

# Kite & Key

Franklin Historical Society Newsletter

DECEMBER 2020

## WITHIN MY RINGS

(recollections from the 1860 catalpa tree)

### Deep Roots

As I look south across the village green, I have a picturesque view of the Kreger house, barn and pig sty which was turned into public restrooms. The Kreger house wasn't always located here. It was originally part of a farm beyond the sledding hill on Scenic Drive. What history is held within its walls?

You may wonder why it is called the Kreger house. Well, typically, historic homes are named after a prominent person that lived there or the last person that occupied it. In this case, it was named after Art Kreger whose resume includes builder, President of the Cemetery Association, church leader and involved villager. His daughter, Maxine Kreger Nelson, was the last occupant of the home, but the history of the home does not stop here.

I knew the history of its inhabitants long before I laid eyes on the Kreger buildings. Bear with me as I shuffle through my memory files and chronologically detail the rich history hidden within the framework of this unassuming structure. If my memory serves me well, I believe that Lucius Miller and his wife Lavinia Stoughton lived in the home and farmed the property around 1840. Lavinia was a sister to Dilucenna Stoughton, the first landowner in Franklin. Of course, back then, it was called the Stoughton-Bullock Settlement also named after the second landowner. They had three milk cows, two working oxen, six sheep and one pig. Corn and wheat were their primary crops. Lucius, as well as other farmers, were seen hauling their crops to the Van Every mill to be ground.

There is a gap within my rings of who lived there next. I've seen a lot of goings on in my day, observed a lot of villagers through the years and sometimes my memory becomes an inseparable collage of people and events. Now, don't think that I'm not credible. I do get most things right, but if I'm not sure, well, I just let it be.

So, I'm going to move on to around 1900 and hopefully, will be able to fill in the gap at some



point, but don't hold me to that. It was at this time that Charlie Johnston and his bride Grace German moved into the house. Now, Charlie and Grace had deep roots in Franklin. Charlie's maternal grandfather was Jonathan Worthing, an original landowner. Grace Amelia, often called Millie, was the daughter of John German, the prosperous miller. German Mill Road was named after him! Charles Lane was named after Charlie Johnston!

The Johnstons farmed the 80 acres that produced potatoes, corn, peaches and just about anything the land could yield. On Fridays, their wagon would be loaded with produce for the journey to the Eastern Market to sell the fruits of their labor. The couple raised two children, Cora and Robert.

Cora married Art Kreger in 1918 and moved into that Greek Revival house on Scenic Drive. They had two children, Robert and Maxine who was the last Kreger to live in that home. Robert married Ruth Barton in 1921 and raised twin boys, Robert and Barton. Maxine married Bob Nelson. And, so ended the legacy of the home, but not the history!

The home and all of its memories were sold to Craig and Laney Bauer in 2008. They donated the house, barn and pig sty to the Franklin Historical Society. So, it was in December of 2008 that I first set my eyes on the house as I watched it being moved to its present location west of the Broughton house (village offices.) All of the people that I observed for 150 years had lived and worked there. And, now their stories would live on for others.

Perhaps my perspective is different. I have lived through its years, knew the people first hand, understood their contributions and importance to remember them. It's not just a house. It's Franklin. And, it continues to serve the village.

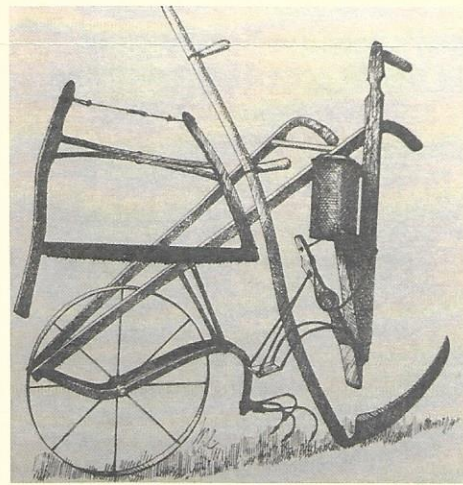
## A REVEAL

I hear there's plenty of cheap land in a place called the Michigan Territory. Let's load up the wagon mama and take only what we'll need. If it all works out, we'll send for our other provisions. And so, families packed up their belongings and headed for the unknown on a rigorous journey to seek a new life.

Come follow their journey at the Franklin Historical Museum. The farmers were the first to arrive to clear land for a log house and for the fields. What did they encounter as they entered the new land? Discover who they were through handwritten letters back home about their hardships, hopes and dreams.

Dear Sister – have my son, Nathan, send my cross-cut saw and mama says her clock too, but pack it well. Tell friends and neighbors we need tradesmen. . . carpenters, blacksmiths, buggy makers, coopers, millers. . . And so, the farming settlement became a trade center.

Walk in the steps of those who molded the settlement into a village trade center. Experience their shops, the tools of their trade and their impact on village life.



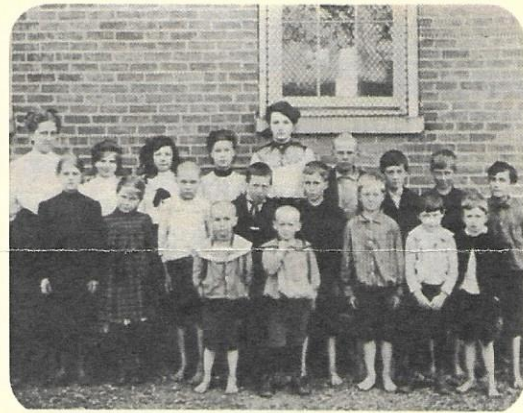
A log school provided book learn'in for children. Photos share their experience with us. A church was erected to help pioneers come together, take time from their chores and express gratitude for

their blessings. Land was donated for a cemetery on a sandy hill. A general store opened to provide life's necessities and a post office insured connections with friends and family back East.

And so, the village grew. There were mills every mile along the river. Wagons, carriages and sleighs offered settlers freedom, taverns tempted the hotels provided solace for the weary. Mail was delivered once a week on horseback. A community hall was erected for socials and dances that offered relief from the daily grind of life.

All of this and more are waiting for you to explore about Franklin's beginnings, its people, their struggles, perseverance and joys.

Stay tuned for the enlightenment of your life at the Franklin Historical Museum.



## DONATIONS

Donations are the heart of our exhibits! Through the generosity of village descendants sharing artifacts from their families, we are able to tell their stories. They are authentically Franklin!

Donated by Bart Kreger:

- Clock – owned by Jane German, wife of John the miller. It hung in the Broughton house where she resided
- Sled – believed to be made in one of our blacksmith shops
- FAMILY PHOTOS – to be scanned

Donated by Bettylee Hepworth

- PLANNING COMMISSION documents

Donated by Karl Lieder, village resident

- COPY MACHINE – Leader Business Systems

*Kite & Key* is a publication of the Franklin Historical Society. The Franklin Historical Society seeks to preserve such material, structures and artifacts that help to establish the history of the Village of Franklin and to make it accessible to those who wish to study it. The Society maintains a museum and archival area at the Derwich House, 26165 13 Mile Road (at Kirk). Volunteers and donations are most welcome. *Kite & Key* and the society welcome mail at:



P.O. Box 250007

Franklin, MI 48025

Email: [info@franklin-history.org](mailto:info@franklin-history.org)

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## PLANNING AHEAD



We have been working diligently to prepare the museum for its grand reopening. These are the steps we have taken:

- Painted the interior walls and woodwork in every room as well as the exterior of the museum.
- Painted the cement block walls in the basement and the floors.
- Cleaned up the landscape.
- Updated the boiler system.
- Applied for and received a \$5,000 grant from Oakland County to purchase an air purifier system to insure clean air circulation in the museum.
- Placed ultraviolet film on the windows to protect exhibits from harmful rays.
- Spent countless hours brainstorming and developing exhibits to tell Franklin's history and stories.

## ARCHIVAL WORK

For several years, we have utilized the expertise of Barb Louie to catalog our archives. We have more than a hundred boxes containing files of Franklin history. She has organized them for user friendly access with an index to help retrieve them.

Every artifact we have acquired has been identified, photographed and logged into a database.

Town Crier newspapers, the All About Franklin and Bert Wood's Yesteryear book, Cemetery Society minutes dating back to 1852, old photographs and more have been scanned. The next step is to make them accessible to the public.

The work continues. Although it is important to preserve our collections, it is imperative to have Franklin history live on.

With the copy machine generously donated by Karl Lieder, a village resident, we are able to quickly copy and scan valuable documents.

### Financial Report 2019 FY (7/1/19 to 6/30/20)

#### REVENUE

MEMBERSHIP DUES	\$5,331
GRANTS	\$8,178
DONATIONS	\$3,901
SCARECROWS	\$634
MISC SALES	\$75
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$18,119</b>

#### EXPENSES

MUSEUM UTILITIES	\$2,558
MUSEUM INSURANCE	\$1,299
YARD MAINTENANCE	\$2,122
BUILDING MAINTENANCE	\$3,032
BUILDING SECURITY	\$408
PRINTING & POSTAGE	\$1,509
MISCELLANEOUS	\$1,902
TECHNOLOGY	\$3,877
HISTORICAL MARKER	\$2,700
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$19,407</b>

FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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## EVENTS

This has been a challenging year for every organization. Events have been cancelled or modified to comply with restrictions in place. It has affected the Franklin Historical Society too. There were no barn, cemetery or walking tours. The museum has been closed other than for renovation. However, COVID did not put the brakes on everything.

We found a creative way to engage villagers in our Horseshoe Caper. The golden horseshoe was hidden on the green in conspicuous and not so conspicuous places and the search began! Our website and Facebook page documented the fun.

Our annual Build a Scarecrow took off in our Crow To Go event. Villagers ordered scarecrow kits complete with a wooden frame, clothes, accessories and straw to build their own at home. Pick up was at the Historical Museum (26165 Kirk Lane) at scheduled times. Cars pulled up, popped their trunk, paid for their scarecrow and headed on their way. It was a successful family fun project!

**TREE LIGHTS AT THE LIBRARY  
COURTESY OF THE  
FRANKLIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**