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# THE MUELLER RECORD

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Spring 2003



**We love old pictures!**

George Johner III donated this picture of his father, George Fredrick Johner II (went by Fred) when he was a Mueller employee. The picture is of the blacksmith shop employees around 1923 or 1924. Mr. Johner II is the tallest man in the back row - he has his arms crossed. Can anyone help us out with the names of the other men? Mr. Johner II's story is continued on page 4.

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# For the Record

By Paula Cross, manager

This newsletter is dedicated to 1954 news from the *Mueller Record*. Why you ask? Because my birthday was in May, I'm thinking a lot about getting older, and I was born in 1954. So there you go - a rather rational explanation.

Do you do the same thing I do? Whenever you get a new calendar, the first thing you do is turn to your birthday month and look at the picture. It doesn't matter which month your birthday is in, you always have the ugliest picture.

Following tradition, I pulled out the *Mueller Record* for May 1954. Of course, it had to be the only one which was dull, dull, dull. The big story, "Ohio Fuels Gas Co. Relocates 10-Inch Pipe with New Mueller Co. Equipment." Smaller stories, "Static Electricity, An Ignition Source" and "Valves Replaced After Fire."

Since May 1954 was dull (it didn't even announce my birth) I turned to the more interesting *Records* for the year and found the first *Main Connections* being published.

The May issue of *Main Connections* was dedicated to the Chattanooga plant but at least it was funnier and told this story:

Wayne Heyer, who left Decatur earlier this year to become plant controller at Chattanooga, is now convinced that Southern Hospitality is everything you hear it is - but he had a shaky start. He tells this story.

On his first day to the city, he parked his car downtown and stepped to the sidewalk. A young cowboy about seven years old took one look at the Illinois license, reached for his water gun, and drew. After grilling Wayne thoroughly, the youngster walked off dejectedly. "Criminy," he said, "Another Yankee."

No doubt you are already a member of the Hieronymus Mueller Museum or you would not be reading this. But if you know of someone who would enjoy receiving this quarterly newsletter, why don't you consider a gift membership?

## Annual Membership Information

### Student/Senior Citizen: \$15

Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

### Regular Membership: \$20

Free admission for member and one guest, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

### Family Membership: \$25

Free admission for member and up to four guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

### \*Support Membership: \$50

Free admission for member and up to four guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

### \*Sponsor Membership: \$100

Free admission for member and up to four guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items.

### \*Patron Membership: \$500

Free admission for member and guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, recognition on museum donor board.

### \*Benefactor Membership: \$1000

Free admission for member and guests, museum newsletter subscription, 10% discount on gift items, recognition on museum donor board.

Please circle the type of membership preferred.

\*A portion of these membership fees are tax deductible.

Please send this form and payment to

**HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM**

61 South Country Club Road  
Decatur, Illinois, 62521  
(217) 423-6161

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\_\_\_\_\_

The Hieronymus Mueller Museum is a privately funded non-profit museum and depends upon donations for its operations.

# New Museum Manager

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It is with much pleasure, gratitude and hope for the future that we welcome Paula Cross as the new manager of the Hieronymus Mueller Museum. As you know, we lost our beloved manager, Nancy Jo Batman, in January, and we are all still recovering from the shock of that passing. During Nancy Jo's recovery from back surgery last summer, Paula stepped in to cover for her. She is a long time friend of Nancy Jo's, and both Paula and her husband, John Arnold, have assisted with various Museum activities through the years. They portrayed Hieronymus and Fredericka two different summers during the well received local cemetery tour sponsored by the Decatur Heritage Network. In addition, Paula has given of her time to various local historical organizations and projects for many years. She is active in the Decatur community and feels, as we all do, that it is important to continue the wonderful work Nancy Jo Batman did here in countless creative ways. We will have a wonderful voice for the Museum in the person of Paula Cross, and we are indeed grateful for her willingness to assume this Museum position at this time.



As a result of the happenings of this winter, the Museum has had some catching up to do. This is our first newsletter since last summer, and our first new temporary exhibit entitled, "Always Something New" opened June 1st. It will take us awhile to be completely back on track, but we are enthusiastic about our future and we hope all of you concur. Come see our new exhibit and meet Paula.

*Jane Mueller*  
*President*  
*Board of Directors*

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*From Main Connections*  
*May 1954*

## George Wilson Retires . . .



George Wilson, a member of our Decatur plant's Shipping Department since October, 1947, was honored by fellow workers on his retirement February 26 when members presented him with a billfold. Assistant Shipping Department Foreman Chuck Girard presents the billfold to Mr. Wilson while members of the department look on.

## Johner Story Continued

Mr. George Fredrick Johner II came to this country from Germany in 1922. He apprenticed with his father in Germany as a blacksmith. Mr. Johner III said his father always knew he had a job with the Mueller company before he left Germany!

Mr. Johner II joined Mueller Co. in 1923. While he worked there, he had a boss who wouldn't let them open the windows in the blacksmith shop even though it got extremely hot. When asked why, the boss said it let germs in. Well, Mr. Johner II was working on some large chisels for the railroad at the time. He "accidentally" bumped into one window and broke it out and then "accidentally" did it again! He and the boss got into a ruckus. Mr. Adolph Mueller heard the commotion and came down to find out what was going on. When he heard the explanation, he made a quick decision, "The windows stay open."

Mr. Johner II worked for Mueller Co. for only three years and then became a farmer. When he left, Mr. Adolph Mueller gave him the anvil, forge, and vise he had used. The company was refitting the blacksmith shop from coal to gas.

The family kept this equipment over the years - the forge is now at the Macon County Historical Society in the blacksmith shop. Mr. Johner III said it was too large to bring to the museum so they donated it to the Historical Society. The anvil and vise are at their son's farm and still being used.

## Volunteer Corner

With great sorrow we learned two of our volunteers, Levi Green and Joanne Jones, have passed away. We extend our sympathy to Levi's wife, Rosella and Joanne's husband, Ben.

Lee and Norma Snoke were in a serious automobile accident. Norma is doing well but at last report, Lee was still in the hospital. We wish him a full recovery.

## Mueller Family News

Mary Elizabeth Kaiser Robison, known as Betty, passed away the end of February. Mrs. Robison was the great-granddaughter of Hieronymus and Fredericka Mueller, the grand daughter of Phillip Mueller, and the daughter of Clara Mueller Kaiser. We extend sympathy to the family.

## New Exhibit!!!

June 1 - September 30, 2003, the Hieronymus Mueller Museum has a new exhibit which features recent acquisitions. The exhibit, titled "**Always Something New**", displays donated items which highlight the diverse historical collection in our archives. The items featured rang from salesman sample windmills to a 1957 baseball schedule/statistics book from the Mueller Co. Employees Credit Union.

## New Staff Member

We have great news! Starting in July we will have a second museum staff member. Jason Butterick, a local history authority, will work Sunday afternoons. We are excited to have someone with Jason's expertise. More about Jason in the summer issue of the Mueller Record.



## Stopping Holdups Old Stuff for Ex-Deputy O.E. Woolley

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"Just a couple of punks who didn't get the job done." That's the way O.E. Woolley, Mueller Co. guard at Plant 4 and a former Macon County deputy sheriff, summed up his opinion of two would-be holdup men who made the mistake of practicing their "trade" while he was around. Woolley personally out-matched two robbers who attempted to hold up a Decatur food market. He just happened to be on hand when the incident occurred. One of the men entered the store, his face covered by a mask and his gun drawn. He ordered the merchant to turn over his money. While the would-be victim opened the cash drawer, Woolley charged the robber and mixed in a scuffle. The second robber entered the store and joined in the fight. Woolley, although 58, gave the two younger men a thorough going over and the fight soon got a little rough for them. One fled through the door. The second followed, but had difficulty getting the door open. At this point, the merchant threw a meat cleaver at the stranded robber. The cleaver missed its mark, and then proved an aid to the men in their escape. The robber picked up the cleaver and used it to hold Woolley back while he opened the door. "I would have worked him over a little more if it hadn't been for the cleaver," Woolley said. "I knew their type. They were afraid to use their guns, but they might resort to use of the cleaver if they got in too tight a jam."

*February 1954*  
*Main Connections*



## Heartland Highways Spotlights Hieronymus Mueller Museum

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Heartland Highways, a program on WEIU TV (Eastern Illinois University - Charleston) visited the Mueller Museum last year and filmed a tour of the museum and short interview with Nancy Jo Batman. The program aired in February of this year. Unfortunately, Decatur doesn't get this station, but we have copies of the video in the museum office if you'd like to see it.

A Champaign gentleman saw the show and drove all the way to Decatur just to see the Mueller car on display. He's an old car buff and was fascinated. Don't tell anyone, but I let him sit in the automobile. When I asked him if he would like to get in the car, his face shown like a kid's on Christmas morning!

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## CarSoup.com

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Have you seen the commercials on TV? It's a nationwide internet used car web site. When you pull up their web site the first thing they ask you to do is pick a geographic area. When you click on Illinois the next page that comes up shows a "vintage" automobile.

Well, CarSoup.com called the Mueller Museum after seeing a picture of the Mueller car on another website and wants to feature the Mueller car on theirs. Neat huh!!

Now all I have to do is get them some photos. I'll let you know when the Mueller car is highlighted.

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## Main Connections May 1954

Five Plant 4 employees whose home towns are observing centennial celebrations this year join in the spirit of the observance by growing beards. The men are, standing, left to right, Everett Riley, Floyd (Curly) Walton and Gus Fyke, all of Niantic, Illinois; and kneeling, left to right, Henry Leipski, Maroa; and Lawrence (Babe) Grider, Niantic.

# Do You Remember?

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◆ 1954 ◆

Mueller Co. started publishing a newspaper in February 1954 along with the Mueller Record. In their first issue was a contest to name the new publication. The winner received a \$25.00 prize. Do you remember the name and winner? Answer: *Main Connections* and the winner was **Dolores Johnson** (secretary to Traffic Manager J.A. Staudt).

◆ **Frank O'Dell**, creator of the Mueller Heat Control System retired December 1, 1954. Mr. O'Dell first joined Mueller Co. in 1914 as a sales representative in the Minnesota territory.

◆ In *Behind the Seens at Plant 1*. in *Main Connections*: "Our congratulations and best wishes to Melvin Whittington and his bride of April 17." The former Melbaline Adams and her new husband had a two week honeymoon in Florida.

◆ **Cal McQuality** is praised for action in Plant 2 fire. Cecil Coffin, Safety Director, said "the fact that Cal McQuality kept his wits about him and immediately turned in the alarm saved the plant from additional losses. As it was, the fire damage was estimated at \$50,000.

◆ A certificate of merit was presented to Mueller Co and to Local 838 U.A.W.-A.F.L. in "grateful recognition of outstanding cooperation and exceptional achievement in the first United Fund Campaign for the health, welfare, and character building services of Decatur and Macon County." A total of \$6,010.10 was contributed by both union and non-union employees at the main plant and headquarters. (**Wonder who gave the 10 cents?**)

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## HIERONYMUS MUELLER MUSEUM

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New Exhibit: "Always Something New"