



## Franklin Historical Society August 2024 Newsletter

### New Monthly Lunch-n-Learns Program

Many of our long-term members likely have marveled at the extent of our collection. The good news is that the Franklin Historical Society really does have an embarrassment of riches in both artifacts and stories. So many riches, in fact, that we can't possibly share what we have only in exhibits in our buildings or at our Annual Membership meeting.

So we've come up with what we think is a great idea!

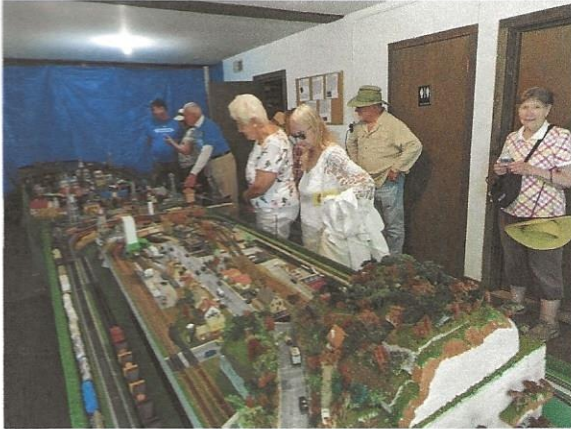
You are cordially invited to join us for **Lunch-n Learns**. We will meet at **noon** on **September 18** in the Town Hall Museum Building in our Franklin Historic Society's historic village of buildings in Franklin's Lions Legend Park 8060 S. Legend Dr. directly across from city hall's back parking lot. Bring your bag lunch along. Local historians and interested folks will present information of interest from our artifact collections and files.

While we're together, we also would love to answer any questions you may have about volunteering at any of our events. The time commitment isn't very large, but the benefits of getting to know our buildings and displays intimately - as well as talking about them with our guests - is so rewarding!



We will see you in September!  
Contact Barbara Pforr at [bap4@earthlink.net](mailto:bap4@earthlink.net) or call 414-425-0244 with any questions. Reservations appreciated by Monday September 16.

**June 30 Open House Tour Pictures After the Concerts in the Park**



**Franklin Historical Society's Fourth of July Open House**



**Children play old-fashioned games in front of the Whelan School House**



**Barn & Town Hall Museums**



## Whelan School Spring Classes

The Whelan School's grade school started 2024 with another successful grade school program. Students from Franklin and surrounding communities come for a one day field trip to be instructed by our teachers on what it would be like to be a student in 1908. Later they tour our historical village. There is an estimated 800 students that are graduates of the program.



The Whelan School was one of seven schools that sprouted up during the latter part of the nineteenth century to educate Franklin's farm children. Others were Stargard, Riverside, Green Valley, Willow Edge, German School and Oakwood High School.

Whelan was built on land secured from Patrick Whelan in 1852. In 1878, a new school was needed and Johannah Whelan, the daughter of Patrick, donated land at the corner of Puetz Road and Hyw 100. A loan of \$389 was secured to build the Whelan School.

The Whelan School was closed when Ben Franklin School opened to serve grades one through eight. The brick Whelan School was purchased by the Franklin Historical Society in 1969 and became the first historic building moved to Legend Park. It is now a living museum, offering classes from Franklin and surrounding districts the opportunity to receive a one-day education in a rural setting of olden days.

## Herda's Hardware

Some interesting details about Herda's Hardware were brought to light through a collection of pictures the family donated to our society recently. When we think of Herda's, we think of the building on St. Martins Road that unfortunately has been sitting empty for several years. But the original Herda's was

located a short distance up the street at the corner where Cross Roads Pizza is located today. This picture shows the original Herda's.

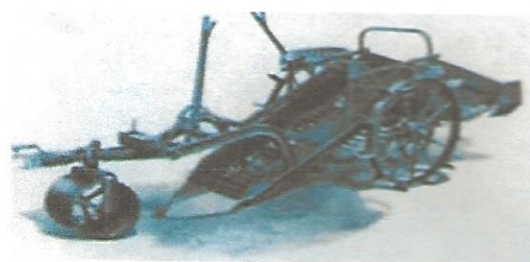


The property on this corner was purchased by Jacob Searing in 1920 and the building was constructed in 1922.

Jacob Searing was

employed as a dealer in farm machinery per his WWI military draft application. The 1921 Polk's business directory for Franklin listed a Searing/Grobschmidt Hardware. Jacob Searing died after a 3-day illness in 1925 at the age of 39 and not much additional information about him has been found.

The John F. Herda Company started as a one-room operation in this building in 1923 by two brothers. They added additional storage in a long, narrow, garage-type structure behind the store. The farming implements lined up in the front of the store were potato harvesters (probably manufactured by Hoover) that were used to harvest sugar beets. Around 1919, local farmers started to plant sugar beets as a cash crop to earn extra money. The land was very fertile, and with the right amount of water, a bumper crop was produced. So much so, that the TMER&L interurban railroad that ran to East Troy installed a siding at the Muskego Center for loading the sugar beets. Farmers hauled the beets in wagons and trucks to Muskego where the beets were dumped into gondola railroad cars and delivered to the Menomonee Falls Sugar Beet Company for refining.

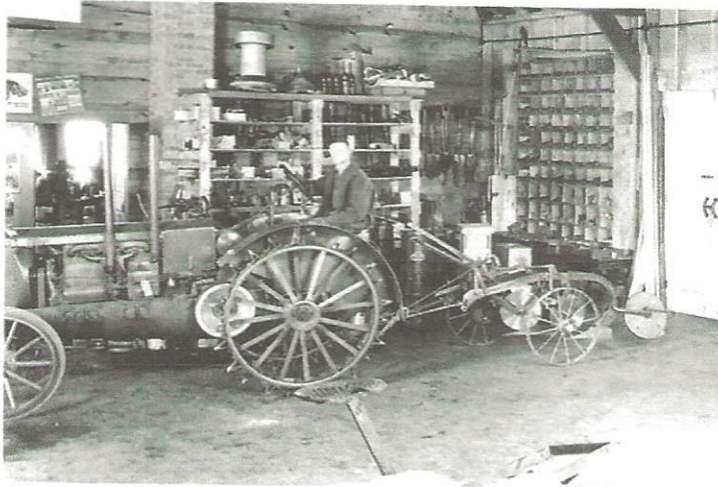


Hoover Potato Harvester



By 1928, Herda's business had outgrown the capacity of their original location. They then constructed a much larger facility and a new house down the street.

The front door of the new store was completed in 1929. By that time, the design and affordability of the tractor had also advanced. The general purpose (GP) tractor featuring high ground clearance, small front wheels, minimal weight, capable of both cultivating and plowing and cutting had been



introduced. Additionally, the cost had also been reduced significantly through competition between manufacturers. The combination of those two factors made tractors so affordable that each farmer could purchase their own. To meet the demand Herda's began selling tractors and farming implements at the new location.

The first tractor brand sold was Wallis tractors. Wallis tractors were an early cousin of Massey-Harris and eventually were built in Racine, Wi. This picture is of a 1929 model 12-20 Wallis tractor and No. 5 plow parked inside the back of the Herda building. In later years, after Herda's

discontinued the sale of tractors, the back third of the building was used to store surplus hardware inventory. Every inch of the three-story building was used. The upstairs level also held surplus inventory, and the lower level, accessible through the back of the store, was a repair shop where mechanics repaired and refurbished tractors.

The side of the building stored bulk items for sale. Customers could pull their truck up to the platform and easily load bags onto their trucks. It also served as a loading dock for the unloading of the new tractors coming from Racine. This picture shows a 1940 Massey-Harris tractor (now with rubber tires) being unloaded from one of the family's trucks. Herda's eventually became the largest Massey-Harris dealer in southeast Wisconsin.



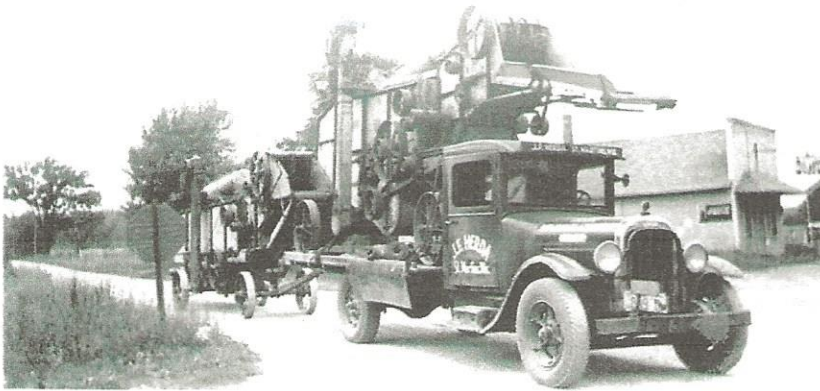
Occasionally Herda's purchased items by the boxcar load. Buying an entire boxcar load of products that had high demand allowed them to keep their price low.



This picture shows three family trucks that were needed to transport a boxcar load of bundles

of baling twine. Other products bought by the carload included dog food, feed and salt.

For over 80 years three generations of the Herda family were involved in the business that catered to farmers.



The family also did their own farming. The picture above shows them returning after threshing.

The picture on the right was labeled "load of brewery grains". Grains for brewing had been grown in the area since the Gross Brewery of Franklin started in the late 1850's. The Herda family probably grew grains for Schlitz or perhaps the Miller Brewery.

Farmers came from as far as Racine and Kenosha because Herda's had a reputation for having everything. Tools, fencing, horse bits, cattle leaders, major appliances, household items, gardening supplies, lamps, nails, bolt, sewing supplies, kitchenware, kerosene, and even dynamite could be purchased as well as farming machinery. The dynamite was stored in a metal box off-site and was used for stump removal and to open springs when the water stopped flowing. One-year Herda's even sold baby chicks. Every inch of the building was used for all the inventory and the staff knew exactly where to find it. The store was one of the last remaining general stores.

As times went on and the area became more residential the items the store stocked also changed. In the early 1960's, Herda's became a True Value Hardware Store.



But as more people moved to the area, larger discount-type stores appeared and made it difficult for Herda's to remain competitive. Eventually the family made the decision to quit the business.

**QUITTING BUSINESS  
SALE**

**UP TO 50% OFF**

**STOREWIDE  
WHILE IT LASTS**

SALE STARTS WEDNESDAY

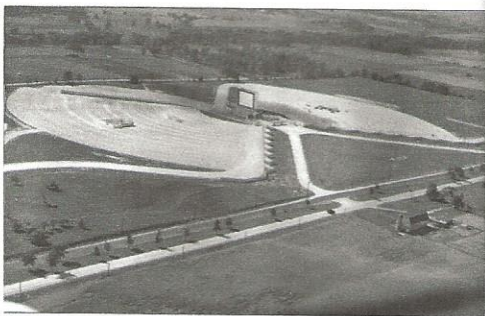
STORE CLOSED TUESDAY TO PREPARE

## A Tribute to Daddy for his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Memories of My Childhood November 4, 1995

Daddy, this how I remember my childhood: You were a very good father. You were a Christian man and it could be seen in the way you lived. You stayed home with your family, didn't smoke, didn't drink or run around. In fact, you were always kind, extremely patient and helpful to anyone you ever met. I can't ever remember you being loud or angry. We were not wanting for anything; however, we were not monetarily rich, in fact we were probably "poor" but never knew it. We were rich in love. Church and family were the center of our lives!

Above is the first paragraph of an 18 page document **Linda Martin White** wrote to honor her father **Alfred Martin**. Linda is the oldest of seven children. Here are examples of what she wrote telling a great story of what it was like growing up on a Franklin family farm.

The farm was located at 4000 W. Rawson Ave. Many members of the Martin extended family lived up and down Rawson Ave.



This is an aerial view of the 41 Twin Outdoor Theater as it appeared around 1950. At this point the screen tower had not been lengthened for CinemaScope film. To the south is Twenty-seventh Street (Highway 41). (Courtesy of Dale Lindner)



On July 1, 1948, the 41 Outdoor Theater made its debut on Twenty-seventh Street (old highway 41), just north of Dresel Avenue. It had one screen, and the first movie shown was *Over Faces West*. Within two years it had screens facing north and south with concession stands on both parking lots. Two more screens were added in 1981. The 41 Twin remained Wisconsin's second-oldest outdoor theater until the property was purchased by the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company and showed its last double feature in September 2001.

In the mid 1950's the 41 twin Outdoor opened and we got free tickets to see "Ma & Pa Kettle at the Fair". We could see the movie from the top rung of the ladder in the haymow in the barn!

Mud Lake was "off limits" to anyone living a mile around it. Your Great Grandpa lost a team of oxen/wagon in that "lake" (quicksand). Today it's called Grobschmidt Park.

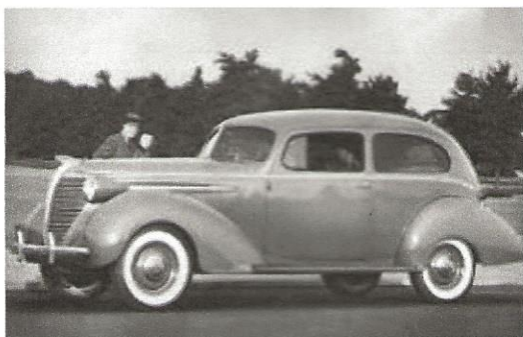
We bought flour in 100 lb. cloth sacks. We girls chose the bag which would become our dress, pinafore or apron when it was empty our mom would sew it for us.

Because I was afraid of the rats in the cellar, you'd advise to me to sing real loud as I would walk down the steps. That way they'd hear me coming and the critters would be gone when I got downstairs. It worked!

Our school St. Paul's played baseball at another one-room Stargard. It was only one mile away on S.51<sup>st</sup> St. After the game we walked just south to Sellhorns filling station to buy penny candy. We also walked to the games at the one-room school at Hwy 36 & 76th and bought penny candy at Pattses.

You loved to watch wrestling on Thursday nights upstairs by Grandma/pa's. Uncle Louie/Aunt Lydia bought their first TV. Grandpa liked TV. TV aired only a few hours a day. (Firestone Playhouse, Kraft Comedy Hour, I love Lucy, Howdy Doody, Mickey Mouse Club and Musketeers.

We went to worship at church every Sunday as a family, but because Grandma/pa went early, we went to Sunday School with them. And you and Mom came later.



Every other Sunday it was our turn to use the car a Hudson Terraplane. We shared it with Grandma/pa.

We once got a freezer. Were we living! Mom froze foods; less canning.

This is just a start of a series of articles from Linda Martin White's letter to her farther Alfred Martin.

The 3 pages about the Herda store and the pictures were the work of Bob Storm the author of "The Stories of St. Martins" Franklin Village, and also master display builder for our buildings. Bob request that we are in need of a 5 quart oil can for a display in the town hall. Any memorabilia or petroleum collectors have one they could donate we would appreciate it. Contact Jim Luckey at [luckeyjim@yahoo.com](mailto:luckeyjim@yahoo.com) or 414-421-6539 if you do.

**Welcome-** New members Joy Kuharske & Randy Borland. We are glad you joined and hope to meet you soon. The FHS is growing.

On Sunday Sept.1 and Saturday Sept. 2 the FHS will be parking vehicles during the St. Martins Fair at the County Dale School. This is our most important fundraiser and volunteer help is really needed. Contact me at [luckeyjim@yahoo.com](mailto:luckeyjim@yahoo.com). or call if you can help. Thank you.

Visit the FHS website [www.franklinhistory.net](http://www.franklinhistory.net) for current information.

Jim Luckey - President Franklin Historical Society