

100 Trips 'Back' and Ready for More

I received an email in January 2020 from then-editor of The Monroe Times, Emily Massengill, asking if I would meet with her about doing a weekly column dealing with the history of the area. To make the most efficient use of our time, my reply was that I was not interested. She convinced me to meet with her and I walked out with a "new job" that day. With all of the changes caused by the pandemic, this has been a good outlet for me to share information I have found about our local history.

Believe it or not, this is my 100th column, with the first one being published on February 1, 2020. I have appreciated the wonderful feedback that I have received from so many people since the first column appeared. I majored in mathematics and minored in computer science, so I appreciate you overlooking any grammatical or wording flaws.

Many have asked why I don't put a column in every Saturday. I am not a fan of deadlines during retirement and since writing is not easy for me, it takes me longer to put something coherent together. Many of the columns also involve a large amount of research at the library, the courthouse, and occasionally online. I had originally planned to write only a couple columns a month but the response was so overwhelming that I am trying to supply columns more frequently.

Below is a bit more information that surfaced after a few of the columns were published. The column about Perry Staver cutting off both of his young son's feet, published on June 6, 2020, was probably the most gut-wrenching of the early columns that I shared. All I knew about the location of this incident at the time of printing was that the farm was located south of the former Staver Church. I received a call from Steve Bartelt who informed me that his grandparents, Ralph and Gertrude Bartelt, bought the 80 acres that were left of the original Staver farm, located at 12985 N Stubbe Road, Winslow, Illinois, from the Stavers about 1927. Unfortunately, the farm had been about 160 acres before the Stavers had to sell off 80 acres earlier due to financial hardship.

In the column published on September 4, 2021 about my great-great grandfather, James Grant, who had been involved in two fatal accidents. One of the accidents took place in 1870 where an Ellis infant was killed. The second accident took place on October 14, 1882 and James Grant was killed. I received a call from Gerald Miller who thought I might have solved a family history problem for him. He knew that his ancestors (Lewis Ellis and wife) had a child that he could not account for. He felt that the child who was killed in this accident was probably the "missing child."

Lustron homes were manufactured in Columbus, Ohio and delivered in pieces to the location where they were to be erected. It was hoped that they would alleviate the housing shortage for soldiers returning home after World War II. After the column was published on September 19, 2019, Walt Rufener informed me that there were two Lustron houses in New Glarus, located at 419 8th Avenue and 318 11th Avenue, in addition to the three in Monroe. I did not hear of any other Lustron houses located nearby.

Family reunions were the topic in a few of the columns. Some of them had information about how settlers originally traveled here. Others gave names and locations from where the people traveled to get to the reunion, which might help someone find their elusive relatives. One fact from a reunion that intrigued me was that the Albert Geigel, Sr. family had a photograph taken at their reunion on February 3, 1914. The Geigel relatives still living here were interested in having a copy of it made. I received a call from Judie Heitz, who had that photo and welcomed the family to make a copy.

It is amazing how much information can be found in the newspapers that will help to date a photograph and maybe identify the people in the photo. Information about another Geigel family photo was printed in the May 8, 1915 issue of the Monroe Evening Times on the occasion of the 94th birthday anniversary of Martin, Senior. This time the photo of four generations was taken with Mr. and Mrs. Geigel, their son, Matt, and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Legler, and their son, John Leroy. Mrs. Legler was Matt Geigel's daughter. I had forgotten to share this information with the family until now, so I hope someone will let me know if they have this photo.

The first column printed this year was about the erection of the American House on the southeast corner of the square in 1841. The second column this year dealt with information about that building from the 1860s. Bill Breihan of Milwaukee (whose ancestor had a connection to Monroe) sent a wonderful email with much pertinent information related to the American House.

Less than two weeks ago I received an email from Tom Danner, St. Louis, about the Henry Stuessy murder. His great-great-grandfather, Jacob Stussie, was the oldest son of the Stuessys who was

sent to look for his father the morning after the murder. Jacob was in an orphanage in St. Louis until 18, as were three of his siblings. Jacob had five children, and passed away at the age of 40. One of his children was on the St. Louis Police Department until he died in a traffic accident while on duty at the age of 32. A grandchild served as a judge in St. Louis County for more than 30 years.

These email messages prove that The Monroe Times is read well beyond the Monroe area. It has been a pleasure to share information through these columns and I hope to share a few more columns about past events in the area. Stay well and keep the feedback coming.



This charcoal drawing of an unknown couple was left in the home at 2105 16th Avenue and found by Amy Schilt when her family moved there about 2011 did some renovating. The only identification on the back is the word Bobb, which might refer to the photographer who was in business in Monroe in 1917-18. Some of the earlier residents of the house were Matilda Norder, Frank Hare, Ernest and Mae Wilson, and L. C. Schramm. If you recognize this couple and would like to have the large image, please contact Matt.