

HERMIT

Mackinaw to dedicate stone at grave of 'Our Hermit'



5 HOURS AGO • [BY KEVIN BARLOW](#) | KBARLOW@PANTAGRAPH.COM

MACKINAW — Nobody knew much about the man known as Charlie Schultz, who lived for 40 years in the woods on the outskirts of Mackinaw.

People around Mackinaw knew him as “Our Hermit,” although he enjoyed visitors and kept up on current events. A 1936 Pantagraph article after his death described him as “a strange character of the Mackinaw Hills, a native of Germany, whose whole life has always been a profound mystery to

Central Illinois residents.”

On Saturday, the Mackinaw Library and Mackinaw Historical Collection will dedicate a stone at his grave.

“He raised chickens and sold eggs at the local store,” said Kathy Friend, a member of the Mackinaw Historical Collection. “He wrote the date on each egg and brought them into town to the store. He always wore bib overalls, carrying a gunny sack, and always seemed to be in a hurry to get back home.”

The collection was founded about two years ago. Its first project was raising funds for the memorial stone.

“I love to do research on people who are interesting but not necessarily well known because they had a lot of money or something,” Friend said. “I never meet ‘Our Hermit,’ but I heard lots of stories about him.”

Schultz was born July 5, 1852, in Bavaria, Germany, and neighbors found him dead Feb. 6, 1936, at his home. He’d arrived in Mackinaw in 1894, on a “land hunt,” paying \$500 for 40 acres north of town. The site, on top of Stout’s Hill, is the current intersection of Dee-Mack and Allentown roads.

He raised chickens for the eggs, but wouldn’t eat the meat, Friend said. He gathered and sold nuts, bittersweet, berries and eggs, bringing them to Tyrrell Grocery Store to trade. He had stacks of magazines and newspapers and liked to read, according to research compiled by Friend.

Schultz built his own cabin. Family members in Peoria and Woodford counties died before he

moved to Mackinaw, and he never married. He never had a job but always paid cash.

Some thought he had gone to college, but he said he'd never made it past grammar school.

Based on Friend's research, Chicago folk singer Mark Dvorak wrote two songs about Schultz. They will be played during the dedication, which will start at 11 a.m. Saturday at the north end of the Mackinaw Cemetery.

"I felt like I knew this man after reading through all of the material," Dvorak said. "But I took the information, condensed it, wrote each sentence out and made a couple of songs. I loved the idea that he lived in this little house and just kept to himself."

"I am planning on coming to Mackinaw in the fall and am really looking forward to walking in the same steps that he walked in."

Mackinaw memorial

What: Gravesite dedication for Charlie "Our Hermit" Schultz, 1852-1936

When: 11 a.m. Saturday

Where: north end of Mackinaw Cemetery