



Historical Society

Dwight Historical Society Newsletter

119 West Main Street
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Website: <https://dwiththistory.org>

P.O. Box 294

Dwight, Illinois 60420-1321
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Facebook: Dwight Illinois History

Message from President Mary Flott.....

Except by appointment, the museum closes for the months of December and January, however, that doesn't mean we aren't active! These weeks provide a good time to clean, sort, straighten, and plan for the year ahead.

February 27th was a great night as we celebrated the official reveal and launch of our new website (www.dwiththistory.org). Kevin Brown, who made the Illinois Humanities Grant possible and designed the website, introduced us all to its features which include a short video on the history of Dwight, a variety of resources, the newsletter, news, and membership renewal and donation options. We thank all those who attended.

We are grateful to the Village Crew who moved our miniature Gothic Church to storage. The church, made many years ago by John McConnell, graced the depot patio for the holidays.

Kim Drechsel continues to do extensive research for genealogy seekers as well as for our next major temporary exhibit: The German immigration to the Dwight Area. Janice Lauritzen is heading that project and welcomes information about families of German heritage. Linda Emling began the task of organizing our files. This inspired many of us to lend a hand and we've now sorted every picture, document, and artifact in storage in the attic. What a treasure trove that is!

If you're in the neighborhood and the light is on, come on in, pull up a chair, have a cup of coffee, meet our new display mannikin, Matilda, a gift of Jim and Karen Finley, and take in Dwight's rich history!



Meet "Matilda", our new mannikin, dressed in a black beaded dress worn by Elisabeth Von Qualen to a roaring twenties dance in the early sixties. I am sure she looked smashing.

Mark your calendar.....Dwight Historical Society program on Monday, April 21st
7:00 P.M. at the Dwight Historical Museum

“Dwight, Illinois: Where Big League Talent Met Small Town America”

With baseball season in full swing, enjoy an evening with Bill Pearch, a Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) member and Dwight High School graduate (1991), as he discusses Dwight, Illinois’ unique connection to our national pastime. His presentation, *Dwight, Illinois: Where Big League Talent Met Small Town America*, will highlight our community’s earliest references to baseball, how Col. Frank L. Smith’s namesake team aided his political aspirations, and several of the major-league and independent teams that barnstormed through town in the early 20th century.

Pearch will shine a light on hometown talent like Odell’s Bud Clancy (Chicago White Sox, Brooklyn Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies), Wilmington’s George Cutshaw (Brooklyn Dodgers, Pittsburgh Pirates, Detroit Tigers) and Dwight’s Eddie Higgins (St. Louis Cardinal’s) all of whom reached the major leagues. We will have baseball memorabilia including uniforms, team photos, tickets, and baseball cards from the era on display.

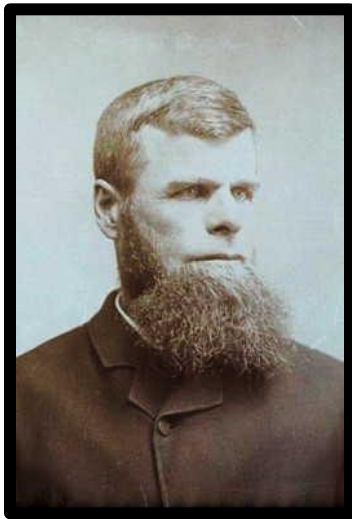


Sneak Peak from the Upcoming German Immigration Exhibit

Goodfarm Township, north of Dwight, was settled by German immigrants beginning in 1851. John Racher and George S. Burger bought land that year and the following year George Simantel settled and purchased eighty acres. Before long many now-familiar Dwight names of German descent settled in this area: Krug, Burk, Burkhardt, Kepplinger, Gantzert, Hoffman, Zabel, and Pfeifer. (See Goodfarm Plat of 1870 on next page.)

Allen Gantzert, a member of the Historical Society, is the great-great grandson of one of the early German settlers in Goodfarm. Johann Philip Gantzert, wife Anna and family came to America from Elmhausen, Hesse, Germany, in the late 1840's. The family lived in New York City with Philip working as a tailor before moving to Goodfarm Township in 1855.

One of Philip's sons, John Henry, married Mary Pfeifer and they lived and farmed in Goodfarm until his retirement. Together Henry and Mary had five children.

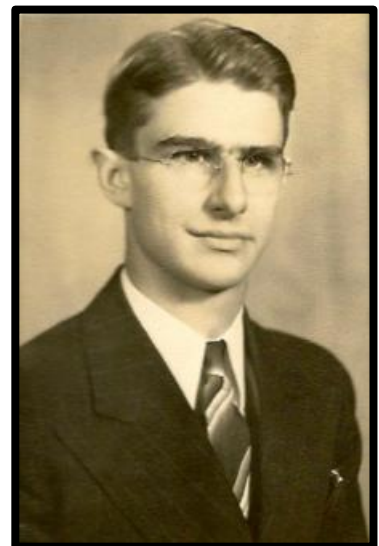


John Henry

Among their children was Elmer Gantzert, grandfather to Allen. John Henry died in 1918 and his obituary reported on his early beginnings in Goodfarm: *"Mr. Gantzert had been a resident of Goodfarm and Dwight for 63 years and was a familiar figure to all. He came to Goodfarm township when only a child and when the country was raw prairie land. He was truly a pioneer of this vicinity and lived to see the country develop and our village grow from a handful of houses to the prosperous little city it is now."*

The roots of Gantzerts in Goodfarm run deep. Allen is the fifth generation to farm and own land in Goodfarm. Allen follows his father Harvey, grandfather Elmer, great-grandfather John Henry, and great - great-grandfather Johann Philip.

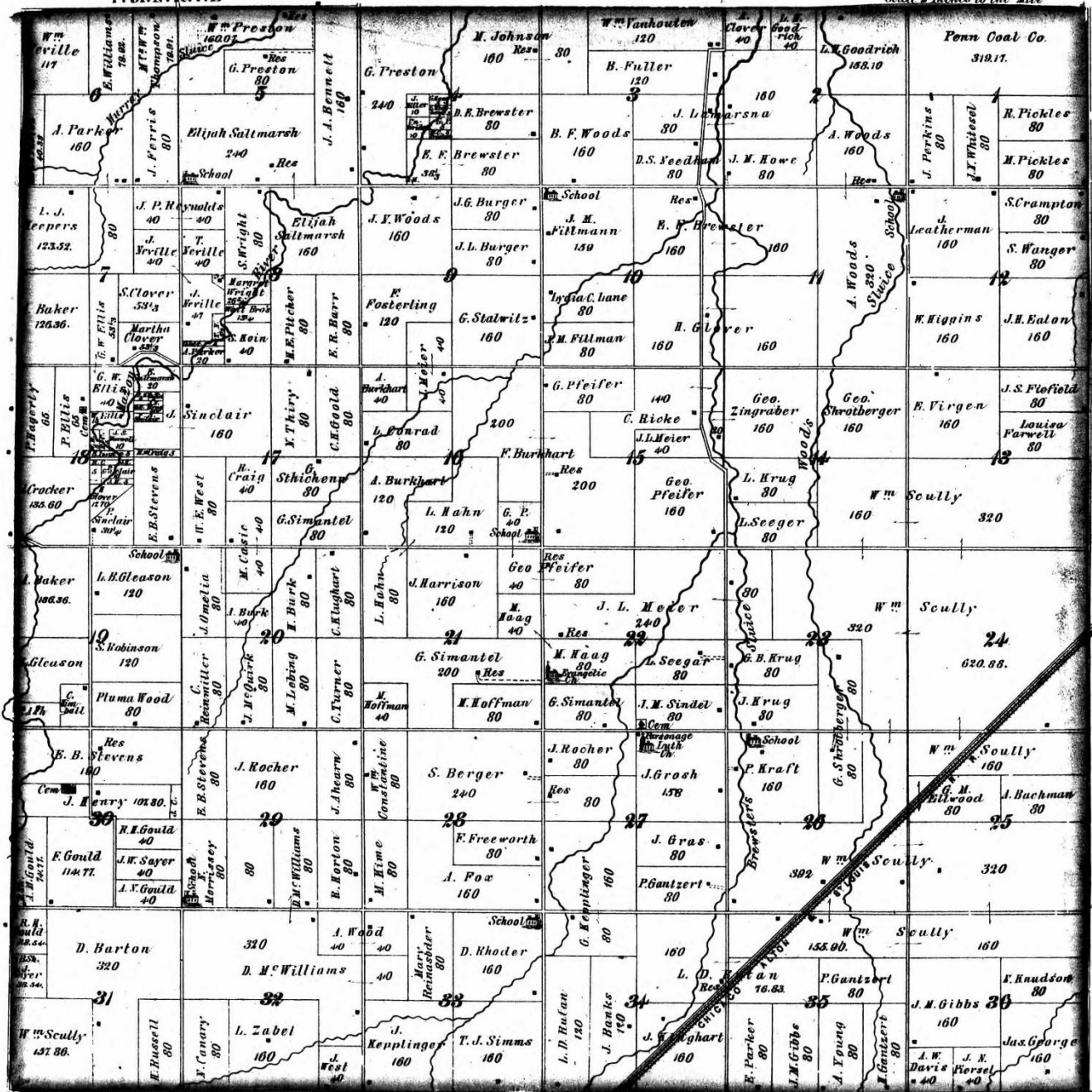
Elmer & Alice (Bower)
Gantzert



Harvey Gantzert

GOODFARM

Scale 2 inches to the Mile



Historical Wanderings... I'm excited to hear Bill Pearch's presentation on Dwight baseball on April 21st and thought this article about a ballgame between the Detroit Tigers and Dwight's F.L. Smith's would give us a preview.

Dwight Star & Herald

LIVINGSTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS, OCTOBER 26, 1907.

EE - YAH!

**It was Good Enough for Anybody
If we did Get Beaten.**

**ABOUT 1500 PEOPLE SAW THE GAME AND
WERE SATISFIED.**

"Never in the history of Dwight, thanks to Col. F. Smith, has such a crowd witnessed a ball game as did last Tuesday afternoon. They not only came from Dwight, but Pontiac, Odell, Fairbury, Chenoa, Bloomington, Kankakee and from far and near, on the steam cars, the interurban, in automobiles, buggies, carriages, wagons, and some walked. It was a good natured crowd who came to see the Tigers eat up the Dwight boys, but while the Tigers did them up a little, they were surprised at the fact that they were not such an easy morsel to devour as they expected

The Tigers came in at 11 a.m. and were met at the train by a good bunch of local fans and escorted to the Livingston. They were taken about the city in automobiles and were well pleased, and when they left they agreed that they had never visited a nicer place or played before a finer crowd, or treated finer generally.

After the game in the evening they were tendered a reception and a ball, and the attendance was fine, and every attention paid the visitors."

In regard to the game proper, we take the following from the Pontiac Sentinel:

NEAR WORLD CHAMPIONS WIN

**F. L. Smiths Are Honorably Beaten—
Higgins Pitched a Good Game
—Smith Starred Also.**

Historical Society Meeting Dates

The meeting dates in 2025 will be **April 21, June 16, August 18, and October 20.** A program follows the business meeting. If you have any suggestions for a program or would be interested in presenting on an aspect of Dwight history, please contact Mary Flott at 815-584-2107.

Docents Needed for Museum

We are always in need of docents to help keep the museum open to the public. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays. **Upcoming dates are: April 12, 26; May 10, 24; and June 14, 28.** Please consider volunteering as a docent by contacting Mary Flott at 815-584-2107.

*****Membership*****

It's not too late to renew your membership. You can go on our website, dwiththistory.org or mail it : P.O. Box 294, Dwight, Illinois 60420. Individual memberships are \$15 and a Family membership is \$20.

*****News Flash*****

The Historical Society is sponsoring a vintage baseball game between the Blue Island Brewmasters and the Deep River Grinders from Indiana, using 1853 rules. The game is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 4th at Dwight's Renfrew park. Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy the game.

