
NEWS

Butler County Historical Society

Preserving and Interpreting Butler County's Rich Heritage

For Immediate Release

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DESCENDANT OF "BILLY YANK'S" CREATOR RETURNS TO UNVEIL HISTORY OF STATUE AND SCULPTOR

Jon Thiem, PhD., will speak about his great-grandfather, Rudolph Thiem, and his creation of "Billy Yank" atop the Butler County Soldiers, Sailors, and Pioneers Monument

(Hamilton, OH) – High atop the Butler County Soldiers, Sailors, and Pioneers Monument stands a lone sentinel – a statue known as "Billy Yank." If Billy Yank could talk about the changes and events he has witnessed over a 100 year period, he would have much to tell. Standing with a watchful gaze, he saw firsthand the courthouse fire of 1912. A year later, he stood harmlessly above the rushing waters of the 1913 flood. He undoubtedly remembers the transition from carriage to automobile, the parades, and the many changes to the streetscape before him. If he could talk, he would probably give us an eye-witness account of the recent break-in to the monument and describe the perpetrator's method of escape.

On Monday, September 21st, Dr. Jon Thiem will talk on behalf of Billy Yank, revealing how the story of the statue's creator, Rudolph Thiem, influenced one of Butler County's most recognizable landmarks. During his program for the Butler County Historical Society, Dr. Thiem will discuss the life of his great-grandfather, Rudolph Thiem, and how his experiences influenced his greatest work. The program is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 21st, at St. John's Church in Hamilton.

Dr. Jon Thiem is professor emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Colorado State University. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. Thiem is a graduate of Dickinson College (PA) and Indiana University. He is the author of *Lorenzo de' Medici: Selected Poems and Prose*, short-listed for the Columbia Translation Center Prize. His most recent book, *Rabbit Creek Country: Three Ranching Lives in the Heart of the Mountain West* was selected as a finalist for the 2009 Colorado Book Award.

Born in Germany in 1857, Rudolph Thiem emigrated from his native Berlin to the United States through New Orleans. His talents as an artist were noticed by Hamilton stove-maker Lazarus Kahn. Offered a position as model-maker and designer at Kahn Brothers, Rudolph relocated to Hamilton in 1886. Not long after, he established his own business as a model-maker, designer, and ornamental carver. He designed plaques of Presidents William McKinley and William Howard Taft, prompting a letter of thanks from the former and a personal visit from the latter. His work also adorns regimental monuments on Civil War battlefields. His best work, done in his own likeness, is that of Billy Yank atop the Butler County Soldiers, Sailors, and Pioneers Monument.

Simply put...

WHAT: "Rudolph Thiem and Billy Yank: What the Artist's Life Tells Us About His Magnum Opus"
WHO: Jon Thiem, PhD.
WHEN: Monday, September 21st, at 7:00 p.m.
WHERE: First St. John United Church of Christ
412 South Front St.
Hamilton, OH 45011
NOTE: Program is free and open to the public.

In 2009, the Butler County Historical Society (BCHS) is celebrating 75 years of dedication to the preservation and interpretation of Butler County's rich heritage. The BCHS, a non-profit organization, operates the historic Benninghofen House – a showcase of Victorian Era lifestyle that includes all the furnishings and décor appropriate for a late 19th century home. Additionally, the BCHS manages an archive that consists of many original and secondary materials relating to regional history. To help us prepare for your visit (tour or research), please call ahead (513) 896-9930. The BCHS is also affiliated with Heritage Hall, a space for the display of rotating exhibits and the permanent location of the Robert McCloskey Collection. To learn more about Heritage Hall, please call (513) 737-5958.