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ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN

OCTOBER, 1977

OCTOBER TO BE BUSY MONTH FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS WITH PARADE, MARKER DEDICATION, SCHOOL DAYS AT OUR REGULAR MEETING.

Oct. 3 GENEALOGY COMMITTEE
Meets in the History Room of Bement Library (St. Johns) at 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 4 MUSEUM MEETING
Meeting at Museum 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 7 HOMECOMING PARADE
Join the St. Johns, Michigan "New Bicycle Band" at 4:30 p.m. at Gibbs Street where Parade assembles. All welcome.
(Story on Page Four)

Oct. 9 MARKER DEDICATION
East M-21 and Shepardsville Road where marker commemorating Michigan Rushers game will be dedicated.

Oct. 20 SOCIETY MEETING
Meeting time is 7:00p.m. at Gunnisonville School which is at intersection of Wood Roads and Clark Roads.
(Story on Page four)

In 1852 the first postoffice in the township of Bingham was established in the home of George W. Estes, who was appointed postmaster. It is said that the first mail brought to St. Johns was carried in the mail riders hat, and that the first postmaster kept his office in a cigar box.

COMMITTEE FOR THE TAPING OF INTERVIEWS OF RECOLLECTIONS MEETS OCTOBER 24 AT THE MUSEUM AT 7:30. ALL INVITED TO ATTEND

MICHIGAN RUSHERS MARKER TO BE DEDICATED OCTOBER 9

"In the field south of this spot, a professional football team, "The Michigan Rushers", played on July 4, 1895 what was, undoubtedly, the first professional football game in Michigan and the nation."

So reads the Historic Sites' marker to erected in a special ceremony on the grounds of the Alderman's Grocery Store at the corner of M-21 and Shepardsville Road, Oct. 9 at 5:00 p.m. Ron Huard will act as master of ceremonies. Special guests have been invited.

In the 1950's some 55-60 years after this historic game was played, Leo J. Grove, manager-player of the team, tried in vain to gain official recognition for Shepardsville as the birthplace of professional football. He petitioned sports authorities, Congressmen, and other officials, and received widespread publicity in the national press.

His claim after Latrobe, Pa. was recorded as being the site of the first professional game, August 31, 1895. Grove knew that the Rushers had played their first game nearly two months before that. Eventually Latrobe was dropped from the record book and the League took the stand that there would be no official recognition of a "First Professional Game."

Tom Tears of the Historic Sites committee had conducted a two year investigation and has made a trip to the Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. There the Research Director, Jim Campbell, acknowledges that although the shared proceeds of the game were small (\$3.00 collected by passing a hat) technically
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ESSAY CONTEST: The second place winner in the grade school division of the essay contest sponsored by the Historical Society is Terry Thelen. Terry was a sixth grade student at St. Mary's School in Westphalia when this essay was written. Terry wrote about ancestors who came to this county in September of 1881.

Mr. and Mrs. Motz lived in Asanto, Germany in the province of Westphalia. Three children, Albert, Julius and my great-grandmother Magdelin shared their home. While in Germany, Mr. Motz was in the newspaper business. This was during the Franco-Prussian war or sometime around the year of 1880. Mr. Motz and his family wanted nothing to do with the war, so they set out on a journey to find a new way of life in America.

On the afternoon of September 10, 1881, the Motzes arrived in New York on the steamship Alba. The Motz family made their way through Canada where two more children were born, and finally reached Detroit where their children were baptized. From Detroit, Mr. Motz and the family made their way to Fowler and there they settled down on a farm bought by the family.

Once in Fowler, Magdelin traveled back to Detroit where she met Joseph Werner. Joseph was a widower with four children. In 1889 Magdelin and Joseph were married and moved back to Fowler. With four step-children already, Lena (as she was known) gave birth to Martha, Tony, Roman, Dorothy, Rosaline, Helen, and my grandmother, Anna Werner. Joseph died in 1933. His wife Lena built a house in 1939 and lived there the rest of her life until 1964.

My grandmother, Anna Werner, soon met Joseph Thelen. They were married on the date of June 13, 1921. They had twelve children, Betty, my father Paul, Leon, Alvin, Jerome, Stanley, Donald, Doris, Marie, Francis, Loretta, and Therese. The Thelen family lived on a farm three and one half miles south of Fowler. Joe and Anna stayed there until 1959 when they built a house in Fowler and lived there for the rest of their lives. Anna died in 1967 and my grandfather died in 1974.

Joseph Thelen's ancestors can also be traced back to Germany. Joseph's grandfather was Michael Spitzley who came from Germany in the middle 1800's. He became an area business man in Westphalia. Later he married and among his children was my great-grandmother Margeret Spitzley.

Margeret was born in 1865. Later she married another Westphalian by the name of John Thelen. John and Margeret had three children. Among them was my grandfather Joseph with his younger brother Edward and John Jr. The Thelen family of John and Margeret lived and worked on a farm in Westphalia. Unfortunately, John Sr. died in 1893. He soon married John Rademacher and they had three sons, with the names of Louis, William and Leonard.

Moving ahead to a generation, I come to my father, Paul Thelen. Paul was born in 1923 to Joe and Anna Thelen. He served in the army as a sergeant during World War II. On June 15, 1949, Paul married Mary Jane Harr from Fowler. The new family moved to a farm on Taft Road where they still live and farm today. While on the farm, Paul and Mary Jane had six children with the names of Jean, Dave, Ruth, Judy, Dan and myself, Terry.

From the 1800's to 1977 the Thelen's have come a long way from Germany to their first dream when they crossed over to American soil on that special date of September 10, 1881.

THE ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN "NEW BICYCLE BAND" TO PLAY IN HOMECOMING PARADE ON OCTOBER 7 SPONSORED BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY---MEMBERS INVITED TO FOLLOW THE BAND.

If you were visiting Troy, Mich. on Sept. 11, you would have seen the St. Johns, Mich New Bicycle Band. Being from this area you might have wondered what these strangers out there were doing with St. Johns as THEIR name. It really isn't hard to explain.

In 1956, a high school student Ron Higgins read in the centennial edition of THE REPUBLICAN NEWS about the St. Johns, Mich Bicycle Band. Higgins, a member of the U.B. Gannison band and an avid lover of music, didn't forget that article. Years later when he was a member of a bicycle club and thinking about a Bicentennial project, he came up with the idea of recreating that same bicycle band which he read about 20 years before.

With such an enthusiastic organizer as Ron Higgins, the band was due success from the beginning. He sought to come to St. Johns during the Bicentennial, but dates could not be coordinated and the thought of being in St. Johns was put aside.

However, Higgins's band became not only a Bicentennial project of a few week's duration, it became an over-night sensation and the group appeared in many parades in Oakland and surrounding counties. The Historical Society will present the St. Johns, Michigan New Bicycle Band at the Homecoming parade. Thus at long last the New Bicycle Band will come home to where it all began. The parade is at 5:00p.m. on Friday Oct. 7 in downtown St. Johns. Anyone who wants to dress in costume of the 1880's and walk behind the band (we'll carry our banner) is welcome. This should be a fun time. The parade assembles on West Gibbs Street at 4:30 p.m. If you don't want to dress up, be sure to view this recreation of the St. Johns Michigan Bicycle Band.

ALSO NEEDED ARE TANNEN BICYCLES AND A FEW ADULT BICYCLES WHICH WE NEED FOR BIRTH DATES.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

(continued from Page One)
 it was the only game on record that could qualify as the first professional game. The dedication on Sunday October 9 will at long last give recognition to the men of the Michigan Lushers and bring to a close Tom Teare's long quest.

The dedication can be reached by going east on M-21 from St. Johns to Shepardsville Road. The ceremony will be at that intercession.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL AT GUNNISONVILLE SCHOOL ON OCTOBER 20 AT 7:00 P.M.

Society members will have an opportunity to go back to school on October 20 when the Historical Society meeting takes place in the restored Gunnisonville School. We will, however, not be ten of the scholars because this meeting will begin one hour earlier than usual at 7:00p.m. due to regulations concerning the use of the building.

The old Gunnisonville school was restored by the Lansing School District as a Bicentennial project. The old school, built of brick at the turn of the century, was used until the new building on Clark Rd. was built in the 1950's. The school annexed to the Lansing Schools. The old building was left vacant and when the Lansing Schools sought to use this building as a recreated classroom so that students could view school life as it was at the turn of the century, they restored it. Many Lansing area students have gone to school in this old building and felt what it was like in "olden days." This school was the recipient of the first tri-county marker. The marker was sponsored by the Clinton County Bi-Centennial Commission.

