

St. Michael Historian



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Beulah The Buick

As Written by Mrs. Dick Swanson (Elaine)

In 1987 when Dick concluded that we really NEEDED a second older collector car, I wasn't against it. In my mind's eye I had pictured a cute little coupe done up in a snappy fashion. You can only imagine my reaction when Dick came home with this HUGE 1939 Buick Roadmaster! It was (of course) on a trailer and was an enormous pile of rust. It was riddled with bullet holes (like a Bonnie and Clyde car), the floorboards were almost gone, and all four wheels were pointing out! One look and I knew that our fairly recent marriage was in jeopardy.

We named it Beulah the Buick and when Dick finally got the thing to run (sort of), I followed him to bring it to Elk River for restoration. The gas line clogged about every five miles and Dick would literally suck out the lines. It might have been the fire in my eyes or the smoke coming out of my ears, but Dick appeared to be just a bit scared and nervous. He swallowed as much gas and gunk as he got out. I suggested that we abandon Beulah by the roadside but then saw a sign that read, "\$700 fine for littering" and knew that leaving it there was NOT an option!

Thus began a two-year Reign of Terror with our lives and our checkbook being controlled by Beulah, the Buick. Needless to say, we survived it and after those early turbulent years, I DID make peace with Beulah. Her first outing was the World of Wheels car show. She had to be pushed on and off the trailer and only later did we realize that she was out of gas. I think Dick drank it all!

The adventures never seemed to end. We had a wheel come off as we rounded a corner; Dick had the brakes go out on the way to our car show, but he kept on driving anyway; Dick backed Beulah into our '62 Buick convertible and got them both at once; he ran over an electrical post at the fairgrounds - - - and so it went!

The real test was our first trip to Chicago for the Buick Nationals. Other than overheating at every stop, we had no major problems. After that, we all survived another trip to Chicago, several road trips to Iowa, rain, hail, wind, and Dick's driving. I finally developed a new respect for Beulah and things greatly improved between us. We peacefully shared our Master for many years.

In 2012 we decided that Beulah deserved a better life. We sold her to a Buick-lover in Oslo, Norway where she now resides as a pampered treasure!



Photo Courtesy, Dick and Elaine Swanson

Publishers note: Beulah represented the St. Michael Historical Society in both the 2010 and 2011 Daze & Knights parade in St. Michael.

Who is Gustave Devue?

by Stephen S Barthel



Gustave Devue of Mal, Belgium and Tombstone in St. Michael

Portrait Courtesy of Eric Vossen and Tombstone Photo Courtesy of Crystal Sayen Photography

Devue is not considered a St. Michael name, but Gustave Devue of Mal, Belgium is part of our history. He was not born in St. Michael, nor did he marry. He did not die in St. Michael. He did not live long enough to leave many documents on his brief three years in North America. He was, however, buried in the old St. Michael cemetery. So, why am I writing about him?

Our historical society has been instrumental in preserving and making available photographed tombstones of the two St. Michael cemeteries and placing them on our website. It is amazing to see people from distant states and countries benefit from our website.

Eric Vossen, a citizen and resident of Belgium, is one who has benefited. He is currently researching his family history and contacted us after accidentally finding the tombstone photo of his great uncle on our website. Eric shared his photo of Gustave Devue, including information that Gustave was listed in the birth register under Antoon Gustavus Devue, who was born on the 25th of December 1883 in the village of Mal, Limburg, Belgium. Gustave was the son of Heinrich Devue and Elisabeth Bollen.

Eric asked if we knew what Gustave died from, as his cause of death remained a mystery to the family in Belgium. The family heard he died from either an illness, a drowning, or he may have committed suicide. What became of him? Can the cause of death be determined, so that family history can be straightened out? Bob Zahler turned the email over to me with the suggestion to do some investigating.

I was able to determine (through Ancestry.com) that Gustave was 29 years old when he departed Europe via Rotterdam on the vessel *S.S. Vaderland*. His ship arrived in Quebec City, Canada on the 22nd of May 1913. According to the passenger manifest, his destination was stated as Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He did not travel alone, but was accompanied by fellow Belgians bound for Winnipeg.

He arrived in Minnesota at some point and, according to his death record, which was found in the St. Michael Parish register, he drowned on 4 July 1916 (Independence Day) near Melrose in Stearns County, Minnesota at the age of 32. He was buried on 6 July 1916 in the old St. Michael cemetery. There were no newspaper articles or obituaries to be found.

NOMEN. 10% De Vae Gustave	Die 4. mensis <i>Julii</i> A. D. 1916 obiit <i>Gustave De Vae</i> fili _____, aetatis <i>32 years</i> ex loco <i>Belgium Europe</i> , sepultus est die 6. mens. <i>Julii</i> A. D. 1916 in cemeterio <i>nostro</i> Adnotationes <i>Drowned near Melrose, Minn.</i> <div style="text-align: right;"><i>A. Mills</i></div>
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St Michael Death and Burial Register for 1916

Photo Courtesy Stephen S. Barthel

What connection did he have with St. Michael to be buried in St. Michael? With no apparent St. Michael relatives that we know of, who would have paid for the tombstone? Perhaps further genealogical research will reveal a connection to relatives. The book on his life is not closed at this point, but put on the back burner. If you have answers, please let us know.

As a side note, the *S. S. Vaderland* was built at Clydebank, Glasgow, Scotland and measured 560 feet by 60 feet. It had four masts and two funnels. It was launched the 12th of July 1900. It was renamed *Southland* in 1915 by the British and was converted to a troopship. It was torpedoed twice by German submarines. The first German torpedo struck in September of 1915 in the Aegean Sea. The ship was repaired. The second time it was torpedoed and sunk 140 nautical miles (260 km) northwest of Tory Island off the Irish coast on the 4th of June 1917.

Activity Planned to Find, Clean, and Assess Grave Markers

By Stephen S Barthel

Memorial Day weekend is soon upon us. Graves are often decorated in the new cemetery. But, those who are buried in the old cemetery (next to the Historic Church) may have been forgotten, as their descendants now number in the thousands and they may not even know who their ancestors are and where they are buried. Parents, show your children where they were buried. This is your heritage.

Your ancestors took great care by erecting monuments to their loved ones, but some of the grave markers are no longer identifiable and are falling into a state of disrepair. Broken stones have been placed flat on the ground, and now grass has grown over them. Probing the turf with a thin screwdriver may help you locate and unearth the stone and take action to repair or replace it.



Example of a gravesite problem in old cemetery

Cemeteries can be a dangerous place. Many markers are no longer secured to their concrete or stone base. Some markers are leaning and could topple if handled in any way. Liability issues are at stake. Always use a licensed monument company to lift stones for repair.

The St. Michael Historical Society is planning an activity for Saturday, May 18 to help you find and assess the condition of your ancestors' graves. Meet us at the old cemetery near the historic church between the hours of 10:00 AM and noon. Duane or Kathy Barthel (of the Cemetery Association) will be there, along with others to advise and answer questions and to help you locate a grave.

If you are up to cleaning moss and lichens off of tomb-

St. Michael**Historical Society****11800 Town Center Drive****St. Michael, MN 55376***Phone: 763-416-7967**We're on the Web!**See us at:****www.stmhistsoc.org***

Meetings held on the second Monday of the month at the St. Michael City Hall in the Gries and Lenhardt Public Meeting Room adjacent to the library.

This newsletter is published quarterly for the benefit of the members of the Saint Michael Historical Society. Reprints of this or any other newsletter by the Society are not permitted without the express written consent of the Saint Michael Historical Society.

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stones, bring a bucket for water and perhaps latex or rubber gloves, rags, and a soft scrub brush. There is access to water at the church building. Do not use bleach or damaging detergents to clean a stone, as these contain agents that break down the stone structure and can discolor the stone. I highly advise you to read and print instructions found at http://www.ehow.com/how_2079058_clean-gravestone.html. Lichens can destroy and/or cover names and dates on a tombstone. I hope we can identify more names and dates on tombstones after the removal of lichen.



“Before and after” example of a stone restored after cleaning process
All cemetery photos courtesy of Crystal Sayen, taken Veterans’ Day 2011, with the exception of “after” photo, shown above right, courtesy of Julie Barthel Simon

We hope to see you there on the 18th of May, but if not, we hope we have given you enough information so that you can do this inspection or cleaning another time! Bring only responsible people who can help you work. No unsupervised child should be there, as the old cemetery can be dangerous. Our Historical Society is not responsible for any accidents, but we want you to be aware of the condition of the cemetery.

Photo on right: Another image of damaged gravestones in the old cemetery



Five Board Members Re-elected at Annual Meeting

By Sheldon Barthel

At the Annual Meeting of the St. Michael Historical Society held on Monday, April 8th, five Board members whose previous three year terms had expired, were re-elected to the Board of Directors for another three year term. They are: Sheldon Barthel, RoseAnne Gindele, Dan Lenz, John Robeck, and Brendan Sage. Continuing on as members of the executive committee are: Bob Zahler, President; Sheldon Barthel, Vice-President; Matt Eiyneck, Secretary; and John Jaeb, Treasurer. Other continuing appointments are: Stephen Barthel, Website manager; Crystal Sayen, Media Specialist; RoseAnne Gindele; Archivist; Brendan Sage, interim Recording Secretary; Sheldon Barthel, Newsletter Publisher and Membership and Retention Chairman.