

Germantown Historical Society **Newsletter**



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Spring, 2026

From the GHS President Jim Dix

The year 2025 has passed, but it offered the Germantown Historical Society many memorable experiences. As mentioned in earlier newsletters, we were blessed with the donation of two separate log structures, and in 2025, a combination of volunteers and professional contractors worked together to prepare and then dismantle both structures.

In January 2025, the Loos family log cabin was skillfully taken down by Dave Brainerd. This picture shows how his power equipment carefully removed the siding and then gathered the logs one at a time. The front three walls will be reconstructed as a period addition on the rear of the Christ Church Museum of Local History. Inside that log structure, we will display our vintage farm artifacts.



In the late fall, the Caspar log granary was expertly dismantled after each log was identified and labelled. This picture shows Mike Krasinski removing a 30-foot-long log from the second floor. Mike has spent the last 30 years working on dismantling and reassembling log structures. He is retiring, but not before restoring both of these mid-1800s log buildings at Dheinsville.

During the summer of 2025, the GHS continued its mission to help many people find their family roots and to learn about the history of Germantown. Among our many visitors and tour groups, our regular museum volunteers gave 50 Germantown High School German language students a tour of all three museums. That was a memorable September day for all involved.

Of course, the climax of the year was our 31st Oktoberfest event. The weather was outstanding, and once again, record crowds enjoyed the music, beer, and brats, watched the Dachshund dog races, discovered our museums, viewed over 100 antique cars, and generally just had a delightful time.

So much happens over the two days of Oktoberfest that sometimes people miss some special experiences. For example, Sunday afternoon is a quieter day than Saturday. Still, this picture shows the Muehl Family Festhalle full of people of all ages and backgrounds simply enjoying conversation with old and new friends while listening to the accordion music of the Ryan Kautzer Band.



Several people take a break by walking around the park, and they often end up having their picture taken in front of the festive Dheinsville Historic Park sign. The Village Parks Department beautifully decorates the sign for Oktoberfest.

On Sunday afternoon at 3 pm, we continue a tradition which started in the year 1810 when King Ludwig of Bavaria invited all the citizens of Munich to join in the celebration of his marriage to Princess Therese of Saxony. There was a procession through the streets to the country festival area, and children dressed in costume danced for the married couple.



In 2025, our honorary wedding anniversary couple was Kevin and Donna Nash. They proceeded through rural Germantown to Dheinsville in a horse-drawn carriage provided by Todd and Cindy Wetterau.

The honorary couple took their place at center stage of the Festhalle and were entertained by Pommersche Tanzdeel Freistadt Kinder Dancers in ethnic costumes. The Pommersche Tanzdeel Freistadt Band provided the authentic music for their dance performance.



Looking forward to 2026, we will begin to reconstruct our “new” log cabins, as well as continue to help people discover their roots and the history of Germantown. Much planning will take place so our 2026 Oktoberfest will be better than ever.

We welcome you to join us in the joy of being part of these experiences.

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

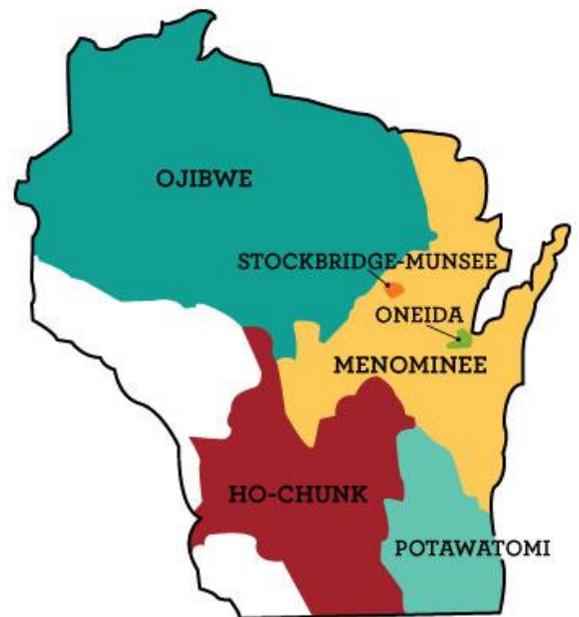
Humble beginnings....

When the early German immigrants came to the shores of Wisconsin, the city of Milwaukee was in its very young days, and one can probably not imagine the hardships they would encounter.

The first settlers would go to Germantown around 1839, traveling along the old Fond du Lac Indian Trail (now Hwy 145) from the port of Milwaukee. The area quickly grew after the land was claimed through the Homestead Act, and by 1845, the land of the township was all but sold to landowners.

In the very early days when no white man was in this area, the lands were populated by several Native American tribes, including the Potawatomi, Menomonee, Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Illinois, and other tribes. By the time the area's first settlers arrived, the Native Americans in the area were predominantly the Potawatomi. These groups of Native Americans co-existed with the early settlers and often shared the same land.

Because of the heavily wooded landscape of most of Wisconsin at the time, log cabins served as the initial, essential shelters for the mid-19th-century European settlers, particularly German immigrants, reflecting a "hard living" frontier era. These structures were often hand-hewn, featuring oak or mixed timber, reflecting the German Blockbau style of construction. The logs weren't fitted as tightly as in most Norwegian log construction, since the logs would shrink anyway. This necessitated chinking for insulation, most often made of rye, clay, and lime plaster, and, in many cases, built in the early days of settlement, when there was no nearby sawmill. Early cabins were often built of oak, beech, maple, or tamarack, and were constructed without modern tools, using mortise and tenon joints with wooden pegs. Later, larger log cabins were often built on the same property to accommodate growing families, and constructed with logs that had been hardened over time to help make the houses more efficient.





Early examples from the 1840s-1860s can still be found or preserved, such as the 1850s German-style cabins and fachwerk (half-timber) houses. The Wolf Haus is just such an example of the half-timber style using a filler of clay and straw.

Germantown is fortunate to have a good number of these log homes, as well as old barns/silos that have stood the test of time and the elements. Over the past two years, GHS has received two such buildings as donations for future projects.



Friedrich Loos

The first was a log home donated by the Joey and Angie Carini family and had once been owned by Frederick Loos, a Civil War veteran born in Germany in 1839.



The logs seen in the photo show the front interior that will be replicated as part of a period addition to the back of the Christ Church Museum. The new addition will house antique farm implements and other artifacts that have been donated from area families throughout the years.



The second structure was donated by Kaz Farms LLC. From what we can tell from our records, this building was probably built in the mid 1840's and used as a granary by the Caspar family for several generations.

Peter Jacob Dix arrived in Germantown in 1842 and bought 520 acres of land not only for himself but also for his extended family and neighbors who would follow in the coming years. This was a common practice for many families that settled here.

Peter's sister, Susannah Dix, was married to Nicholas Caspar in Germany, and in 1843, they settled on 80 acres of land previously purchased by her brother.



In those early days, the Caspar granary might have been a residence for the young immigrants while a new, larger farmhouse was built.

The granary has since been dismantled, with its logs numbered, cataloged, and moved to Dheinsville Historic Park. The granary will be reassembled to its original form and eventually opened to the public at a later date to give residents a good look at what

early log cabin architecture was really like.



Granary interior - first floor main room showing original doors on the far right and original stairway, flooring, and ceiling beams.

Granary interior - second floor showing original flooring and roof rafters from the mid-1840s

These pictures were taken just before disassembly by Mike Krasinski, who will reassemble this granary as close to the original structure as possible.



Perhaps the most well-known log house in the area was the Turck-Schottler house. Christian Turck was one of the earliest settlers in the Germantown area, coming in

1839. In the early 1840's, he had built a log house and sawmill on his 80-acre farmstead. Around 1856, the property was sold to Mathias Schottler.



Actual photograph of the Schottler family on their Germantown homestead, late 1800s

The Turck/Schottler Haus uses the Blockbau construction common in the heavily-forested, southwestern part of Germany. The structure is now preserved as part of the German complex at Old World Wisconsin outdoor museum near Eagle in Waukesha County.



Historical architecture experts claim that there are only a few good examples of this Blockbau style that remain in Wisconsin, as well as the more common German Fachwerk style that are open to the public.

The Society has been extremely fortunate with these donations and with continued support from community members to have one of these projects started in late spring of this year. This is a big part of a historical society's mission, which is to ensure that the memories of families, their stories, their ancestors, and what they did are never lost.

The recent passing of some longtime members of the GHS, including.....



On November 13, 2025, Bill Gay passed peacefully into the joy of eternal life. Bill was a special gift to the Germantown community, to which he shared his time and talents for decades. He taught English at Germantown High School for over 35 years and was their National Honor Society Advisor for most of his distinguished career. He touched and influenced the lives of many students as well as adults. Bill was a lifetime member of the Germantown Historical Society, and he authored three books documenting the history of

Germantown. In 2020, Bill was recognized with the Germantown Lifetime Achievement Award.

On January 9, 2026, Ken Miller peacefully passed into eternal life. Ken was a devoted community leader who left an indelible mark on our community. As County Board Chairman, he brought the Washington County Fair Park to life. Ken served with the Wisconsin Army National Guard for over 30 years. In his later years, Ken helped develop the Nike Hercules site into a Cold War-era museum in Waukesha. He was a lifetime member of the Germantown Historical Society, and his legacy lives on through his wife Marge's continued service on our Board of Directors.



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2026 Dates to Remember:

April 21, 2026 Annual Meeting

June 3 - Wolf Haus Open for the Season, Wednesdays 1-4 pm

June 3 - Bast Bell and Church Museums Open by Appointment

September 26 & 27 - 2026 Oktoberfest

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

The Wolf Haus & Genealogy Research Center will be open on Wednesdays from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm from June 3rd through September 27th

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.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE: GERMANTOWNHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

We Hope to See You

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