

Clinton County Historical Society

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Saint Johns, Mirhigan 18879

THE CLINTON INDEPENDENT

APRIL 1987

PAINE- GILLAM SCOTT MUSEUM MARKS 50TH REMEMBRANCE OF SOHN'S DEATH

Clements A. Soh,, known as the original batwing jumper, was promoting aviation when he was killed while jumping in Paris on April 25, 1937.

On April 25 Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum will remember Sohn with a service at Fowler. Activities include:

APRIL 25: "A 50TH YEAR REMEMBRANCE" of Clements A. Sochn
1 p.m. Most Holy Trinity Cemetery, Fowler
Followed by open house at PGS where Sohn's batman
wings and other memorabilia will be displayed.

(Information below from essay written by Connie Miller-Simmons of Denver. She wrote the essay in 1975 when a Fowler High School student)

"...Sohn was born near Fowler...Dec. 7, 1910,...son of Mr. & Mrs. Gottlieb Sohn. ...as a student he served an aviation apprentice-ship under Art Davis, a noted Lansing flyer. He became a licensed pilot and then took up parachute jumping.

He made his first jump in Florida in 1932...gradually increased the time of his delayed jumps and then came up with the idea of fastening material to his arms and between his legs so that he might swoop and dive while making his jumps.

"Bat Man" in 1934...s few weeks after he made his first bat-wing jump at Miami.... (he) appeared before Ionia audiences in 1933 as a mile jumper, an act where he fell from an airplane, plunging several thousand feet before opening his parachute. To thrill the crowd Sohn carried with him a sack of flour, which marked his path from the airplane to the ground.

(He) had 2 parachutes which he wore every time he jumped... In 1936 Sohn narrowly escaped death while performing in England. His first chute fouled in his wings, forcing him to pull the emergency chute...he landed among parked cars...

(continued next page)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CCHS membership: No information available at press time.

GENEALOGY DIVISION
April 6: Election of officers
& Janet Snyder on
"Gazateer & Directory"
Capitol Federal Savings
& Loan, St.Johns, at

7:30 p.m.

ARCHIVES: DeWitt Township Hall 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. Mondays through Wednesdays

PAINE GILLAM SCOTT MUSEUM
April 25 "50th Remembrance" of
Clem Sohn's death
See page 1 for details
Reopens April 5

(Sohn continued) On April 25, 1937 the 26-year old Sohn dived to his death at Vincennes, France...while he succeeded in freeing one chute, it failed to open and he plunged to the earth. He had jumped ...at 6,000 feet and swoooped through space on his man-made wings until reaching 1,000 feet where he strove to release his parachutes in vain.

Witnesses said he was falling about 140 feet a second when he hit. Hoping to remain in flight four minutes, he was in the air only 1 minute, 25 seconds when the fata plunge began. The terrific impact of his body dug a furrow in the ground six feet deep. His head, limbs and torso were broken in a hundred places.

Of his bat-wing jumps, Sohn had written:
"There is no sound but the wind. If I lose speed the wind dies and there is no sound at all. Someday I think everyone may have my wings and be able to soar from the house tops...."

JANET M. STURGIS-SNYDER has received her Sesquicentennial Pioneer certificate from the Mich. Genealogical Council & the Library of Michigan. Anyone wanting forms to apply for certificates can call her at 224-4315. Deadline is 12/31/8



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