



**March 2025**

## **HAPPY 137th BIRTHDAY TO BEN HUNT!**

Walter Bernard Hunt, known to all of us as Ben Hunt, was born March 13, 1888. His parents, August and Josephina, lived in the old Town of Greenfield, and his father was employed as a bookkeeper at Allis-Chalmers Company, a manufacturer of heavy machinery in West Allis. Ben claimed that his father was responsible for developing his interest in hobbies.

Ben’s grandmother, Barbara Thoma, retreated during the hot months each summer to

her log cabin near what is now the Sacred Heart School of Theology in Franklin. Ben lived with her whenever he could. She encouraged him to draw, to whittle, to do leather work, and to make the things he wanted instead of buying them. She also told him tales of the early Indians in Wisconsin’s woodlands.

Ben recalled, “I had played Indian with the other kids and read Indian stories like all kids do, but I wasn’t greatly

interested in Indians until Buffalo Bill brought his Wild West Show to our old National Park.”



***Ben with his maternal grandmother, Barbara Thoma, and his mother, Josephina, in 1898***



***Ben’s illustration of his experience of Native American performers at Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in 1900***



***Grandmother’s cabin in 1905 — Ben’s boyhood home during the hot summer months***

## **Storyteller Paul Akert Brings John Muir to Life at February 26 Presentation**

Fully bearded, clothed in well-worn outdoor attire, and carrying a hiker’s walking pole, Paul Akert was the embodiment of naturalist John Muir at HCHS’s first program of 2025. Paul shifted seamlessly throughout his presentation from first-person to third-person narration of Muir’s life and travels in Wisconsin, across the United States, and to every continent except Antarctica.

Paul began his presentation by reading selections from Muir’s journal account of his trek to Alaska to see the glaciers. He then

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### **Attention, HCHS Members**

The proposed slate of nominees for HCHS officers for 2025-27 and HCHS directors for 2025-28 will be sent to you by mail or email. You will be able to respond in the same manner and also by phone. Watch for this important notice during the first week of April.

# Father Kundig, Pastor of St. Mary's Church, Organized the First St. Patrick's Day Parade in Milwaukee

Father Martin Kundig (1805-1879) became pastor of St. Mary's Church in Hales Corners in 1842. At that time, St. Mary's was a mission church, while Holy Assumption in St. Martins was the mother church. In fact, St. Martins was named after Fr. Kundig's patron saint to honor the priest for his service.

Although not of Irish heritage, Fr. Kundig organized the first St. Patrick's Day parade in Milwaukee on March 17, 1843. He worked with Milwaukee officials who wanted to draw attention to Wisconsin, as well as with members of the Catholic Church who wanted an archdiocese placed in Milwaukee.

His efforts were rewarded soon afterward, when Fr. John Martin Henni, a 38-year-old native of Switzerland, was appointed the first Archbishop of Milwaukee on November 28, 1843. Fr. Henni and Fr. Kundig were lifelong friends who continued to work together.

If you want to know more about Fr. Kundig, you can read all about him in *Stuffed Saddlebags: The Life of Martin Kundig, Priest 1805-1879* by Rev. Peter Leo Johnson. Rev. Johnson was a professor of church history at St. Francis Seminary in St. Francis, WI. Fr. Kundig's tombstone can be found on Chapel Hill, facing the chapel in Milwaukee's Calvary Cemetery.



*Father Martin Kundig*



*Archbishop John Martin Henni*



*Father Kundig's tombstone*

## TALES OF THE CORNERS - MARCH From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

### 90 YEARS AGO (1935)

- Governor Phillip La Follette speaks to a crowd of more than 500 residents at the dedication of the new addition to Hales Corners School.

### 80 YEARS AGO (1945)

- The Milwaukee County Parks Commission grants permission to use the Whitnall Park CCC barracks to house German prisoners of war. The captives will be put to work in area canneries.
- Private First Class Norbert Sweeney is awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in action during the recent fighting on Leyte Island in the Philippines.

### 70 YEARS AGO (1955)

- The Hales Corners Village Board opposes proposed

changes in state statutes that would make it easier for towns to incorporate. The Board fears a change could lead to encirclement of the Village, blocking any future expansion.

- Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hintz are the new proprietors of the Hales Corners Hardware store.

### 60 YEARS AGO (1965)

- Rev. Charles W. Hornburg retires as pastor of Whitnall Park Lutheran Church.

### 50 YEARS AGO (1975)

- New telephone subscribers in the area will be assigned numbers starting with 529 prefixes instead of 425. The telephone company is running out of 425 numbers.

## First Hales Corners Library Opened Almost 50 Years Ago

The first Hales Corners Library opened in the former St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church building at Highway 100 and Ridge Road. In March 1975, the property was purchased for \$169,000, with another \$53,000 appropriated for necessary remodeling. The former church was renamed the W. Ben Hunt Memorial Building of Hales Corners and reopened as the Hales Corners Library in January 1976.



*This photo shows the west side of the Library during an Art Fair in 1976. Currently, Confucius House Chinese restaurant stands at that corner on Hwy. 100.*

As always, community involvement was strong. The Hawthorn Garden Club and the new Hales Corners Friends of the Library group received permission to hire a landscape architect to plan the Library grounds. Other community organizations were invited to donate part of the plantings. By 1979, the landscaping was substantially completed and all of the new materials had been donated.



*The W. Ben Hunt Memorial Building was added to the east side of the Library in 1980. The current Hales Corners Library opened in 1984.*



*View from the former church's altar area, 1977*



*Front desk, 1981*



*Interior of the Library, 1981*

(JOHN MUIR: Continued from page 1)

described Muir's early life as a child in Dunbar, Scotland, where his love of nature originated. In 1849, his family emigrated to America and settled near Portage, Wisconsin, on land surrounded by fields of flowers and populated by an abundance of wild creatures.

At age 22, Muir enrolled in the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he took his first botany lesson. In his autobiography 50 years later, Muir wrote, "This fine lesson charmed me and sent me flying to the woods and meadows in wild enthusiasm." After a two-year sojourn in Canada, Muir returned to the U.S. where an industrial accident in 1867



**Paul Akert portrayed John Muir at the HCHS program on Feb. 26.**

nearly blinded him and caused him to consider the real purpose of his life. When he regained his eyesight, he decided

to be true to himself and follow his dream of exploring and studying all facets of the natural world and the wilderness.

Subsequently, Muir remained in near-constant motion, traveling throughout the United States and to Cuba. On his first visit to California, he was overwhelmed by Yosemite's broad vistas, waterfalls, and mountains. His love for the region and strong desire to see it protected led him to become a co-founder and long-time president of the Sierra Club. He also was the driving force behind the creation of the National Park Service. Throughout his life, he was a tireless activist and advocate for the conservation of the Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park.

## WELCOME, NEW\* AND RETURNING 2025 HCHS MEMBERS!

Constance Anderson  
Kenneth J. Augustine  
James Bain  
Nancy Barker\*  
Mary Bennett  
Joan Berg  
Robert Burnham  
& Patricia Laughlin  
Esther Demerdash  
Ronald & Kathleen Dondlinger  
David HB Drake  
George & Diane Edward  
Matthew Eternicka  
Mike & JuDee Fischer  
Robert & Mary Forecki  
Katy Galewski  
Jim Gilboy  
Marsha Hammer  
Jean Hancock  
Jeff Hanewell & Susan Spoerk  
Paul Hapka\*

David & Margarete Harvey  
Duane & Sharon Hause  
Michael Holmes  
Frank & Judith Humpal  
Jeffrey & Mary Javorek  
Mike Jdrzejewski  
& Sybil Grandeck  
Gregory Jenks  
Celine Kashishian  
Bob & Dottie King  
Scott & Judy Kruger  
Romaine Krystowiak  
John & Lynne Litzenberg  
Mary Long  
Walter Nickerson  
Gary Kohls & Karen Niessing  
David O'Brien  
Mike Praedel  
Scott & Maureen Riemer  
Richard & Carol Ann Rose  
Randy Sannes

Mel & Elaine Schmidt  
Don & Suzanne Schwartz  
Joe & Joan Sem  
Nancy Sievert  
Michael Simmons\*  
Marjorie Stahl  
Daniel & Kayellyn Strasburg  
Al & Ruth Strekow  
Linda Teschendorf\*  
Mark Thiel  
Ian Thomson  
Robb & Kathleen Thoren  
Brian & Laura Touhey  
Tom Ueberroth & Delene Hanson  
Patricia Warchol  
Robert & Jeanette Wardinski  
Wimmer Brothers Realty, Inc.\*  
Janice Zeit  
Kathleen Zellmer

*Membership roster  
current as of March 2025.*



## HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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