

Heritage Society display includes made-in-Sandusky tractor and car

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PERKINS TWP. — If you find yourself getting a little tired of the 21st century, step inside the buildings at the fairgrounds run by the Heritage Society of Erie County. You'll get a look at what life was like decades ago. And you'll also see rare objects that would make any museum proud, say members of the society. The society's collection includes a 1917 farm tractor, made in Sandusky by the Jacob Dauch Manufacturing Co. It's believed only three such tractors are left anywhere, said Larry Holkenborg, a founding member of the society.

Dauch Manufacturing also made the 1922 Courier car in the group's collection. Many of the old objects the Heritage Society displays connect to life on the farm. "Agriculture's our first focus," said Ron Cull, president of the Heritage Society, and another founding member when the group began back in 1984.



But the display also has a few memories from the City of Sandusky, too. "We do a lot of work on keeping memories alive of buildings and industry that don't exist anymore," he said. For example, the society displays a gigantic red crayon that's ten feet long and that weighs 332.5 pounds. It's another unique "made in Sandusky" item, from the American Crayon Company.



Perhaps less unusual, but more revealing of how people used to live, is a bed that uses a mattress stuffed with straw, resting on a rope frame. "It's a bed your grandfather might have slept on," Cull said. Comfortable? Well, maybe. If you were tired from working at the farm all day.



Other objects in the collection include a long wooden bench, a relic of a train station that once stood in downtown Sandusky, a collection of salt and pepper shakers, a collection of old cameras, and stacks of old player piano rolls, dating back as early as 1917 and perhaps earlier. There are also old road signs, including one that proclaims, "Clyde, Home of Private Rodger Young, Whose Heroic Deeds Inspired World War II Ballad."

Young, who from Clyde and is buried at McPherson Cemetery there, won the Medal of Honor in World War II. He was remembered in a popular song



available on YouTube, and Wikipedia has an article about the song. The preservation of the vintage sign is a fluke that illustrates how members of the Heritage Society are alert to opportunities. John Schaeffer, 88, a former county commissioner and county recorder, found the sign not in Clyde but floating in the water in a marina in Sandusky. He asked if he could have it, and the man he was talking to agreed. Schaeffer's wife, Alvina, has put together detailed scrapbooks on tractors and other local lore. The couple has a long history of their own. They've been married for 67 years, but John Schaeffer says, "We first met about third grade in Milan School."

The Heritage Society's offerings will be available all through the fair, Aug. 9-14.

This year, the society is making a special effort to keep kids happy when families visit the barn. They can play in a sandbox in which the usual sand has been replaced with kernels of corn, and a rope expert will be on hand to explain how to make rope, Cull said.