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# Historical Society sees facility as underutilized link to community's past

The Saukville Area Historical Society's Crossroads Museum has undergone a lot of changes since it served as the Saukville fire station, but it was in part the building's colorful past that attracted a local family for a reunion.

The Doppel family gathering was held on a recent Sunday afternoon at the museum on North Mill Street.

The setting was appropriate not only for its collection of historical artifacts that gave a feeling of authenticity to the reunion, but also because the life and death of one of the family's ancestors — former Saukville resident Phillip Doppel — is closely linked to the landmark.

Doppel operated a blacksmith shop across the street from the old fire station, which was built in 1912.

He died in the early 1920s from injuries he sustained from a fall while working on the fire department's bell tower.

The brick building was used as the fire station until 1962. The Historical Society acquired the building from the village in 1998, and began the process of converting it into a community museum.

In appreciation for being allowed to use the museum for the reunion, the family presented the Historical Society with a copy of the book recounting its history.

"We are excited to be able to do something like this," Historical Society President Anne Kertscher said.

"This is really what we are all about, helping people get in touch with their local roots. We've all done research on family trees and realize how frustrating it can be when you can't find the resources you need."

Kertscher said the Historical Society has accumulated a wealth of documents and artifacts that could provide the keys to countless family mysteries.

The group is in the process of having its records preserved by a professional archivist, which she said will be appreciated by any family researcher.

“Over the past six or seven years we have found a lot of our energies have been tied up with getting the museum to where we want it to be, but now we want to get back to being more on task,” Kertscher said.

Image Information: THE DESCENDANTS OF Saukville resident Phillip Doppel gathered at the Saukville Area Historical Society’s Crossroads Museum recently for a family reunion. Family members included (front row, from left) Jan Rathgeber, Patty and Al Tomaszewski, Betty Jane and Joe Hamm, (back row) Mary and Jerry Lorenz, Tom Mahieu, Eric Rathgeber, and Carol and Paul Jushka. The Society makes the museum available for events that benefit from a historical ambiance. Photo by Sam Arendt