



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

Herman Dinkler. Neighbor. Artist. German Spy?

Written and edited by Carol Wentz

Mary Maurer probably got more than she bargained for when she hired her neighbor, Herman Dinkler, to paint the walls and ceiling in her bathroom. When she inspected the room after he was finished, she found naked cupids on the ceiling of the room. This was certainly not acceptable for a farmhouse near Kettlersville back in the day. No one is sure how the cupids disappeared, but someone painted over them soon after they were finished.

Herman Dinkler was born in Heldburg, Germany in 1875. The artist left Bremen, Germany in 1921 for Argentina, and arrived in the United States the following year. He was 47 years old at that time. While the records at the Department of Immigration and Naturalization show that his wife Rose and son Otto came through New York City from Argentina in 1922, no such records exist for Herman. It is possible that he entered the United States through Canada to avoid immigration officials. It is also possible that the records of his entry through New York City were somehow lost.

In the years following World War I, new immigrants from Germany had to have a sponsor who would essentially

be responsible for a new immigrant. The Bartenstein family who lived near Kettlersville had origins in Heldburg and knew the Dinklers. They agreed to sponsor the Dinkler family.

After Herman arrived in America, he made his way to Kettlersville and took up residence with the Bartensteins. There is no record of where his wife and son lived during this time. At any rate, the living arrangement with the Bartensteins only lasted six months. There were serious disagreements between Herman Dinkler and his sponsors which led to the Bartensteins finally kicking Herman out of their house.

The Quellhorst family from Kettlersville then hired Dinkler to care for a sick family member in exchange for his room and board. Apparently, things didn't go well for the painter with this family either. Shelby County court records show that Herman Dinkler sued William Quellhorst for damaging his reputation as a nurse after the death of William's brother, Henry. Mr. Quellhorst



Ascension of Christ painting by Herman Dinkler which still hangs in Immanuel Church in Kettlersville

New Lifetime Membership:

Dave and Lee Bell

New Yearly Family Membership:

David and Donna Meyer

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Herman Dinkler's mural painting of the crucifixion located at the front of Immanuel Church in Kettlersville

accused Dinkler of basically poisoning his brother (Quellhorst did later retract some of his statements). The lawsuit dragged on for over a year but was finally settled out of court and off the record. However, Herman Dinkler did become known in the Kettlersville area as a very difficult and odd person with an explosive temper.

Eventually, Herman ended up purchasing a 40 acre farm at the intersection of Amsterdam and Lucas-Geib Roads. By this time his wife Rose and son Otto had joined him. This is where Herman Dinkler lived while he was making his living as a painter. His odd ways continued to be a topic of conversation in the Kettlersville area. One neighbor remembered that during a fire at the Dinkler house, the firemen would throw Herman out one opening in the house, and he would go back inside through another opening. This happened multiple times until the firemen finally had to restrain him.

Dinkler painted in churches and homes in the area and also as far away as Dayton and Cincinnati. Sometimes he employed a crew with as many as five workers but usually worked in private homes with just one local assistant, Marvin Sollmann. Dinkler's helpers would paint the walls, and he would add the artwork afterward.

Three of Herman Dinkler's works still exist at Immanuel Church in Kettlersville. His painting of Christ's ascension into heaven hangs on a wall above the main part of the church, while a mural he painted of the crucifixion sits inside an arch near the organ. Originally, another mural of the birth of Jesus filled the corresponding arch on the other side of the church. It was removed when church remodeling took place in the 1950's.

Another unfinished painting was stored in the bell tower of the church for years until the church members made the decision to employ another artist to finish the work showing Jesus preaching to the crowds.

Herman Dinkler lived and worked as an artist in the Kettlersville area until he was 63 years old. It was 1938 and near the start of World War II Dinkler made an odd exit from the United States. Without a word to anyone, he sold his farm and livestock and moved back to Germany. With the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party at that time, tensions and suspicions in the world were running high. Herman Dinkler's unpredictable and unusual behavior in the years he lived near Kettlersville made him an easy target for all kinds of unverified spy stories after he was gone.

It was rumored that Dinkler's artistic ability was, in fact, used for much more than painting murals in churches and houses. Supposedly, he was working undercover sketching factories, roads, and bridges in the area from Holgate, Ohio in the north to Cincinnati in the south. These sketches could then provide information for the German army if they invaded the United States at some point. Of course, none of these rumors have ever been found to be true. But the German spy legend continued to be told for many years around our area.



Painting found in the bell tower at Immanuel Church. Herman Dinkler never finished this painting, but the church hired someone to take it to completion. It hangs above the north door of the sanctuary.

The last anyone ever heard about Herman Dinkler was when FBI agents showed up at the Anna Post Office to question Marvin Sollmann about him. By that time Sollmann, Dinkler's former assistant, was working for the postal service. Apparently, nothing came of that because it was really the last anyone heard of Herman Dinkler.

Years later, his grandson provided information that Herman Dinkler did, in fact, return to Germany and died there in 1952. However, the unsubstantiated German spy stories continue to this day. And as we all know, Americans seem to love a good conspiracy theory.

New Displays in Place at the Packer Historical Center

Items from the archives at the Packer Center have recently been brought out of storage and arranged into two new interesting displays featuring the 1950's in the front display room and a military display in the middle display room. The museum will be open on **Sunday, August 2 from 1-3pm** and also on **Sunday, September 6 from 1-3 pm**. Additionally, the ADHS will be participating in the **Shelby County Open House Tour** when all the county museums will be open from 1-4pm on **Sunday, September 13th**. Refreshments will be provided on that particular Sunday.



Military uniforms and many other related items



50's display including
a poodle skirt, 45's, and soda fountain table

Please Consider Giving Us Some Help!

Currently, we have too few hands trying to cover too many bases in the Anna District Historical Society. Without committing to another meeting night, we are asking for several other members to help with some specific tasks that can be done from home:

ADHS Website Updating

Membership

Hometown Hero Banners

Event Planning

Newsletter Articles

Please call either Carol Carity (937.394.3581) or Carol Wentz (419.234.1344) if you are interested in helping us out.

Anna District Historical Society

112 West Main St.

P.O. Box 133

Anna, OH 45302

POSTAL CUSTOMER
ANNA, OH 45302



Anna's town baseball team back in the day

The Anna District Historical Society
Packer Historical Center
112 W. Main Street, P.O. Box 133
Anna, Ohio 45302
Website: adhs-oh.org

**To schedule a private tour of the
Packer Historical Center, call ADHS
President Carol Carity at
937-394-3581.**

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ANNA DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 133, Anna, Ohio 4530

Attention: Susan Bertsch