here to give all the details of Carl's tragic and fascinating story. Details which have come to light are due partly to Carl's service friend Calvin Kelly who kept looking for him and eventually discovered he had been marched into the forest and shot by a German SS Commander and buried in a church cemetery in Rensdorf, Germany. Some months after the end of the war Carl was reburied at Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten, Holland.

A woman by the name of Trudy Beckers who was tending Carl's grave at Margraten made an email inquiry to the town of Marcus as to whether any of Carl's relatives were still living here. (Local people volunteer for grave tending duty) Nancy and Matt were contacted and Nancy decided she wished to go to Holland to meet and thank Trudy. A story about these plans was published in the Sioux City Journal. This story was read by two people living in Florida who had relatives in Rengsdorf. Through this couple contact was made with Irmgard Kutscher who as an 8 year old was with a group who came upon Carl's body while gathering firewood. These people saw to it that Carl's body was taken to the churchyard. Pastor Dr. Erich Bammel gave Carl a Christian burial in spite of instructions to the contrary given by Nazi authorities.

On May 27, 2017 Nancy, Matt and other family members visited the Rengsdorf churchyard in Germany and met Irmgard Kutscher there. Irmgard told of how the pastor stood against the authorities in order to give Carl and two other Allied casualties Christian burials. The family was invited to a reception at the church and the current pastor presented Nancy a signed and dated Bible. Then it was on to Holland and the Netherlands American Cemetery. The Sunday



Memorial Celebration there was two hours in length, quite formal and respectful with people of importance as speakers, a men's choir and a flyover by the Dutch Air Force.

Nancy, her sister, and parents had visited Margraten in 1949 and pictures of this visit were shown. At that time grave markers were wooden crosses and they are now white marble markers. About 12,000 of those buried there have been taken back to their homelands. 8,000 remain. Nancy said that her parents made the decision to leave Carl's grave undisturbed. Nancy gives her nephew Matthew Botkin a great deal of credit for his research into his uncle's death and for arranging the visit to Margraten. We give him a great deal of credit for the excellent presentation we were privileged to hear and see.

#### Annual Election of members of the Board

Ballots were tallied at the regular October meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month. These included ballots received by mail, not just those of members attending the October meeting.

This year four of the seven seats on the Board were up for election. Winners were Pat Ducommun, Phyllis Rapagnani, Faith Specht and Julie Sand. These are two-year terms.

There was not a quorum of members of the board present so election of officers waited until the regular November meeting. (Members elect the Board, the Board selects the officers) Officers for 2018 are Julie Sand, president, Phyllis Rapagnani, vice-president, Faith Specht, treasurer, and Maxine Shea, secretary. Board members not already mentioned are Brian Nelson and Ila O'Brien.

#### Future event

A tentative date of Sunday, May 6 has been set for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Museum Day. Exhibitors are being contacted for what has become an increasingly popular event.

To join the Marcus Historical Society, please mail a check or money order with your name/address/email/phone information and mail to:

PO BOX 321, Marcus IA 51035.

Individual: At least \$10/year (due yearly at fair time - first week of Aug.)

Family: At least \$15/year (due yearly at fair time - first week of Aug.)

If you wish to give more for your membership, both your donation and membership dues will be greatly appreciated.