

# Culver History Quarterly

The Antiquarian and Historical Society of Culver

P.O. Box 125 Culver, IN 46511 www.culverhistory.com

This publication of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Culver appears quarterly in these pages as part of a partnership between the AHS and the Culver Citizen / Pilot News Group, which also includes the monthly "Culver History Corner," also in the pages of the Culver Citizen.

## Museum Committee proposes Culver Museum and Visitor's Center

The Museum Committee has been hard at work this fall, planning for the Center for Culver History's future. The Committee was formed after the town-wide meeting hosted in conjunction with the Indiana Historical Society last fall, with a mission to research possible locations for the museum upon vacating the library in Fall 2013.

At a museum retreat meeting last November, committee members brainstormed ideas about what various visitors to the museum might be like to see. After discussing Culver history from the perspective of the various communities of Culver, members noted that the interest of the tourists and visitors closely overlaps with the mission of the history museum.

At the February Culver Chamber of Commerce meeting, Museum Committee Chairman George Duncan unveiled the committee's idea to open the new museum as a Visitors Center and Museum, noting the many crossovers

between museums and visitor's centers. He cited examples of other Museum/ Visitors Centers and noted that the Visitors Centers have more grant opportunities than museums.

Museum Director Rachel Meade suggested several upcoming museum projects that fit in with the Visitor's Center vision, including a proposed walking tour brochure and map showing walkable areas of town and the Academy along with historic information about current and former buildings.

The Museum Committee's Julie Hollowell, an anthropologist, is heading up a committee for the potential Indiana Landmarks grant project, along with Culver Academies' Dana Neer, and historic preservation expert Kurt Garner. Those present expressed interest in the idea, suggesting possible collaborations and locations.

## Center hosts 'In Your Neighborhood'

On March 7, the museum committee will be hosting an In Your Neighborhood meeting sponsored by the Indiana Historical Society. Local Northern Indiana historical societies and museums will be invited to attend. The topic of conversation will be "how to increase community support."

## New and Upcoming Exhibits

Just in time for the ice-fishing tournament, the Center for Culver History unveiled a new fishing display, composed of vintage fishing tackle, lures, floaters, and hooks loaned from **Latham Lawson** and **Jo and Dick Dugger**.

Mannequins recently donated by **Karen Blocker** are currently wearing Navy uniforms, a wedding dress, and a bridesmaid dress belonging to Culver native and veteran John Werner and his wife Doris. Biographical information about John Werner's life and career accompany the exhibit, adapted from Werner's biography. Thanks to **Janice Werner-Kemp** for the donation.

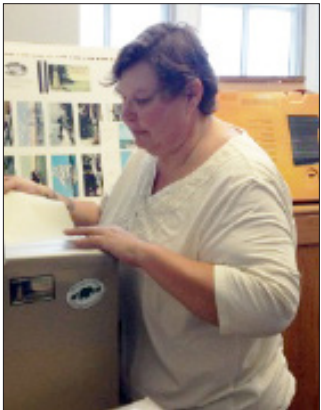
The museum is now hosting an exhibit on Academy Artist in Residence **Warner Williams**, including several bas-reliefs, busts, and animal sculptures. The exhibit will feature items owned by the museum as well as those loaned from the community, accompanied by photos and information about Warner's career, and stories collected from the many citizens who recall the beloved Culver artist with fondness. Stories and loans are still being collected.

Starting March 7, the museum will be hosting a traveling exhibit from the Indiana Historical Society, "**Endangered Heritage**." The exhibit aims to educate the public and potential funders about the need for good collections care. Stay tuned for programming on caring for individual artifact and photography collections in conjunction with the exhibit.

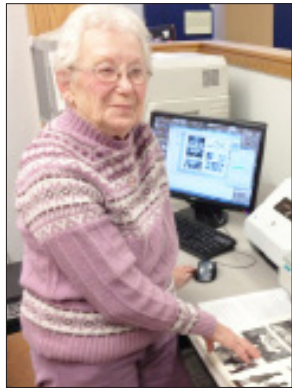
## Center for Culver History volunteers

### Anna Lemar Neher

Anna Lemar Neher has been volunteering 10 hours a week at the Center for Culver History since early January. Anna has been helping us scan Culver High School yearbooks, and will soon be working on getting Culver yearbooks on our website. Anna has also been contributing updates to our Facebook page, and has assisted in researching and putting together displays. Anna has



lived in Culver since she was four. She is a former truck driver, and lives with her husband Don Neher in the home built by her parents—George and Theresa Lemar, who met in the marines. George did most of the work himself, luring in neighbors with beer to help put up walls. They purchased the land from their neighbor Al Sytsma, who used the money to open Al's TV and Appliance Store.



### Jeanette Geiselman:

Jeanette Geiselman has been volunteering 4-6 hours a week for the museum since October. Jeanette has helped organize and catalogue books and has scanned a decade's worth of issues of the State Exchange Bank newsletter, now available on the AHS website, and most recently has been scanning Culver High School Yearbooks. Jeannette has lived in Culver 60 years, moving here from Roch-

ester to marry her late husband Forrest Geiselman Jr. Forrest's parents moved from Kewanna when he was young, in 1927, running Quality Grocer at Main and Washington for 9 years. Later the building housed the Trone Shop and it currently serves as an office for the Lake Maxinkuckee Environmental Council. Jeanette has lived in two homes in town and one on the lake and currently lives in a hundred-plus year old farmhouse just south of the Masonic cemetery. She keeps a garden there. She has raised 3 children in Culver and worked at the Culver Military Academy for 25 years. She currently volunteers at Real Meals and formerly for Meals on Wheels.

## Warner Williams

### Culver's Renaissance Man

By Rachel Meade

Ask any long-time Culver citizen about Warner Williams, and you'll probably hear a description of an eccentric man riding around town on his bicycle, his long beard flying behind him. Others may recall the geodesic dome he constructed in his back yard, out of from which he churned out countless plaster animal sculptures following his 1968 retirement from the Culver Military Academy. According to Warner's son David, the dome was his habitat, from which he typically emerged only for meals. The dome still stands in town, as do his animal sculptures, bas-reliefs, and bronze medallions, which can be found in area homes, at the Culver Public Library, and throughout the Culver Academies campus.

During his 28 years as artist-in-resident at the Culver Academies, Warner created countless works of art for the school; from the bust of long-time headwaiter Charlie Dickerson in the Dining Hall, to the processional cross at the campus chapel, to the Woodcraft 50th Anniversary plaque that hangs at the camp's entrance. His commissioned bas-reliefs and sculptures can also be found in universities and museums across Indiana, Illinois, and beyond. The sculpted head of Voss native and Notre Dame football coach Knute Rockne resides in Voss, Sweden.

Some of his more famous commissions include bas-reliefs of John F. Kennedy, Leopold Stokowski, Thomas Edison, George Ade, Mark Twain, John T. McCutcheon, Pope Paul XXIII, John Wayne, and Stan Musial, among many others.

Warner was born in Kentucky, where he attended Berea College (in 1960, he would be appointed an aide de camp on the staff of the state's Governor with the rank and grade of Colonel, for "success in your chosen field and...cultural-historical contributions to your home state").

He later spent several years studying at Chicago's Art Institute under an honors scholarship. By 1930, Williams was known as "the Hoosier sculptor" for his work in the state, which included designing the best-selling medallions for the Indiana Sesquicentennial Medallion and the fiftieth running of the Indianapolis 500. In Illinois, he was commissioned to create murals and sculptures for the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. He won the City of Chicago prize in 1931 and the Daughters of Indiana prize in 1939.

Despite the accolades, Warner Williams is remembered as a quiet, humble person who worked long hours through the end of his life, chiefly because he enjoyed it. In a 1968 interview Warner said, "I'm not interested in production. I rarely reuse my work. Most of it is personal. I give a lot of things away."

Former CMA art teacher Anne Duff recalled how he kept a little basket of animal sculptures in the dome to hand out to his visitors. Regarding his style, Duff calls it "illustrative."

In a 1930 interview with the Culver Citizen, Warner said, "If the design is an interpretation of fundamental laws, it is timeless. It has perpetual value."

In addition to creating personal and commissioned pieces, Warner also spent a great deal of time educating the public about the process of artistic creation. According to his son Earle, prior to coming to Culver, he spent years traveling throughout the Midwest giving lectures. With his oldest son Carroll running the projector, he would select someone from the audience and create a model of them in 20 minutes, which he would later fine-tune in his

studio. Culver resident Marcia Adams recalled serving as a model for one of these public lectures. Warner sculpted her face and then aged it 40 years, demonstrating how the features of the face would change as the years passed.

### A Thirst for Knowledge

Warner's family and friends describe him as a Renaissance man whose curiosity for the world and breadth of creative interests was seemingly endless. In addition to his prolific artistic career, Warner wrote hundreds of satirical limericks, played piano and accordion, analyzed people's characters by their handwriting, and read constantly. He built telescopes, the dome, and a wide-format camera used to photograph his art.

"If he couldn't buy it, he'd build it," said former Academy historian and Warner's colleague Bob Hartman.

He built several telescopes, one of which resided on the roof of the Music and Arts building at the Academy.

"Every Saturday night when it was clear, cadets and families would come up and view planets and stars," said Warner's son David, noting that Scientific American Magazine featured Warner in a 1951 article about how to make your own telescope. One of his telescopes is still used at the observatory at the Woodcraft Camp.

According to David, "[Warner] was an artist by trade but he was really a scientist."

He spent a great deal of time studying the natural world and his animal sculptures attest to that interest.

"He was forever looking at pond water and sketching things— pictures of amoeba and anything he could spy in the microscope," said his son Earle.

In the pre-Internet age, Warner relied upon print sources to feed his insatiable thirst for knowledge.

"He just absorbed literature. He had a full Encyclopedia Britannica at home and he would read it at night cover to cover," said David.

Warner spent a great deal of time at the Culver Public Library and developed close friendships with several librarians. As a testament to that relationship, he donated a sizeable collection of animal sculptures to the library in the 1970's.

Warner was also an avid writer of letters. He corresponded with first lady Pat Nixon commiserating with her over Watergate. He also wrote to close friend and famous Swedish sculptor Carl Milles, who designed a number of sculptures in New York City's Rockefeller Plaza. David and his mother Jean once visited Milles' home and studio in Stockholm, and found a stockpile of letters from Warner to Carl—"really intense letters about the nature of the universe."

### Eccentricities

By all accounts, Warner Williams was a true eccentric. Locals typically recall his appearance first, describing him as a Gandalf-like figure.

"He would wear this paper bag as a hat to keep his head warm. He would even wear it to dinner. He didn't care what people thought," said his son David.

"He was this little gnome with a massive beard," said David.

"He was small of stature, but feisty, a rather ornery person," said Anne Duff. Duff See Williams page 4



Warner (left) and Jean Williams in the artist's geodesic dome studio on White Street in Culver.

## Save the Dates

**March 7 – 25:** An educational exhibit about the dangers facing Indiana historical collections lacking sufficient funds

**June 8:** Carmichael sings Carmichael with Randy Carmichael, the son of Hoagy Carmichael singing his father's songs and entertaining the audience with antidotal stories.

**June 19 - July 19:** A traveling exhibit created by Ball State students which will include an I Pad station with the **Vonnegut family tree**, digital manuscripts, etc.

**July 13:** **Launches of Lake Maxinkuckee** presented by Jeff Kenney talking about the first Native American canoes to present day use.

**August 17:** The **cemeteries surrounding Culver** and their occupants given by John Benedict giving us a history of locations of cemeteries and stories on people who occupy them.

## In Memorium

### Allen Becker

Last November we lost long time member Allen Becker. We join his wife Judy, children, grandchildren, brother and sister, stepsisters and stepbrother, and many nieces and nephews in grieving for his absence. He was well known on the Lake for his tireless activity with the Yacht Club and for his support of many worthwhile organizations, including the Lake Maxinkuckee Environmental Fund and, of course, the Antiquarian Society, but mostly we will remember his friendly and cheerful face wherever we would meet him. He was always a pleasure to be with. R.I.P.

### Robert Bracken

Another faithful member, Robert Bracken, left us in January of this year. Our sincere condolences go to Margaret, their two children and granddaughter, a Culver resident. From his home in Frankfort, IN, he spent much time at their West Shore home and studied the history of the area, especially the story of the railroad which ran along the west shore years ago and was an important factor in the importance of Culver as a tourist mecca. One of our most memorable meetings was held at their home and was highlighted by Bob's comprehensive and interesting story of the railroad's coming and going. Thank you, Robert Bracken, for your support. R.I.P.

We welcome any news items from members. Hopefully they will not all be obituaries, but we would like to remember our deceased members. For fuller obituaries for the two members above, you can contact the Museum office.

## Charlotte Hahn: Outstanding AHS Member



Charlotte has been volunteering for 5 years taking orders for the brick sales in Heritage Park. She moved here permanently from Demotte, IN in 2007 with her husband Jim. Charlotte, known as Shotsie to her friends, has been actively involved in our community with Friends of the Library, Lions Club, AHS, St. Mary's of the Lake Church and LIFT. She has taken orders for the bricks, picked up the bricks, organized the installation and written a thank you note to each person who purchased a brick. She has been an invaluable volunteer but after the installation of the bricks this spring, she will be turning over the responsibilities. We want to thank her for her years of service and acknowledge Charlotte for all her community work. If anyone is interested in ordering a brick, please contact The Center for Culver History at 574-842-2941 or email us at www.historyofculver@gmail.com.



called how he once wrote to Life Magazine to complain that I and the F in the title were too close together. He later credited himself for the improved spacing.

Many recall the metal WW that adorned the front of his car. His son Earle explained that Warner always pried the metal dealership symbols of his cars.

"He despised advertising," said Earle. "One time when I came home from college, I noticed all the soup cans had the labels taken off."

Earle's mother Jean explained that Warner had removed the labels in a fit of anti-commercialism. Earle eventually inherited the WW plaque, which he adhered to his own car.

Warner wrote hundreds of limericks, on scraps of paper, which his daughter-in-law has since compiled into a hefty booklet. They were typically political in nature, but according to David, "they often strayed into commenting on my girlfriends."

#### The Williams Family

David, Earle, and Sylvia all grew up in Culver, attending Culver Military Academy. Warner's son David said that when his family first moved into town, they were looked at with suspicion by neighbors, who wondered about these eccentric Academy people with the dome in their backyard.

Warner's second wife Jean was an artist as well, a calligraphist who hand lettered CMA diplomas through the early 1980's. A nature-lover like her husband, she often painted Lake Maxinkuckee and its surrounding. Toward the end of her life, she was busy creating elaborate paper cutouts. Unlike her husband, who preferred to keep to himself, Jean was heavily involved in town politics. She was a charter member of Culver's Zoning commission, president of Culver town board, and served on Culver's Economic Development Committee. She was also a founding member of the Marshall County Community Foundation,



ABOVE: The geodesic dome outside the Williams home in Culver. BELOW: A sampling of Williams' animal sculptures long familiar to Culver library patrons.



ally known for his research on lightening. Warner's deceased son Carroll Warner Williams was the co-founder and director of the Anthropology Film Center in New Mexico, which taught film techniques to Native Americans.

According to Carroll's 2005 obituary, "Carroll's extraordinary ability to repair, customize, and invent just about any kind of device necessary to a filmmaker became local legend."

Sylvia Williams inherited her father's artistic talent—she collaborated with Warner on the animal sculpture series. Sylvia is a licensed caricature artist in New Orleans.

#### Artist-in-Residence

David recalled his father's outspoken counter-cultural

and designed their logo. After Warner's death in 1982, Jean remarried and moved to South Bend, where she died in 2006.

According to David, Warner's love of science and art strongly influenced all the Williams children. David Williams is the Director of The Center for Visual Science at the University of Rochester.

"I built my reputation making these little pictures of the eye. My father had this strong interest in vision because he was an artist," he said.

Earle Williams is an atmospheric physicist at MIT and is nationally

views, and the heightened political climate of the 1960's: "He thought the [Vietnam] war was just a great waste of men."

Both Warner's sons noted that he was an inspiration for many Culver Academy cadets. "My father's art studio was a safe haven with a lot of students at the Academy," said David.

One such student was renowned actor Hal Holbrook, who once told Earle of Warner Williams' positive role in his Culver Military Academy experience.

Summer resident Julie Hollowell recalled his inspiring teaching style from an art class she took from him one summer: "Warner seemed to believe that everyone was an artist, if one could simply slow down, focus, and tap into an inner sense of seeing."

In 2012, the White-Devries Rowing Center was erected and adorned with two limestone eagle plaques. The architect was Warner's former student John Chipman, who commissioned and paid for the plaques in Warner's honor. They are based on the original bronze medallions Warner made for members of the crew team in 1968. Chipman, a 68' graduate who owns his own architecture company, credits Warner Williams' guidance for his success. Warner created a specialized architecture course for Chipman at the Academy.

"He took me aside and said, 'I really want to design this special curriculum for you.' I ended up spending a lot of time in his studio working on my projects. He was a mentor to me," said Chipman, recalling how Warner ordered him a subscription to Architecture Magazine, and counseled him on his college applications. "There [was] really no real recognition of Warner and what he's done for the Academy... He was a great man who's underappreciated."

The original medallion is on display in the alumni room of the Rowing Center.

**The Center for Culver History Museum, located in the Culver Public Library, is currently hosting an exhibit of Warner Williams' life and art. His sculptures are also permanently on display around the fireplace of the library.**