

Germantown Historical Society **Newsletter**



INCORPORATED – 1974

Fall, 2026

FROM THE GHS PRESIDENT JIM DIX

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. We appreciate your interest in the Germantown Historical Society.

This summer has been hot, humid, and at times extremely smokey. In July on the smokiest day of the year, we had scheduled to meet with Mike Kraminski to sort all the logs of the Loos log cabin. We wanted to prepare them to be moved from the Donges Bay location over to Dheinsville. Because Mike was open that day to bring his heavy equipment we went ahead as planned even in unhealthy environmental conditions.

I was joined by Dave and Mary Bykowski, and once we got started it was fun to work with the 160-year-old logs. Some were 32 feet long and weighed hundreds of pounds. That hands-on experience continues to leave us in awe of Germantown's early pioneer settlers. They displayed determination and toughness to clear their land of large virgin trees and then use hand tools to hew and cut the logs to size and fit them together. For them it was a matter of survival to provide crude but immediate shelter for their families in their new Wisconsin home.



A selection of logs has now been relocated to Dheinsville and are now beginning to be reconstructed into an annex to the Christ Church Museum of Local History. It has been a slow process, but once completed the new space will have displays of our vintage tools and farm implements dating from the mid 1800's to the early 1900's.

While many hours of volunteer work will be contributed to this project, it also requires several professional contractors to do the heavy and specialized work. The total cost of this project is projected to be around \$100,000. But we are very appreciative of a major contribution from Bill Wetterau which will cover most of these expenses. Bill Wetterau has a soft spot in his heart for Christ Church and for preserving Germantown's history. We all owe Bill a big THANK YOU for his exceptionally generous donation.

To see up to date reports on the progress of this and other projects, check out the GHS Facebook page where photos and videos are posted.

1929 SEAGRAVE PUMPER TRUCK

This summer the Germantown Historical Society officially took ownership of the 1929 Seagrave vintage fire engine pumper.

The Germantown Volunteer Fire Company was first chartered in 1907. At first all of the firefighting equipment was powered by hand and moved by horses. In 1929 the Fire Company purchased its first motorized pumper truck, and this Seagrave pumper has been saved and restored to be operable to this day.

Since 2000 the truck has been stored and displayed in a separate room inside the Bast Bell Museum in Dheinsville Historical Park. But while the GHS now officially owns the truck, we think this vintage truck belongs to the community, and we intend to keep the tradition of entering the 1929 Seagrave in Germantown's Fourth of July parade.

Once again, the GHS owes a big **thank you** to Bill Wetterau for his role and leadership in making this transition happen.



If you would like to see the Newsletter with colored pictures, please visit our website at germantownhistoricalsociety.org Or you can send your request with an email address to ghsjdix@gmail.com and I will email you a copy of the newsletters.

Germantown history and genealogy.....

By Mary Bykowski, Volunteer Researcher

Tavern history of the 5 Corners area of Germantown

Tens of thousands of motorists pass the historic crossroads of Holy Hill Road, Maple Road, and Fond du Lac Avenue every year, completely unaware they are driving through the literal birthplace of Washington County's earliest immigrant tavern culture.

Let's start with what prompted this article. Very early on the morning of Tuesday, August 4th, a devastating fire swept through Stag's Tavern at the 5-corner intersection of the streets mentioned previously. For those who aren't familiar with this location, every building on each corner has the foundations of the early Dheinsville settlement. But even before that, Native Americans originally carved out the trail connecting Milwaukee to Fond du Lac. As pioneers widened the trail for horse-drawn wagons, Dheinsville naturally grew into a bustling commercial center. By 1873, the small crossroads featured a general store, a stone church, a cobbler shop, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a school, and early mutual insurance offices.

Philipp Dhein, the founder of the settlement, purchased hundreds of acres of land, some of which he donated for a "new" log cabin building which doubled as the church and early school. As the community grew, so did the needs of the parishioners and students for a bigger and better building. The stone church that was built in 1862 and possibly the stone school around the same time marked another era. Amelia Ruegg, the wife of Casper Ruegg, pastor of Christ Church, was the teacher after

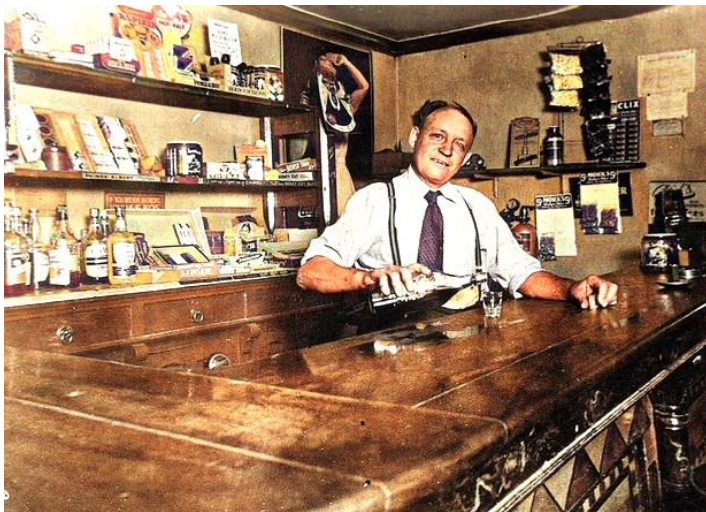
they arrived in 1868. On the 1873 plat map, only a school building is indicated on the corner where future taverns and saloons would eventually be.



Amelia Ruegg taught in that building until 1890, when she requested that a new school be built one mile north on Rockfield Rd. During this time, from old records and newspaper articles, the school doubled as a meeting hall and saloon at the same time. In 1893, another news article said that an addition was being built on the old schoolhouse, which was known as the Dheinsville Saloon.

This was the beginning of a long string of taverns and saloons at that location. We can account for over a dozen different proprietors on the site from 1893 until the present day. Some of these include Lucht's Tavern in 1900, Berg's Saloon in 1907, Happel's Bar in 1925, Vern and Rolly's Bar in 1955, Dheinsville Inn in 1957, Kautz's Saloon in 1962, Longhorn Inn in 1971, Yesterday's in 1979, Rick's Crossroad in 1989, Sports Corner in 2003, and now Stags Tavern since 2023.

John Berg's Saloon existed between 1906 and 1924. This picture was taken about 1907 when transportation was still with horse drawn carriages and wagons. Soon, this scene would become a thing of the past. The automobile brought in a new modern era.



When John Berg passed away in 1924, the operation of the bar transitioned over to his son-in-law John Happel. During Prohibition times were tough, but rumor has it that the good whiskey was hidden in the old stone school structure and sneaked out the back door. But after 1933 the booze started flowing again at Happel's Bar, as shown in this picture of John Happel.

In the 1960's Wilbert Kautz's Saloon was the place to meet with friends and family.





In the 1980's Yesterday's was where one could discuss the good old days while sitting at the bar.

For more than 20 years during the early 2000's the Sports Corner was full of lively conversation about the games on the TV screens. Robin was a big supporter of GHS Oktoberfest providing volunteer tee shirts annually and whatever was needed to help us make the festival run smoothly.



In 2023 the community meeting place changes names again to Stags Tavern.

The new owner, Nicki Saxon, changes the atmosphere and menu, but keeps the community spirit alive and vibrant.

The recent fire is a serious setback, but we hope a new Stags Tavern can rise from the ashes with the help of the community.

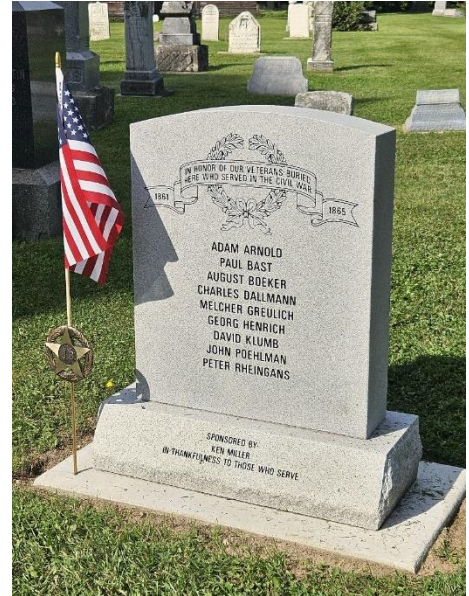
Historically, the taverns and saloons served as the vital civic, social, and commercial centers of the community. Far more than places to drink, these 19th- and early 20th-century establishments hosted a wide array of public and private events. Many early saloons, the upstairs of various crossroads taverns, featured dedicated dance halls. They regularly hosted community dances, lively brass bands, and traveling performers.

While we don't know what the future holds for this iconic location after the recent fire, the Germantown Historical Society will support its mission to attempt to preserve the rich history of the area.

CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL

The Christ Church Cemetery in Dheinsville is one of the oldest cemeteries in Washington County. During the Civil War, Germantown had several men who served in the Union Army. Nine of those veterans are buried at the Christ Church Cemetery.

The Civil War Committee from the Veterans Service Office in West Bend has created a memorial to honor these veterans. This permanent stone marker is sponsored by Ken Miller in thankfulness to those who served. The memorial has been installed, and a dedication ceremony is being planned for Sunday, September 27th at 1 PM. This is also Oktoberfest weekend, so come early and stay late.



TIME CAPSULE MYSTERY

The dedication of the bell tower in Fireman's Park drew a large crowd. The event took place on Memorial weekend 1976. A new bell tower was built to hold the original fire bell which first rang in the 1907 "new" fire station. The Village dedicated the tower to the Germantown Fire Company who immediately re-dedicated it to the community.

The memorial included a space for a time capsule containing old papers, photographs, and items relating to Germantown's history. The capsule was placed inside the bell tower memorial later in 1976. It was intended that the capsule should be opened on July 4, 2026, the nation's 250th Anniversary.



This summer in June, Village representatives removed the plaque to see what condition the time capsule was in. To their shock and astonishment, the space was completely empty. **The time capsule was missing.** After weeks of searching and making inquiries, no one has a clue as to what happened to the time capsule.

We are asking the community if anyone has any tips as to the whereabouts of the missing time capsule, or possibly its contents. Any information can be sent to germantownhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Germantown

**Sat., Sept. 26 &
Sun., Sept. 27
2026**

Don't miss the
Dachshund Dash!



Dheinsville Historic Park

N128 W18780

**Holy Hill Rd.
Germantown**

- **FREE Admission~**
Includes 3 Museums
- **FREE Parking**
- **Authentic Food & Drink**
- **German Beers On Tap**
Including Locally Made
Old Germantown Beer

Saturday

12p-3p: Good Time Dutchmen

12p-5p: Silent Auction/Craft Sale

3p-4p: Dheinsville Dachshund Dash

3:45p-7p: Music Venders

5:15p-5:45p & 7p-7:30p: Pommersche
Tanzdeel Freistadt Adult Dancers

7:30p-10:30p: Cold Sweat and the
Brew City Horns

Sunday

12p-3p: Ryan Kautzer Band

12p-4p: Classic Cars on Display

3p-3:45p: Anniversary Couple
Recognized, followed by Pommersche
Tanzdeel Freistadt Kinder Dancers

3:45p-7p: Copper Box Quartet

Hosted by the
**Germantown
Historical Society**

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World**

Supported by the
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Tourism Funds**



Call **(262) 628-3170** or
go to **www.germantownhistoricalsociety.org**
for more info.

Volunteers Appreciated

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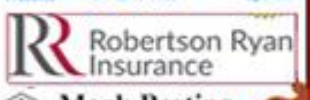
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2026 Dates to Remember:

September 26 & 27 - 2026 Oktoberfest Come and Enjoy the Fun

September 27 — Wolf Haus, Bast Bell, and Church Museums Closed for the Season

The Wolf Haus & Genealogy Research Center will be open on Wednesdays **by appointment** from October 1, 2026, until June 1, 2027. GHS phone number is 262 628 3170.

The Bast Bell Museum and Christ Church Museum of Local History can be toured during Wolf Haus Museum hours. Inquire there. Also, groups are welcome to tour all three museums **by appointment**. GHS phone number is 262 628 3170.

TO BECOME A SPONSOR IN 2026

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: GERMANTOWNHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

We Hope to See You

GERMANTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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