

# Transcending Time

CARVER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

36/3: Summer, 2015



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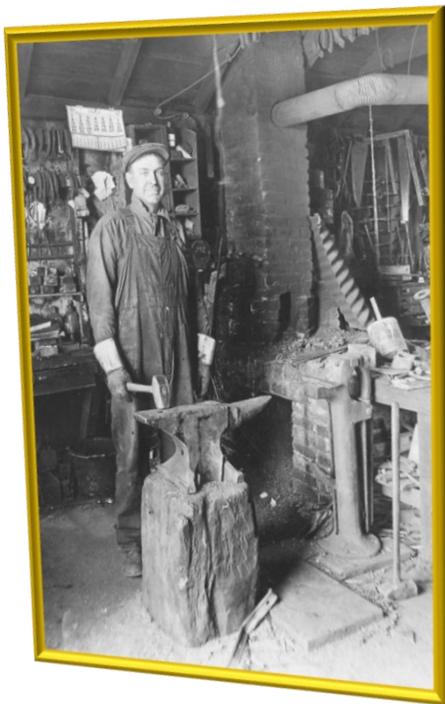
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75th anniversary?



"Opportunity is missed  
by most people because  
it is dressed in overalls  
and looks like work."

- Thomas A. Edison

## Blacksmithing at the Fair



This year at the Carver County Fair the Guild of Metalsmiths will be demonstrating. Founded in 1977, they are a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to keeping metalworking crafts alive. The organization is centered in the Twin Cities area but they have members all over Minnesota, in Wisconsin, Iowa, North and South Dakota, as well as a couple scattered around the country and the world.

Typically, blacksmithing is shaping iron and steel into useful or decorative items through the use of heat and force. The heat is supplied from a forge which burns either coal or propane. The force is provided with a hammer and an anvil. The actual items that are made depend a lot on the smiths present and the venue. Frequently they make what could be referred to as "immediate gratification" projects. These are small items that can be made quickly while people are watching. Things like nails, mini horse shoes, small S hooks or J hooks, leaf key fobs, etc., go over well as people can watch them start to finish. Sometimes they will work on more complex projects that take more time.

The Guild will be demonstrating throughout the week at the fair, next to the CCHS granary.



## *As Easy As 1, 2, 3?* By Erika Hildreth

Museums receive donations on nearly a daily basis. People give items to the museum, and the museum puts them on display. Easy peasy, right? Not quite. For those who don't know, putting donations into the museum's archival system is not quite as easy as 1, 2, 3. It is a process that can take as little as a few hours or days to run through, or unfortunately, a few years!

My name is Erika Hildreth. I graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in history, and am currently a graduate student, looking to obtain my Master's degree in Public History. I am interested in working in history museums. As a curatorial and collections intern at CCHS, I have been given the chance to work with the museum's collections and see the archival process first-hand to understand how a museum operates. I figured it was time the general public receives a snippet of the process, to understand the important steps of putting artifacts and paper records into the system.



*Plaque for CCHS's founder, O.D. Sell, 1955.*

First, before any item can be placed into the system, its significance to Carver County must be assessed.

CCHS's mission is to preserve and successfully interpret the county's history, and to do that, each item the museum holds must show a connection to the county's past. Upon giving a donation to the museum, the donor fills out a green slip, detailing as much information as possible about the items in the donation. Once items are given the green light to stay in the museum, the donor is given a thank you letter, as well as a Deed of Gift, that must be signed and sent back to the museum. Without that Deed of Gift returned, the item cannot be placed properly into the museum's system! Unfortunately many items given to the museum are still without their Deed of Gifts, even years after their original donation.



*Baptismal certificate for Enoch Trittabaugh, 1903.*

Once all of the donor's paperwork is filled out, it is time for the curator of the museum to do their own paperwork! It seems to never end. Each collection (whether it be one item or multiple) is given an accession number (such as 2016.0056), and each item in the collection is then labeled accordingly (such as 2016.0056.0001 and so forth). Both numbers are entered into the computer system, as well as the donor's information. Not only is everything typed into the computer, but a physical sheet of paper is also filled out and filed away. Once all of that is done, the item or collection can finally find a home in collections storage!

Many people think that their items will be placed on display immediately upon gifting it, but it isn't quite that quick. The process stated above must be finished, and only then, if the item has particular importance to an exhibit theme, will it be displayed for the public. Exhibit space is limited in any museum, so each item must be chosen carefully – but those that are not on display have just as much importance to the museum! The majority of items given remain safely in storage and even though they are not often seen by the public eye, they are significant for future exhibits, and for the use of research about the county. Whether an item is anything from a photograph, a plaque, or a baptismal certificate (as shown in this article) each and every item is handled with extreme care, as their importance to the county is (and always will be) cherished and safeguarded.



*Photograph of E.L. Sell's automobile.*



## Ward Holasek's Hearse: A Vehicle of Mourning and Memory

### By: Meghan Flannery

My name is Meghan Flannery and I am a curatorial and collections intern at CCHS this summer. I recently graduated from the College of Saint Benedict with a history major and a communication minor. I am hoping to pursue a career working in history museums. At CCHS, I have had the opportunity to document and research the horse-drawn hearse collected by Ward Holasek, who owned Rock Isle Farms. This piece is the most fascinating artifact that I have been able to work with so far in my career as a museum professional. I can see why Holasek collected this late nineteenth century hearse, as it is a beautiful museum and statement piece.

Mourning the lives of deceased loved ones was an important part of life in the nineteenth century. It was a ritualized process to grieve one's loved ones. There were special customs that close members of the deceased would follow such as wearing all black and avoiding social events. The local community would respect families' time and need for grieving. Families were expected to mourn their loved ones for extended periods of time which would often last years, depending on individual relationships to the deceased. While funerals were brief events, they inspired a longer period of reflection and commemoration of the deceased.

In the mid-nineteenth century, hearses became more elaborate than their simple flat-bed predecessors. They became large glass-enclosed coaches with spring suspension and a driver's seat. Hearses were extensively detailed with wood trimming and mourning drapery inside the hearse. Hearses could have beautiful paintwork, intricate wood detailing, and impressive wooden figurines. Hearses were often owned by the town livery store and rented for funerals. The journey between the church or home and the cemetery became longer, especially in the far spread farmlands of rural Carver County, so hearses were important for protecting and transporting the deceased to their final resting places.

Holasek's horse-drawn hearse is more modest than other nineteenth century hearses that I have been encountering in my historical research. This could be a reflection of the humble agricultural and Midwestern values where this hearse was originally used. It is ten feet long, five feet wide, and seven feet tall with wheels that are four feet in diameter and is painted in all black. The hearse is in great condition with little deterioration or damage from use. It still has all of its original parts, including the spring suspension on the wheel axles.

It has two oil lanterns on both sides of the driver's seat. The four corners of the hearse are trimmed as Roman columns. The rest of the wood trimming is simple and square in design. The unpretentious style of the hearse matches other hearses that were used in Carver County in the late nineteenth century. Based on through examination of the hearse and comparisons to other nineteenth century hearses, I can say that this hearse dates to the late nineteenth century, circa 1890. Holasek's hearse is truly a remarkable historical treasure that represents how people in nineteenth century Carver County grieved and remembered their loved ones after death.

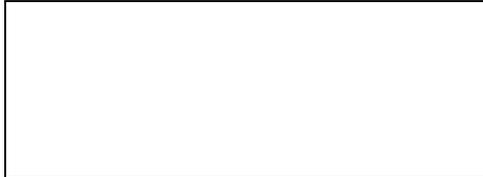


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Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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The Carver County Historical Society is a nonprofit organization supported by memberships and contributions from county residents, business, and government. All members receive *Transcending Time*, this newsletter.