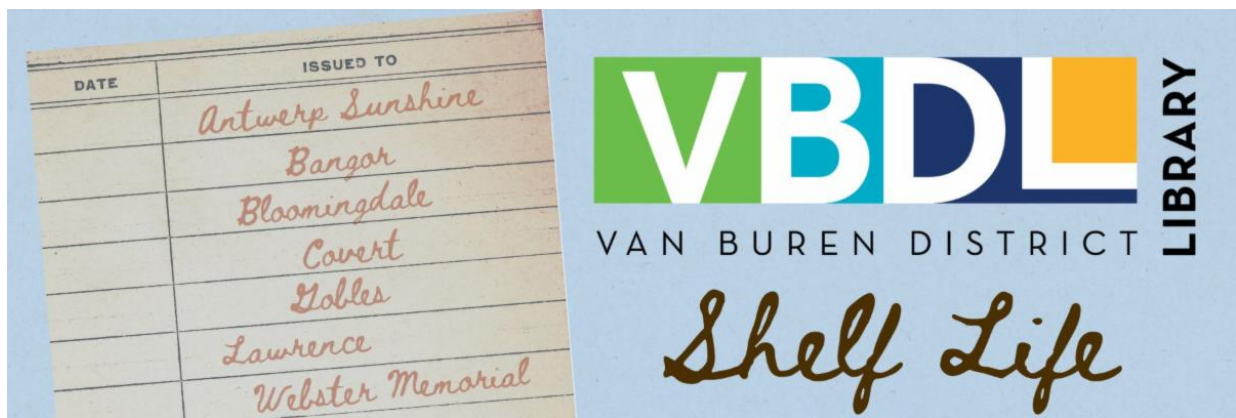




Who was John LeDuke?

And how did VBDL help solve the mystery and return a family treasure?

The **Toni I. Benson Local History Room** located in the Webster Memorial Branch was on the mission to discover *who* he was, as well as *why* he had a silver baseball pendant with his name engraved on the back.

In March 2024, one of VBDL's local history librarians received a phone call. Michigan Metal Detectors Club member Todd Williams had uncovered something on a friend's property using a metal detector. He had found a silver pendant engraved with "Champions Van Buren County, 1911 LHS" and a baseball player on the front and the name John LeDuke engraved on the back. Not knowing who John LeDuke was, the library was contacted to help solve the mystery and to see if there was any family that would like to claim the pendant.



Born in 1891, John was the youngest of four children born to Nelson and Julia LeDuke. He played on the 1911 Lawrence baseball team, when he and his teammates won the Champions Van Buren County, earning the silver pendant as a trophy. When he was eight years old, he was struck by a piece of tin and as a result lost the sight in that eye. John passed away in December of 1918 at the age of 27 from influenza, an epidemic that killed millions of people worldwide while World War I raged on.

Using several other contacts around Lawrence and surrounding areas, the silver pendant was reunited with John LeDuke's great-niece, Marjorie Dowsett. His life and his story made a little clearer by using the tools and resources of the Toni I. Benson Local History Room and people willing to work together to solve the mystery.



John's great-niece Marjorie Dowsett with Todd Williams. Ms. Dowsett is seen holding the pendant discovered by Mr. Williams.



The Lawrence High School Baseball Team, 1911.
John LeDuke is third from the right.

A Blast from your Past!

Did you know that many of VBDL's branches have local high school yearbooks? Reminisce about days gone by, laugh at the questionable fashion choices, or wonder whatever did happen to Steve and Diane?

In order to keep the yearbooks in good condition, yearbooks are not able to be checked out or taken home, but you can still ask library staff to bring them out to read inside the library. Sounds to us like a great opportunity to spend a Saturday afternoon with friends and family sharing memories of the good ol' days!



Don't Be So Negative....

The Toni I. Benson Local History Room located in the Webster Memorial Branch can help with some of those negative things in your life. Save and restore your treasured photos by coming to the Toni I. Benson Local History Room and use this neat device to digitize your photo negatives and slides.

Schedule an appointment with a local history librarian and start restoring your photo collection today! Appointments are available on Mondays, 10am - 4pm. Be sure to bring a thumb drive to place your finished work on to take home. Call 269.423.4771 for more information or to schedule an appointment.



Van Buren District Library | 200 N Phelps St, Decatur, MI 49045

[Unsubscribe lpuckett@vbdl.org](mailto:lpuckett@vbdl.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by info@vbdl.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!