

Passion for saving soles

By Patricia M. Albrecht

Recently, the Tuscarawas County Public Library displayed a unique collection of 100 shoes for a retrospective look at footwear sponsored by the Tuscarawas County Heritage Association. Portrayed above the sea of shoes was a quote from 16th century French essayist, Michel de Montaigne, stating: To each foot, its own shoe.

More than half of the collection is personally owned by New Philadelphia resident Jerry Stoughton, retired French teacher and member of the Tuscarawas County Heritage Association for the past 28 years.

"I am originally from the Lancaster area," said Stoughton, "but moved here to become a teacher in the Dover, New Philadelphia area. When I was teaching, I also directed plays. Two days prior to one of our plays being put on, we realized the costumes had been stolen. I decided I had to attempt to sew some others very quickly. I began a clothing collection after that for the heritage association. Following that, I thought I'd like to do something with hats, and then I started collecting shoes."

Stoughton taught French in New Philadelphia from 1966 to 1971. From there, he went to Massillon to teach at Jackson.

"After that period," said Stoughton, "I ended up working in a factory for 10 years, and it was at that time that I began working at the Little Theatre as a costumer."

Stoughton got back into teaching, ending up at Dover for 21 years and two years at

SHOE

from Page A1

Central Catholic.

"Now, I'm retired," said Stoughton, "and do programs with clothing, hats, and now shoes. I go to various clubs and groups, bringing my collection and speaking about the history of the items. I have done a program for the Red Hat Society, nursing homes, and I will be doing a program in September for a homemakers' group that contacted me."

Stoughton's collection is unique and varied and includes such shoes as a sling-back pump, a spectator brogue, a Philippine sandal, button shoes, wooden shoes, Mother Goose shoes, a Japanese Geta, and a 1910 men's spat.

"I have a KISS boot," said Stoughton, "from the tribute band, Mr. Speed. That boot weighs over 10 pounds. Can you imagine wearing that around on stage? The oldest shoe in the collection is the 1876 cloth baby shoe."

"My friend's great-grandmother wore that shoe. It's amazing that it's cloth and still in good shape after all these years. The Mother Goose pair of shoes I have are in their original box and were never worn. Several people told me they had but-

ton shoes for my collection. I had a button shoe, but soon discovered that there are several different kinds of button shoes."

An evolution of skates was displayed from the 1930s up as well as a baseball, track, and 1950s football shoe, ballet and tap shoe.

"I began adding items for repairing and polishing shoes," said Stoughton, "and button hooks. And, of course, I had to add a horse shoe to my collection. Then, I started looking for shoe ads. I found two ads about the 1930s Daniel Green shoes I had in my collection. One of the hardest things to find was the shoe sizer. I wanted to display one with the shoes, so Marty Miller of Miller Shoes downtown loaned me one. I have an article about Chinese foot binding, which made the shoes end up to be about four inches long. People's shoe sizes have gotten larger over the years with one exception. A size 38 shoe was worn in 1939 by the world's tallest man, who stood 8'8"."

The day Stoughton was putting up the collection at the library someone brought him a late 1940s shoe. He was so happy because he had ladies shoes from the 30s, 50s, and later, but nothing from the 40s until then. Stoughton also does exten-

sive research on the history of shoes.

"The sandal is the oldest man-made shoe," said Stoughton. "Shoe strings came about in the 1800s. Before that, they had buckles, buttons, or straps. The idea of left and right shoes didn't come around until 1870. Until then, shoes were called "straights" that you could wear on either foot. When we think of wooden shoes, we often think of Holland, but really wooden shoes were for peasants because they were inexpensive and could be worn like a boot to do chores outside. The peasants would wear slippers once they got inside."

Stoughton said he continues to buy shoes for his collection, even finding some at Goodwill and Hospice.

"I've learned so much from having the collection here at the Tuscarawas County Public Library," said Stoughton. "A gentleman from Pennsylvania told me I didn't have any Jack Purcell shoes. I found out he meant the shoes I had referred to as Chucks or Converse."

As library patrons passed, several people told Stoughton that his shoe collection was one of their favorite displays, that provoked much conversation. Stoughton is available for programs and can be contacted at 330-339-4551.