

## *Hecker Quasquicentennial*

*That's 125 Years Old!!!*

Saturday, September 4th, 2021

Parade 4 p.m.

Festival 5 p.m.

Presentation 5:30 p.m.

Entertainment

Tim Berg & The Kurtz Family Band

Saloonatics



Hecker's Halley's Concert Band (Left)  
& Hecker Symphony Quintette (Right)

### *Hecker Background - 1815-1894*

Settlers came to the Hecker area as early as 1815. The first known settler was German Henry Null, who settled southeast of the current village limits. The most notable was a settlement just over a mile west of the present village limits. This was an English settlement founded by Thomas Winstanley in 1816. This area was later known as the Winstanley Settlement. St. Augustine of Canterbury Catholic Church was established on this site in 1824. Over time, the site had two churches built there, the first was a log church built in 1824, the second was a stone church built in 1854. A rectory was built in 1862 that also served as the school. Prior to that, the log church was also used as the school. The present-day rectory was built from the salvaged stone from the second church at the Winstanley Settlement.

By the 1830's, many German settlers were arriving in the area. On December 18, 1840, land owned by Theodore Hilgard was laid out and surveyed by the county surveyor, Thomas Singleton. This new town was called Freedom. The first house was built by Jacob Frick in 1849. He operated a general store in the building. In 1850, Henry Gambach, a merchant and barrel maker, decided his space for the store in the Jacob Wagner building, which he originally occupied, was limited, so he built a new store at 110 North Main Street. Other business arriving at this time included a creamery and an implement business that was operated by Theodore Klinkhardt, located at 110 South Main Street. Completing the downtown Freedom square, were two buildings constructed by Mr. Rexroth and Mr. Noll. The Noll and Rexroth buildings were used as saloons during this time. The Noll building is located at 111 North Main Street. The Rexroth building was located at 110 South Main Street. Mail delivery was thought to have begun in Freedom as early as 1835, around the time when the Frick brothers settled in the area. The first known Freedom postmaster was Augustus Rittmeyer serving February 13, 1854, through February 3, 1858.

While there were several small businesses starting to operate at the time, one of the more notable was the Star Flour Mill. This frame structure was built in 1863 by Keho and Thieltges. The mill had a capacity of 80 barrels per day. George Frick purchased the mill in 1864. In 1886, a boiler exploded in The Star Flour Mill and burnt the mill down, which permanently seized operations. This site was located directly across the road from the present-day St. Augustine Church. Other businesses were operated by the following: Jacob Wagner, a civil war veteran, opened a wagon shop in 1864; Henry Diefenbach a shoemaker; 3 Blacksmith shops (Lenhardt Weis, John Grib & Joesph Meyercough); & Henry Reismeyer a harness maker. Jacob Thum came to Freedom in 1864 and built the first two hotels. One hotel, operated by Mr. Diefenbach had seventeen rooms and was also used as a butcher shop.



Slaughter House—1890

The slaughterhouse was located on 131 East Monroe Street, directly behind the Henry Gambach building. Also, the Diefenbach building was used as a dance hall and the first barber shop in Freedom. The first public school, a brick structure, was built in 1865 for \$1,300. On November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1868, the Freedom Cemetery Association bought land from August & Catherine Stehfest for \$150. The Stehfest Cemetery land was laid out on July 6, 1881, and was recorded on March 27, 1885. By the 1880's, Freedom had a Justice & Notary Public named H.J. Frick. Around 1867, the Freedom Library Association was organized. The Library Association then chartered on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1872, and contained about 570 volumes, worth \$2,500. The school served as a multi-purpose facility that housed a worshiping place for the Protestant congrega-

tion. This is where Friedens United Church of Christ originally met after forming on January 11, 1874. Two years prior, The Ladies Aid Society was organized and met in the homes of the members before the church was built. The present Friedens Evangelical Church was built in 1889, with the steeple added in 1895. In 1893, St. Augustine of Canterbury constructed their present-day church in Freedom, this was the third church building with the other two being at the Winstanley Settlement. In 1899, the original public was school abandoned, and a new school was built at the current site of the Hecker Community Center. It was a two story, two room school housing all the grades. The average enrollment through the years was around 25 pupils.



Prior the village incorporating, the postmaster was asked to change the name of the village, as there was already another town in Illinois named Freedom. The people of Freedom had taken a liking to a local Civil War hero from nearby Summerfield, Illinois. Friedrich Hecker, a German patriot, came to the United States, and enlisted in the Civil War at the age of 50. He brought leadership which allowed him to quickly move up the chain of command and become a colonel. He was involved in forming the Illinois Republican Party. After the war, he spent a night in Hecker at one of the hotels. When visiting the citizens of Freedom, he made a lasting impression on the people through his personality, intelligence, and ideas. When it became time for the people to select a new name, "Hecker" was the obvious choice. Colonel Friedrich Hecker died in 1881 and is buried in Summerfield, Illinois.

**Hecker Incorporation - 1895-1940**

As time passed, the citizens of Freedom realized that it was time for further progress and incorporation. With poor infrastructure, such as dirt roads, the people of Freedom sought rock streets and concrete sidewalks. Money for such improvements could be better attained if they incorporated. Throughout this process, they chose Reiss and Reiss, attorneys-at-law, of Red Bud, Illinois to help complete this task. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1895, community leaders presented their petition to the firm of Reiss and Reiss to be filed at the Monroe County Clerk's Office in Waterloo, Illinois. A request was added that the name of the proposed Village would be "Hecker". On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1895, in the town of Freedom, fifty-one votes were cast in favor of changing the village name from Freedom to Hecker, and four opposed the action. The votes were then taken to the Monroe County Clerk's Office and were counted and approved by the proper officials. The Village of Hecker's Articles of Incorporation were officially filed on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1895, at the Monroe County Clerk's Office. Hecker adopted the traditional style of village government with a president and six board members. The new board included, President Henry Gambach Sr., and trustees Henry Heidelberg, Nicholas Joeckel, William Barthel, Henry Diefenbach, Charles D. Boll & A.C. Rexroth.

Following incorporation, the Village purchased two lots and constructed a jail with two iron cells, a tool-house, a deep well, and a hand fire pump and hose were purchased. On March 4, 1905, taxpaying citizens held a meeting to discuss providing some means of fire protection. In May 1905, a new fire engine was purchased from H.R. Howe of Indianapolis, Indiana and was delivered on Sunday, May 14, 1905. Water could now easily be thrown upon the roofs of the highest building in Hecker. A fire brigade was organized to let each know what to do in case of a fire. As time passed, an organized fire department was necessary. On December 14, 1933, the first meeting was held to organize the current Hecker Fire Company. The Farmer's Telephone Company was established on November 7, 1905. John Keller was hired as the switchboard operator, and it was in his home. One year later he resigned, and the switchboard was moved into the Charles Boll residence. His daughter Eliza Boll, worked as the operator for over 50 years and became known as "Aunt Lizzy".

In addition, Hecker was able to improve their streets with rock and construct sidewalks. In 1907, the sidewalks were laid by William Melly of Red Bud, Illinois. In 1912, a Molasses Mill was built by Henry Hill, a short distance east of the current HCC building. In 1913, the State Bank of Hecker opened in the Noll Building (NW corner of Main & Monroe Streets), however due to the depression and a bad investment it became defunct and closed in 1933. In 1901, St. Augustine of Canterbury built a school next to the current church. The school was torn down in 1930 and replaced with a new schoolhouse consisting of four classrooms and a multipurpose



Switchboard Operator "Aunt Lizzy"

room. This building currently operates as the Parish Center. Illinois Light and Power Company lit up Hecker in 1935. Prior to that, part of town had electricity generated by Kammler's Tavern and the other part used kerosene lanterns. Over a twenty-three-year period, until Prohibition (1918), the Village of Hecker never levied any taxes to be used for Village purposes. All expenses for officers and improvements were financed out of revenue from saloon licenses. Leonard Mertz's general store opened in the Gambach building in 1933. As business rapidly grew, the need for a new building existed and was constructed at 140 North Main Street in 1939. The need for expansion also occurred in 1952, when the Diefenbach Hotel building was demolished and an addition to the south was constructed by Leonard and Hilda



Pictured- Hecker Baseball Team in front of Gambach building

Nearby Hecker, north on Rt.159, Nu- Deal Oil company was established in about 1929. In 1936, Lester Gregson joined Nu-Deal-Oil Company as an agent selling to farmers. At the time, it was owned by A.F. Budde. After Budde was killed in a wreck in December 1940, Lester Gregson bought half of the company's interest from Budde's widow. Around 1957, longtime Village President Virgil Gregson bought the other half of the company from Budde's widow. Nu-Deal Oil Company is a third-generation, family-owned business, who is currently operated by Joe Gregson, son of Virgil Gregson. Nu- Deal Oil Company still operates as a full service gasoline and tire service.



Pictured - Lester Gregson  
Nu- Deal Oil Company

**Hecker Growth - 1940-1995**

The Hecker Sportsman's Club was organized on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940. The Sportsman's Club meetings were held in the old schoolhouse (built 1899), until they erected their own building in 1958. The Village was graced with doctors such as Heidelberg, Dinges, Reis, Trappe, and Eckert (Last Doctor-1949). In 1956, the public school was relocated to East Back Street in a two-room schoolhouse that consisted of a kitchen and a large multi-purpose room. In 1970, two additional school rooms were added, along with a front entry way and a principal's office.



Dr. Eckert House—located at 110 East Monroe Street

By 1980 enrollment had dropped to 17 pupils and the Waterloo CUSD closed the school. The building still stands to this date. While the need for homes was increasing in Hecker, the Home Sites Addition was developed (North Park Street, North Orchard Lane, and North Nike Street) in 1951. This development consisted of 26 parcels. Utilities soon became available like natural gas, public water, and public sewer. Water was pumped to the homes and businesses in Hecker beginning in 1956.



Hecker Public School on a snowy day in 1977

This was accomplished by the placement of three wells. Public sewer came to Hecker in 1961, and updates to the treatment plant occurred in 1971 and 1993. In wartime preparation, the Nike Hercules Missile Site was built in 1959 to help defend the St. Louis area from high-level air attack. The site closed in 1969 and has been used a student center since 1972. The former barracks is currently used to house 'Career Center of Southern Illinois' and the missile launch site was purchased for \$227,000 in 2014 by Ron Mertens. These sites are located approximately four miles from Hecker. After the death of Theodore Eicheenseer in 1965, his store, located in the Theodore Klinkhardt building, was purchased by the Hecker Crossroads Inc. Also, Hecker Crossroads Inc. purchased 38.7 acres south of the village limits fronting on the east side of Route 159, and purposed plans included construction of a motel complex, shopping center, and a 64-unit multiple home complex. Ninety percent of the stock of this corporation was held by area residents. This deal apparently fell through prior to construction.



Hecker Crossroads Inc. -1965

In 1970, Basic Industries was founded at 351 South Main Street by John R. Hottenrott. This business continues to operate under the direction of sons, Rick, and Roger Hottenrott. The Eldondale Subdivision was developed by Elmer and Edna Haudrich dating back to 1969. The development consisted of three streets and a total of 48 parcels. Another major development was led by John Donahue in 1976. The Country Village development consisted of six apartment buildings and twelve residential lots. Hecker Jaycee's started printing the "Hecker News" in 1976. Although originally operating out of people's homes, the Hecker Reading Center was housed at the Hecker Public School beginning February 18, 1980. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1985, the Village of Hecker conducted an open house to dedicate the renovations to the Village Hall and the addition of the public library. The library began printing the "Hecker News" and the Hecker Commercial Club, now the Hecker Community Center, sponsored the free paper. In 1978, Hecker abandoned their wells and joined Freeburg & Smithton to form the Freeburg-Smithton-Hecker Water Commission (FSH). Many businesses came to Hecker in this era including the State Bank of New Athens branch in 1983. An old Sinclair service station on South Main Street was retrofitted into a bank. Others included Roy & Betty's Creamy (closed September 1989), Sportsman's Inn, Mavericks Tavern (Formerly the Thum Hotel on Main Street at West Washington demolished in mid-1980's), The New Broom (located at Main Street at East Washington demolished in 2004), and Hecker Commercial Club in 1962. In 1989, longtime Village President, Virgil Gregson, retired after 26 years in office. In 1991, Hecker added the current water tower as well as updated the water mains to provide more capacity and better fire protection. In 1995, Hecker celebrated it's 100-year anniversary. The centennial consisted of a fish fry, craft fair, festival/parade, German cooking contest, firemen's muster, and a special stamp cancelation. Fredrich Hecker's descendants and German Troop were in attendance and participated in the parade. The parade consisting of 82 entries, was held in conjunction with the three-day festival on September 1-3.



In 1961 Joseph Griffin of Hecker completes last joint of new sewer system

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Village Hall before construction



Village Hall during construction

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Centennial Parade



Friedrich Hecker's German Troop



Parade Grand Marshal Hugo Probst

**Recent Years - 1996-2021**

After the New Athens bank branch seized operations in Hecker, Commercial State Bank bought the building on South Main Street and opened a branch in November of 1998. In 2008, Commercial State Bank sold to Midland States Bank, in which they continued to operate the branch until June of 2013. After Midland State Banks seized operation, the Hecker Fire District purchased the building. In 2018, the office space was torn down to create room for the fire department's addition. The Hecker Fire Department moved into their addition/renovation in November of 2019. In August of 2002, the Hecker Post Office moved from the L.D. Mertz building into a newly constructed facility on 140 West Monroe Street. In November of 2002, Friedens United Church of Christ burnt their mortgage. In addition, Hecker Shopping Center closed on November 16th, 2002, after a 26-year run. In May of 2004, the Hecker Police Department seized operations. The final two chiefs of the department Fred Sauerhage and Franklin Kohler. Currently, the Monroe County Sheriff's Department is contracted to patrol the Village. Around the same time, The Freedom Subdivision



The Hecker Post office in 2002, located at 140 North Main Street



Jennifer & Charlie Kujawski in front of Hecker's Police Car in 1990

development was launched, consisting of 19 lots plotted on property previously owned by the Hecker Community Center. The original plans consisted of constructing an additional ball diamond. The contractor was Dennis Brand of Waterloo, Illinois. A few restaurants came into the spotlight starting with Mary's Hecker Sandwich Shop, Honky Tonk Bar & Grill and Back Street Wine & Dine. The Honky Tonk was housed in the Rethrox building and was occupied from 2000-2007, after taking over from Sportsman's Inn. The Honky Tonk tragically burnt in May of 2007. Another vital business in town was The Hecker Country Store, which was housed in the Gambach Building. The store served deli sandwiches, general grocery items, and liquor. The Country Store served as the go-to community gathering spot during its 7-year run. The store closed in November of 2014. In August of 2008, the Village of Hecker hosted the Moving Vietnam Wall at the Hecker Community Center Park. This was quite the honor for a small village, as they received the Governors Hometown 1<sup>st</sup> place award in 2009. In May of 2011, the



Fire Chief Ralph Eckart directs firefighters at the Honky Tonk burn in 2007



The Hecker Country Store

*Hecker News* and the Hecker Public Library ceased operations. The library space was renovated to create a much-needed Village meeting room. Along with this renovation, the Village Park added a restroom facility and another playground set. In 2017, the Village of Hecker purchased the 'Lou' Burkhardt (burned down in 2003) property to create an adequate parking lot and drive through payment box. Also, renovations to the roof and entrance were completed to the Village Hall. In May of 2016, Hecker was graced with the establishment of BackStreet Wine and Dine, serving as a locally owned bar and grill. In October of 2016, the Hecker Feed Service closed permanently after a 60-year run. The Mill is currently operated by Lohrberg Lumber and Alliance Crop Services. In 2020, Basic Industries celebrated their 50-year anniversary.

**Our Celebration - 2020-2021**

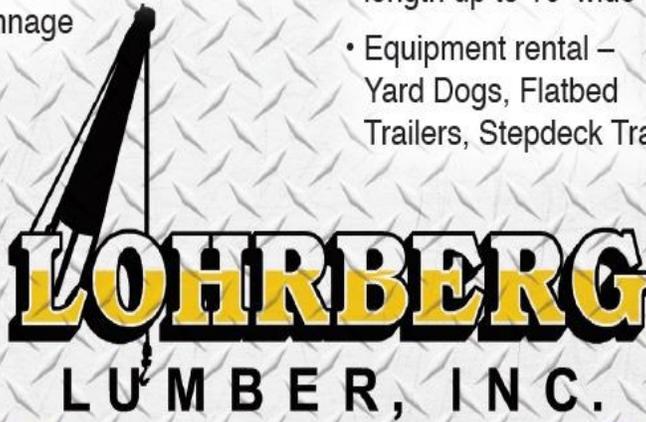
In 2020, the Village of Hecker began its Quasiquicentennial Celebration to help commemorate Hecker's anniversary of incorporation. The first event, a banquet, was held on January 4, 2020, at the Hecker Community Center. This event attracted 450 individuals to help commemorate Hecker's anniversary. The night consisted of a dinner, presentation, and entertainment by *The Three Amigos* and *Kentucky Straight*. A large display of history was available for the guests to view. The next event was a Fish Fry that took place on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Once again, this event was a huge success that gathered 350+ people. The parade and festival was scheduled to be held on September 12, 2020. Sadly, due to COVID-19, the Village's Celebration was cut short. Plans to reschedule the events in 2021 quickly surfaced. On July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a Firemen's Muster took place at BackStreet Wine and Dine in Hecker. The event gathered 150+ people, with 7 local fire departments participating.

The Village of Hecker continues to stive through the adversity of being a lowly populated Village. With the help of dedicated volunteers and town residents, Hecker is still going strong 125 years later. The Village of Hecker will continue to strive for prosperity and what is best for its residents. Hecker is making great strides towards a promising future in the next 125 years. The Village has always been open to new ideas and adapting to the current standards that have been presented. We hope this history rekindles memories of your childhood, or stories that you have been told over the years. We can assure you that we enjoyed writing this history and we hope you enjoy it as much as us!



Former and Current Hecker Officials gather at the Quasiquicentennial Banquet

- Crane Mats up to 40' – Sales & Rental Available
- Transition Mats
- Outrigger mats – with steel plate option
- Buyers of Standing Timber
- Dunnage
- Hardwood Timbers up to 40'
- Piling Oak and softwood available
- Steel Plate Rental ½" - 3" thick 4' - 20' in length up to 10' wide
- Equipment rental – Yard Dogs, Flatbed Trailers, Stepdeck Trailers



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***Lohrberg Lumber -1991***

***Hecker, Illinois***



***Lohrberg Lumber -2021***

***Hecker, Illinois***



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# CONGRATULATIONS

*Village of Hecker - Quasquicentennial*  
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1966 Aerial photo looking north taken from an airplane



2021 Aerial photo looking north taken from a drone.



Left: Installation of Water System in 1956. Right: Hecker Makes Final Payment on Water Works; Smallest Town With Their Own System; Left to right: First Row: Henry Armstutz, Harold Eichenseer, Victor Eichenseer, Charles Isslhardt, Lerter Gregson, Nic Hess, Tom Wilson Second Row: Attorney Sam Pessin, Mayor Aaron Papenberg, Contractor Bud Ingledue, Joseph Griffin



**Keeping History Alive!!!!**

**Congratulations on your  
125th Anniversary from the  
Monroe County  
Bicentennial Committee**





Monroe County Bicentennial co-chairman Mike Kovarik presents a \$1,500 check to the Hecker Quasquicentennial Committee in effort to promote history and raise funds for Hecker's celebration in 2020. Pictured from left, are Arnold Eckart Sr., Mike Kovarik, Aaron Eckart, Village President Charles Kujawski, and HCC President Michael Karban.



Downtown Hecker was shining bright all year long with a beautiful birthday cake portrayed at the Hecker Village Hall. Special thanks to Rich & Ryann Happel for revamping the lighting system and the City of Waterloo for generously letting us borrow the cake.



One of the many attractions in Hecker this year was the large & joyous birthday cake standing tall on Rt.156. Several families gathered to take pictures to help commemorate Hecker's anniversary.



Hecker Village President Charles Kujawski lights the ceremonial cake on New Years Day to kick off Hecker's 125th Anniversary. Pictured celebrating the occasion are Rich & Ryann Happel.

Cheers



to  
125 years

from  
Monroe County  
Retail Liquor Association



Jeff Talbot - President-P.O. Box 97- Hecker, IL 62248

AllianceCropServices@gmail.com

*The American Legion in Hecker, Illinois*

*The Rittmeyer - Rausch Post 572 of the American Legion, Department of Illinois*



"Kammler's Tavern & Hall", Originally "Meng's Tavern", Most Recently "Honky Tonk" Destroyed by fire May of 2007

The Waterloo Republican newspaper of February 25, 1920 reported that "The Returned soldiers of Hecker and immediate vicinity met in Kammler's Hall Sunday and organized an American Legion Post. So far 27 members are enrolled but the membership will be increased shortly as the number of ex-soldiers were not present Sunday. The Post will be known as the Rittmeyer and Rausch Post, American Legion. The following officers were elected: Commander, Jerome A. Meng; Vice Commander, Henry Armstutz; Secretary, Theo Eichenseer; Treasurer, Herbert Stahlheber; Sgt. At Arms, Oscar Rittmeyer; Entertaining Com., Ellmer Kammler, John Mueth, and Emil Werner."

The Rittmeyer - Rausch Post 572 of the American Legion, Department of Illinois, was granted its Post Charter on August 10, 1920. The Post met the required minimum number of members to be granted a charter at that time.

During December of 1920, the Post placed an order for their Colors: an American parade flag and an American Legion Post 572 parade flag. The Post also ordered ten government rifles to be used in parade and ceremonies. The Post received their colors in silk during May of 1921. The flags were affixed to parade staffs and could be mounted in flag stands.

The Post held regular meetings, sponsored social activities, participated in memorial and patriotic events and supported community service activities.

According to the American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana, Rittmeyer - Rausch Post 572 disbanded on September 14, 1924. The reason the Post disbanded is not recorded. The Post was in existence for about four years.

James A. Mertz



Harry and Flosee (Kammler) converse with William Fritsche inside Kammler's Tavern in the 1990s



The first meeting to organize a fire company was held on December 14, 1933 at the barbershop. This meeting took place after a fire consumed a building owned by Philip Braun in July of 1932. Prior to that time the village had a primitive firefighting hand pump trailer however no organized fire company. That trailer was purchased by the village in the early 1920's during prohibition. A fund-raising event involving Oliver Birkner and the Moonlighters played at Hecker's very own Maniers Park (Now part of Eldondale Subdivision), followed by a picnic. An additional \$400 was borrowed. The newly formed fire company got the village to build a new village hall in 1934 and construct 4 4000-gallon underground tanks in different parts of town for fire protection.

The newly formed fire company consisted of Hugo Probst, President; August Frisch, Vice-President; Joseph Griffin, Secretary; Lester Gregson, Treasurer and William Fritsche, Fire Chief.

The initial boundaries of the fire company was just over a nine-mile radius. It included quite rural places such as the Lord's Corner & east of Richland Creek to the Kaskaskia River into rural New Athens.

At first residents paid a \$1.20 per year fire subscriber service fee. The department sent out yearly reminders. No taxes were collected.

The first Hecker Fire Department truck was a 1931 Model A. It had an open cab, a crank siren and 800 feet of leather hose. Several of the volunteer firefighters were mechanics and put it together themselves. That truck remained in service from 1934-1941. In 1941 the department purchased 1941 Ford Pumper built by Central Fire Truck Corporation out of Chicago, IL. It had a Darley 250 GPM rotary pump with a 200-gallon water tank. This being war time, trucks were hard to obtain. The truck was ordered from Feurer Ford of New Athens, IL for Armin D. Reinhardt Construction of New Athens. Mr. Reinhardt let Hecker Fire Department buy that truck and he went to the bottom of the waiting list. It was then driven by firefighters to Chicago to get the fire truck body. Three helmets hung from back of that early truck; the chief had the red one. That 1941 eventually had a second reincarnation as a Maull's BBQ truck and was used by a St. Louis tavern to transport catered food to Busch Stadium boxes. After the Cardinal's won the 1982 World Series the truck was used to bring in closing pitcher Bruce Sutter on the opening day of the 1983 season. The scoreboard acknowledged the truck as a previous Hecker Fire truck during that game and that fire department members were present during the game.



Firefighters with the 41 Ford at Village Hall, from left to right, Henery Armstutz, Fred Fritsche, Louis Armstutz, Aaron Papenberg, Bill Fritsche, Bob Laut, Werner Kommler, Henery Heulsman, Hugo Probst, Lester Gregson & Edwin Wachtel

By 1958 the fire department sought approval from its voters to become the Hecker Fire Protection District. The district was established in 1959 with taxes collected in 1960. The new district collected \$2,735 in 1960 from its property owners for tax year 1959.

In 1963 the district was in need of a larger firehouse so bonds were sold and it was soon constructed. It had 3 bays and a meeting area. In 1965 the Hecker Fire Protection District ordered its first new truck after forming the district, which cost \$17,000. This was their first automatic truck. It was a 1965 Chevy built by Towers Fire Apparatus of Freeburg, IL. Many fire department members were truck drivers by trade, and their advice (including input from Raymond Braun), was to "Get an automatic transmission with Posi traction". Fire Trustee Willard Probst said we should get an automatic transmission because one day not everyone will know how to drive a manual shift truck. This advice paid off in its early years as it made it up a hill in icy conditions when other department's trucks had slid off the side of the road.



1965 Chevy Pumper

By 1971 they needed to add a back addition to the new house, so another 3 bays were added on the north side off the building. A used truck purchased from New Athens Fire Department was soon acquired. Another used truck was purchased from the Columbia Fire Department, It was a 1949 REO Speedwagon with a rescue body on it. In 1983 an old Harrisonville Telephone truck chassis was purchased from Nobbe Chevrolet in Waterloo, IL. That chassis and the rescue body off of the REO were restored and put into service.

In 1978 the department purchased a brush truck, a 1978 Chevy 4x4 pickup especially suited by Towers Fire Apparatus to fight field fires. Another innovation was the purchase of the first set of "Jaws of Life" in 1989. The fire district paid half, and the volunteer firefighters donated the rest from the "dance fund" profits. Hecker was one of the first fire departments in the area to carry "jaws of Life" so they were routinely called to assist other departments.

Firefighters again gave their time and talents in 1989 to convert an old milk truck into a water tender, a tanker truck. This was necessary for rural locations which had no access to fire hydrants. The tank on the truck held 2500 gallons of water. It took six



1977 Chevy Firefighter Built Tanker

months of working evenings and weekends to build it. As always, the volunteers didn't give it a second thought, it needed to be done, and they did it. Later firefighting equipment purchased new includes a 1990 Ford/Towers Pumper, a 1999 Freightliner/Pierce Rescue-Pumper and a 2009 Spartan/Crimson Pumper-tanker.

In the early days, you called the fire department by telephoning, Greenwood 3-2211 latter 473-2211 which rang phones at the firefighters' homes and places of business. The store and the chief's house also had a button that would blow the siren at the firehouse alerting those firefighters outside that there was a fire call. 1 long blast was for an in-town fire and 3 short blasts was an out-of-town fire call. By 1992 both St.

Clair and Monroe Counties had established 911 service and the fire phone system was shut down and radio pagers were used to notify the firefighters. While technology has advanced similar pagers are still used today with additional notifications including a smartphone app that provides mapping details and response data.

Monroe County Ambulance Service placed a BLS ambulance in service at the Hecker Fire Station in 1993 thanks to the dedication of 17 volunteer EMT's from the community. By 2006 that roster was down to 4 EMT's and it was no longer feasible to man an ambulance in Hecker. The fire department volunteers again stepped up to the plate to fix the problem. To better serve the community, a first responder service was added. While First Responders are much more limited in the type of medical procedures they can perform as compared to paramedics, they quickly arrive on the scene and can check vitals, give oxygen, use an AED, preform CPR and much more until an ambulance arrives. They transfer care to Monroe County, Millstadt, New Athens and Medstar ambulance services. Over ¾ of the department volunteered to take the first responder training. The fire company with the help off fund raisers such as the BBQ and the Trivia Night purchased and retrofitted a 1999 Chevy Suburban to be our first responder vehicle. In addition to the vehicle, the fire company also purchased all of the required EMS equipment. In 2012 that vehicle was replaced by the district with a 2012 Ford rescue truck which is in service today.

In 2019 the district was again in need of expanding. The station and the addition had bay doors only 10 feet high. The last two trucks had to be precisely specified and custom built to fit in the building.

In addition to height the length of the bays was not adequate for modern fire apparatus. The district with the support of Schneider Designs of Waterloo entered into a contract with Shores Builders of Centralia to add on to the existing facility and renovate the existing space into a classroom. The new facility can now accommodate trucks up to 14 feet tall and 50 feet long and has a training classroom that can seat up to 50 people.



1941 Ford & 1965 Chevy at New Firehouse



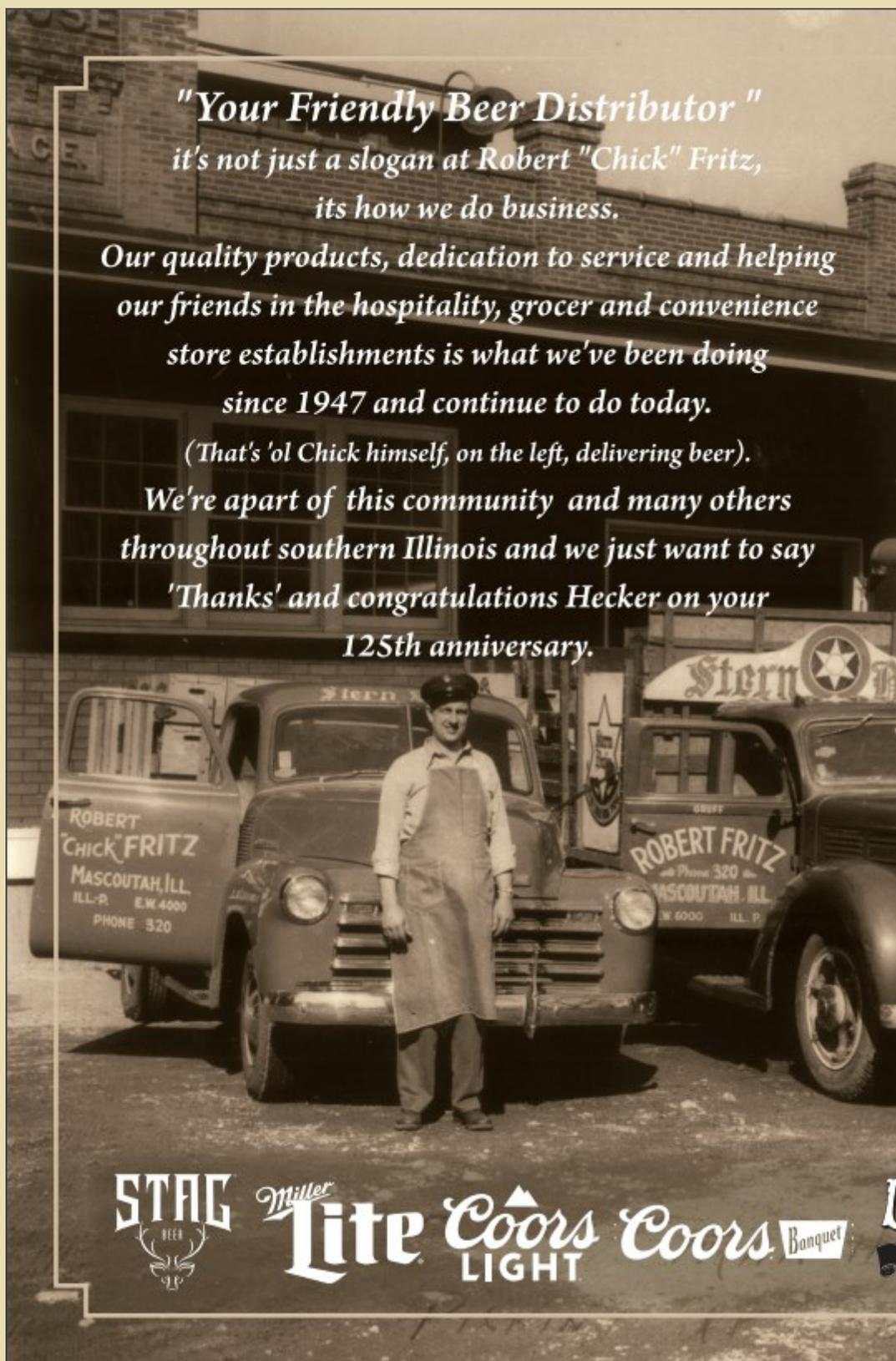
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*We're apart of this community and many others  
throughout southern Illinois and we just want to say  
'Thanks' and congratulations Hecker on your  
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Hecker, Illinois

Est. 1940

The advertisement for The Gilded Lily is a collage. On the left, there are two vertical panels of decorative floral arrangements: one with dried, golden-brown branches and another with a mix of dried leaves and berries. The central part of the ad is a photograph of the storefront of The Gilded Lily, showing a sign with the shop's name and a window display. To the right of the storefront, the text "HAPPY 125TH" is written in a large, thin, black, sans-serif font. Below this, a small orange banner contains the text "small businesses support small towns". At the bottom right, there is another decorative floral arrangement and the contact information for the shop.

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small businesses support small towns

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*Happy 125th Anniversary!*

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Arnold, Angie, Arnie, and Aaron Eckart



## Saint Augustine of Canterbury

### Hecker, Illinois



Newly Constructed  
St. Augustine Church



St. Augustine Students participate in the 1988  
Presidential election

1833 to 1838, Father Vital van Cloostere of Prairie du Rocher said Mass once a month in the log church. On March 5th, 1834, a grant of sixty acres in Monroe and St. Clair counties was made to Bishop Rosati of St. Louis, from Edward and Mary Newsham and John and Catherine Winstanley, to be used sole and forever for St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish. A new stone church was completed in 1837 and consecrated by Bishop Rosati on November 11, 1838. It is reported to be the first consecrated church in Illinois. Even though there was a position from some of the parishioners, a third stone church was built in the village of Hecker, then known as Freedom, a few miles east of the Winstanley Settlement. The church was dedicated by Bishop John Janssen of Belleville on October 14, 1894. It is the current parish church which pastors and parishioners have continued to maintain and update to provide a place of worship. The importance of education of the parish children in the Catholic faith can be seen in the energy expended on providing Catholic schools in the parish. From the old log church, to a brick school at the Winstanley Settlement, two school buildings in Hecker, the last of which was dedicated by Bishop Althoff in 1930, St. Au-



Around 45 students attended St. Augustine in 1997

gustine's parishioners have shown their continuing dedication to Catholic education. For many years, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ staffed St. Augustine of Canterbury School. Even though the school closed in 1997, St. Augustine parishioners continue to work together to raise funds to support the area Catholic schools in which Hecker children are educated. Saint August Parish has been blessed with six vocations to the priesthood and three men have professed their vows as religious brothers. Twenty-one women of the parish have become sisters, with the most recent being Sarah Harbaugh who professed her vows on August 8th, 2020. Msgr. Donald Eichenseer credits his parents, teachers and his pastor, Rev. Joseph Frey, who was a role model for him. Brother Tom Ruhmann OMI, was inspired by his teacher, Sister Marjaleen, PHJC and will celebrate his Fifty Year Jubilee in September 2020. St. Augustine Parish has had thirty-five pastors and administrators. The most recent pastor, Father Von Deeke, just completed ten years in Hecker before being transferred to St. Joseph Freeburg & St. Agatha New Athens parishes. St. Augustine Parish today continues to worship God and to educate children in the faith as their forefathers did. The parish reaches out in service through the community through the Hecker Emergency Fund, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and House of Neighborly Service.



Rev. Ralph Haas, left, presents a hand carved clock to Bishop James Keleher when the Bishop visited St. Augustine for confirmation. The clock, made by Fr. Haas, was a gift from the confirmation class. At right is Virgil Gregson, mayor of Hecker, who presented the Bishop with a key to the Village of Hecker.



The Hecker Sportsman's Club is a proud part of the Village of Hecker and the surrounding area. Congratulations to the Village of Hecker on their 125 year anniversary! We look forward to celebrating many more milestones in the years to come.

### ***About the Hecker Sportsman's Club***

#### ***Meet the Board***

**President** - Rodney Rausch

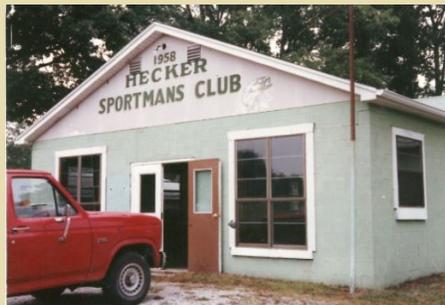
**Vice President** - Gary Rist

**Secretary** - Jerry Mollet

**Treasurer** - Arnold Eckart

The Hecker Sportsman's Club was established on June 1st, 1940. The Charter Officers were as following: President - William Braun, 1st Vice President - Lou Mueth, 2nd Vice President - Elmer Parker, Secretary - Vincent Klein, Treasurer - Victor Papenberg. In 1958, land was purchased and the building was erected. The club was organized for preservation of wildlife. The Hecker Sportsman's Club has held countless events over the years such as Spring & Fall Festivals, turkey shoots, fishing derby's, and volleyball tournaments. Most importantly, the Sportsman's club has served its members to lifelong memories and enjoyable moments with family & friends.

Currently, the Hecker Sportsman's Club has 80 members. The Sportsman's Club has many perks to offer such as a rental hall, a 2.5 acre lake, a sand volleyball court, and many outdoor seating and gathering areas. If you are interested in becoming a member please contact Gary Rist at 618-792-8665



Hecker Sportsman's Club - 1990s

*A Happy 125th Birthday from the Eckart's!*

*Edmund and Esther Eckart*

*Ralph, Jeannie, Mary, Eddie, Marvin, Geri , Lori, Arnold, Theresa  
& FAMILY!*



*Basic Industries Inc. Division of the Hottenrott Company*

Basic Industries, a tool and machine shop, was founded in 1970 by John R. Hottenrott. The building was formerly known as Jim Miller's garage. At the present time, Basic Industries are builders of precision industrial and printing rollers and special machinery. In 1968, when the building was purchased, it totaled 1,800 square feet. In 1975, an addition was built on the south side of the business, which increased the size by 1,080 square feet. An expansion of 2,400 square feet was added in 1982. This was to the rear portion of the existing building. In 1993, a brick addition was added to the front of the building to provide office space. Over the years, the business has grown from the original 1,800 square feet building to its present day 6,336 square feet building. Currently, the company has 7 employees and is under the direction of Roger & Rick Hottenrott. Basic Industries recently celebrated 50 years of business in 2020.



1968



1975



1993

## ***Hecker Community Center***

Chartered: April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1962

Originally chartered as Hecker Commercial Club this organization has been a staple of Hecker hosting countless events from dances, concerts, weddings and social gatherings of all types. Having survived both tragedy and the test of time it will continue to be a part of this great community of Hecker.

The organization got its beginning from a collection of Hecker citizens who collectively held a meeting at the Hecker Village Hall to charter the club back in April 1962.

The following individuals were the first officers of the club:

***President:*** Harold Eichenseer

***Vice President:*** Melvin Wagner

***Secretary:*** Clem Parker

***Treasurer:*** Charles Cameron

***Board of Directors:*** Leonard Mertz, Victor Papenberg, Joseph Wittenauer

***Agent for 1 year:*** Ray Braun

Continued are a few of the many historical notes concerning the hall:

- First piece of property acquired from Leonard Mertz in Fall 1962 for \$5,000
- Additional property purchased February 1963 from Warren Weaver for \$4,360
- July 12 & 13 1963 saw the first pavilion shelter constructed
- February 1965 the hall coordinated with the school board for the purchase of property for a ball park. Cost to the hall was \$670
- Fall 1967 a concrete slab was poured by shelter pavilion to serve as a dance floor.
- In February 1970 two plans for a new building were put out for bids. A committee chaired by Dale Papenberg oversaw the project. Plan A called for a 50x64 building with basement. Plan B, which is what was accepted, called for a 60x80 building without a basement at a constructed cost of \$26,000.
- May 1973 saw a 50x64 addition to this building for \$32,500.
- In May 1976 the current ballpark and concession stand were constructed hosting countless events to date.

- Tragedy: In May 1979 the building was destroyed due to a gas leak which lead to a violent explosion. Thankfully there was no loss of life and the community rallied to rebuild the venue to the bigger and better facility which stands today. Ambrose Harbaugh escaped serious injury as he was exiting the hall as it exploded.
- Three state horseshoe tournaments were hosted in the years of 1981, 1983, and 1990.



- Claiming one of the largest dance floors in southern IL and seating for 550 it is quite the community accomplishment.
- October 2014 the Club celebrated it's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Butch's Polka Kings and Freefall played to help celebrate the occasion.



Current Hecker Community Center Building - 2021



Current Pavilion – Frame of Old Community Center



HCC Building Construction - August 19th, 1979



Current HCC Ballpark

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## ***Friedens United Church of Christ***

### ***Hecker, Illinois***

Friedens United Church of Christ was founded January 11, 1874. Founding members met at the Freedom School House in Freedom, Illinois, the village we now know as Hecker. The original Kirchen Verstand (Church Elders) were Kilian Rexroth, Jacob Spalt, and Leonard Kunkelmann who were elected at this founding meeting. The congregation also adopted its corporate name, Friedens (Peace) Gemeinde (Community or Congregation). Earliest worship services were held in the schoolhouse. The Frauen Verein (Women's Association) that was formed fifteen months earlier met in the homes of its members. In 1889, fifteen years after the establishment of the congregation, the church building was erected. From that time on members met in the present church building. In its early years the congregation was affiliated with St. Marcus Church of Round Prairie, Emmanuel Church of Herr Gotts Eck (Lord's Corner) and St. Paul Church, Floraville. Friedens Church has also been affiliated with St. Paul Church, Waterloo and St. Paul Church, Freeburg. The first confirmand, Julius Frick, was confirmed at St. Marcus Church in 1877. The first class confirmed at Freedom was in 1884. The members were: Caroline Wagner, Auguste Rausch, Maria Sturtzum, Anna Koenigstein, George Birkner, Heinrich Hoereth, and Adolph Spalt. The church has undergone various transitions throughout its history. Originally, Friedens Gemeinde had a Lutheran affiliation. However, in a short time it became affiliated with the Evangelical Synod of North America and became known as Friedens Evangelical Church. In 1934, the Evangelical Synod of North America merged with the Reformed Church in the United States to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Friedens Church became known as Friedens Evangelical and Reformed Church. Today, the official name of the church is Friedens United Church of Christ, as a result of the merger of the Evangelical and Reformed Churches with the Congregational Christian Churches in 1957. The church property, which faces Monroe Street in Hecker, has been improved many times through the commitment of its members. The present church was built in 1889. A steeple was added to the church in 1895. The Fellowship Hall, which was a barracks from the Scott Air Force site was moved on to the newly constructed basement foundation. A parsonage was built as a residence for their ministers and dedicated June 3, 1956. The interior of the church was renovated in 1973 in time for the centennial celebration in 1974. In 1987 the church hall was improved and joined to the church with the addition of an office between the two buildings. In the early 1990s the interior of the church sanctuary was again renovated. The most recent improvement was a handicapped accessible ramp and bathroom addition, dedicated November 7, 1999. Friedens has been served by more than thirty settled pastors throughout its history. The church has been closely connected with other area United Church of Christ churches and has periodically shared pastors with them. Students and professors from Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri have served as worship leaders. Other pastors from the Illinois South Conference of the United of Christ have also served Friedens. The current pastor is Rev. Ivan Horn. Although Friedens has historically been a smaller membership church of the Illinois South Conference, the spirit of fellowship, responsibility and love has helped to magnify its presence. Friedens has been a constant faithful supporter of our denominational relationships through its history and presently the Illinois South Conference and the United Church of Christ. Its members often grew up together and developed a strong commitment to one another and their church family. New members moving to the area have added to the diversity and strength of the church. Special services, which have come to symbolize the spirit of Friedens, include an Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service with St. Augustine Catholic Church in Hecker. Friedens Christmas Eve Candlelight Services were added in 1970. Friedens was recognized by the Illinois South Conference on October 25, 2019 for its ministry of 145 years.



Original steeple damaged by a storm on January 29, 1909

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## *The L.D. Mertz General Store Hecker, Illinois*

Leonard D. "L.D." Mertz and his wife, Hilda R. (Wilhelms) Mertz owned and operated a general store in Hecker for forty-three years. Leonard came to Hecker from his father's farm just north of Floraville to operate a general store in the former Gambach Store building (110 North Main



Gambach Building



Street) in the northeast corner of the intersection of North Main Street and East Monroe Street during 1933. It was in Hecker that he met and later married Hilda Wilhelms who was from Waterloo,



Pictured in Gambach Building from left - Henry Armstutz, Oliver Birkenner, Agnes Wittenauer, L.D. Mertz

Illinois and was employed as a teacher at the Hecker public school. At that time, married female teachers could no longer teach and Hilda had to resign from her teaching position when she and Leonard were married. After resigning, she became Leonard's partner in the operation and administration of the store.

At the time Leonard and Hilda started their general store careers, there were two full line general stores in Hecker.

Anton Eichenseer operated the former Boll & Hoereth Store in the southwest quadrant of the South Main and West Monroe Streets intersection, catty-corner from the Gambach Store building. It would later be owned and operated by Theodore "Ted" Eichenseer as a "Tom Boy" franchise store.



Mertz's New Building - 1939

In 1939 the Mertz's built a new store building just north of the Gambach building at 140 North Main Street and moved their general store business to that location operating as a "Clover Farm Stores" franchise. The store building was a "shotgun" style masonry 27' X 60' structure consisting of a single ground floor sales room and a full basement.



Mertz's Clover Farm Store- 1952

In about 1952, the original store was in need of additional space and the structure was added to by completion of display, sales, and warehousing space as well as a residence, all under one roof.

In October of 1976, the Mertz's retired from the grocery business and operation and management of the store continued as the "The Hecker Shopping Center", an AG (Associated Grocers) franchise under Larry Schaltenbrand, Jr's direction.

James A. Mertz



DAVID STELLHORN

ANDY SCHILLING

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## *Hecker Shopping Center Inc.*

Hecker Shopping Center, Inc. was established November 1, 1976 by Larry Schaltenbrand, Jr. Located at 140 North Main Street, in the middle of the village, the store was previously known as "Mertz Shopping Center" or "Mertz Clover Farm Store" for 43 years. The store was purchased in October, 1976 from Leonard and Hilda Mertz. Hecker Shopping Center continued the 'Mertz tradition' of offering groceries, a full service meat counter, hardware, paint supplies and window & screen service. Several years later the store started opening on Sundays, expanding to include liquor, video rentals, and lottery tickets to accommodate the needs of the customers. Homemade deli sandwiches became a favorite for locals at lunchtime or those passing through town. In advance of personal charge cards, an in-house charge system was offered to allow family members to charge purchases to their account and clear it on a monthly basis. All parts of the operation were conducted to fulfill the company's motto '*For all your needs*', including delivery to a customer's door.

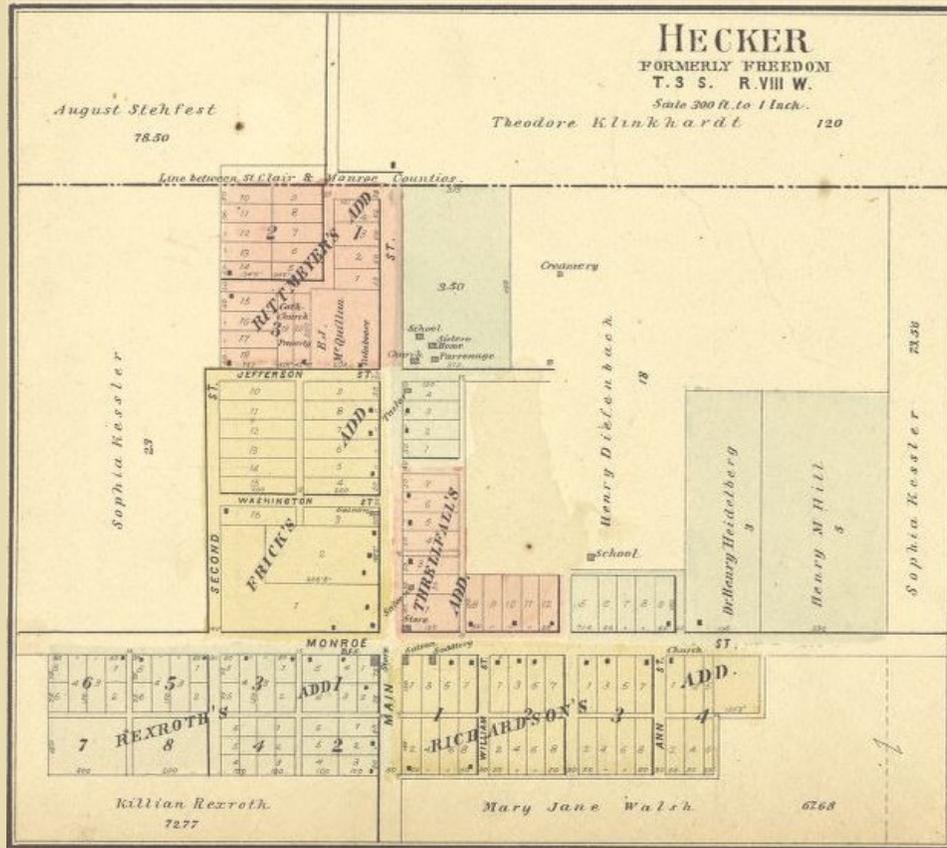
In 1987, Lori (Eckart) Amann and Arnold Eckart became partners of Hecker Shopping Center Inc. with Larry & Mary Schaltenbrand, continuing the tradition of family ownership.

Ultimately, each of the owners moved on to new careers while continuing to operate the store. Hecker Shopping Center, Inc. was advertised for sale in 2002. Sadly, due to lack of interest to purchase the store, it was then closed. The last day of business for Hecker Shopping Center was November 16th, 2002. On December 1st, there was a public auction to sell the inventory and equipment. Hecker Shopping Center served as the only full service grocery store in Hecker over its 26 year run. The store was also the last full service grocery store Hecker has seen to this date.

Over the years, Hecker Shopping Center served as the go-to community gathering spot for Village residents. The store provided countless memories among its residents. The Village thanks the dedicated families who made this place an asset in our Village for many years.



Left: Hecker Shopping Center owners Larry & Mary Schaltenbrand, Lori Amann & Arnold Eckart gather at the Hecker 125th Banquet on January 4, 2020. Right: Hecker Shopping Center street view in early 1980's



Page from 1905 Monroe County Atlas



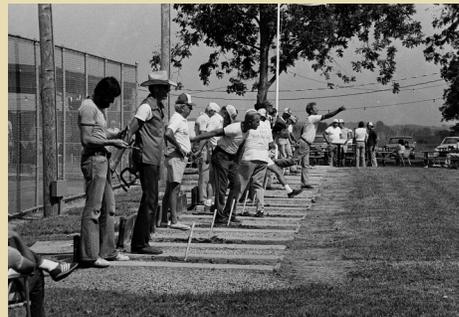
Hecker Pee-Wee & Bantam Teams-1984 Season



Hecker resident & local historian Hilda Mertz (Left) and Hecker Mayor Virgil Gregson (Right), speak with several newspapers in preparation for Hecker to become the designated population center of the United States (1970). Sadly, preliminary data was misleading to the people of Hecker and nearby Mascoutah, Illinois ended up holding the title.



Hecker Pacers Softball State Champions, August 8, 1979



Hecker hosted three state horseshoe tournaments over a decade, including 1981, 1983 & 1990