

History Center Receives Major Gifts

THE renovations at the Sauk County History Center received a major boost recently when a \$20,000 donation was received from a member who wishes to remain anonymous and a \$5,000 gift was announced from the estate of the late Pearl Douglas of LaValle. The funds come at a time when Phase 2, the renovation of the first and second floors, is nearing completion. When this phase is completed the Society will be able to move day to day operations from the Van Orden Mansion to the history center. Items that still need to be completed include new doors and trim, carpeting, railings and furnishings.

A total of \$30,000 is still needed to finish Phase 2 and open the upper two floors of the history center. Many members have donated to this worthwhile project over the past several years and gotten us to the point we are at today. With a little more help the Society can start a new chapter in the collection, preservation and sharing of Sauk County history. Details on the completion of Phase 2 will be sent to members soon. The Society wishes to thank our anonymous donor and the estate of Pearl Douglas for the generous gifts given towards the history center.



Over 100 members and guests attended the Society annual Founders' Day picnic in early June held on the lawn of the history center. Wisconsin author Michael Goc spoke about women workers at the Badger Army Ammunition Plant during WWII and members also toured the history center to see the extent of renovations.

Photo Contest Winners Announced

AS part of the Historic Preservation Month of May, the Sauk County University of Wisconsin Extension Office-Arts & Culture Committee, and the Sauk County Historical Society are proud to announce the winners of this year's photo contest. Thirty-three photos were submitted this year. First prize of \$100 goes to John Laukant of rural Reedsburg, for his photo entitled, "Church on Hwy D" (See photo). Second prize of \$75 goes to Diane Thomas of Baraboo, for her photo entitled, "Primetime." Third prize of \$50 goes to Tammy Leidig for her photo, "Waiting on the Wind." We congratulate the winners of the 2012 photo contest.

All entries will be on display in the West Square Building, near the west entry, and the winning photos may be viewed on the Sauk County Historical Society's Web site at: www.saukcountyhistory.org.



Ringling Hospital – 90th Anniversary



WERE you born in St. Mary's Ringling Hospital in Baraboo? Or did you work there? To help celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the hospital, a celebration is being planned and will be held November 2, 2012.

We are looking for photographs of the hospital (interior & exterior) to display during the event. Photos will be scanned and returned to the owner.

We are also looking for artifacts which represented everyday life at the hospital. If you have such items, please contact us for possible display.

If you have interesting stories about the life and times of the hospital, we will be conducting interviews the day of the celebration. If you would like to share those stories to be recorded, please let us know.

You may contact the Sauk County Historical Society regarding any of the requests listed above. 608-356-1001, Wednesday through Saturday, noon until 4 pm. Or Email us at: history@saukcountyhistory.org

Become a Member of the SCHS

WE invite you to join the growing number of SCHS members who delight in learning more about Sauk County's extensive and fascinating past. Our members are engaged in Sauk County's history through a variety of exhibits, programs, and special events, all sharing in the unique tales of the past!

Membership is currently around 600 individuals, couples and families from Sauk County and many states of the Union including Alaska and Hawaii.

The society holds an annual summer picnic, a fall banquet & business meeting and a Tour of Historic Haunts. Other events include a biennial Tour of Historic Homes in Baraboo and a biennial Living History Cemetery Tour, and during the holidays, the mansion is decorated with over 20 beautiful Christmas trees. An annual Wm Canfield award is given to someone who demonstrates a love of history and its preservation. Workshops and seminars are also occasionally available.

If you or your friends or a family member would like to become a member of the Sauk County Historical Society, visit our Web site at: www.saukcountyhistory.org/membership.html



Baraboo High School History Club volunteers, left to right, Oliver Horjus, Erica Hainz and Molly Wight began volunteering at the Van Orden Mansion last October. Most of their work involved consolidating and filing newspaper clippings in the family history files. Molly also assisted with Christmas tree watering, merchandise displays and general cleaning. Hopefully the BHS History Club members will return in the fall. Their work was greatly appreciated.

President's Report

By Paul Wolter

IT has been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. While this may be one reason to pay attention to history, another reason might be the kindred connection we can get to people's experiences of the past that help us deal with our own present. The ongoing drought in southern Wisconsin has caused me to remember the drought of 1988 which was the fourteenth driest year at the time since 1840. While this is recent history to some we can draw from historical sources to learn about other times in the past when people have experienced similar circumstances. Recently a researcher from Vermont came to the museum with a letter from 1886 written by Clara Martin of Baraboo. Martin wrote the following excerpt to her brother and sister on August 8: "... There is a great deal of sickness here. Due perhaps to the extreme hot weather. We have had no rain to speak of this summer. Only two or three showers since the first of May I think. The grass is all dead in the yards and the corn does not fill at all." While we certainly have improved the effects of heat on public health, the rest of the excerpt sounds very familiar. This summer will be another one for the record books, but perhaps one of the most comforting things about looking to the past is that we often have the advantage of knowing what the "ending" is. We do know that eventually it rained in 1886 and in 1936 and in 1988, and that helps us have hope that it will rain again in 2012.

We Care Program

The Sauk County Historical Society receives a percentage of all of the dollars spent by everyone who has SCHS designated on their Pierces Supermarket Reward Card. Pierces is having all their customers renew their cards so now is a good time to designate SCHS as the charity receiving your percentage. To do this, use the number 1092 as your charity when you fill out the enrollment.

Old Sauk Trails • July/August 2012

The Sauk County Historical Society publishes *Old Sauk Trails* six times each year.

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www.saukcountyhistory.org

Master Gardeners Tend SCHS Flower Beds

MEMBERS of the Sauk County Master Gardener's Association (SCMGA) have again been invited to plant and care for flower gardens at the Sauk County Historical Society this summer. The SCMGA is made up of individuals who enjoy the beauty of flower gardening and sharing their talents with others. Headed by Phyllis Both, they are applying their skills to beautify the grounds of the Historical Society headquarters on 4th Avenue.

The purpose of the SCMGA is "exclusively for horticultural education to supplement the effort of the University of Wisconsin - Extension Program and thereby provide education and information on horticultural and environmental stewardship to the residents of Sauk County."

The SCHS has also accepted a generous donation of flowers and foliage from John Schwenn, a "garden hobbyist," as he describes himself. He recently traveled from Walworth to deliver coleus, marigolds and salvia. These flowers will greatly enhance the appearance of the grounds at the Society.

The SCHS would like to thank the Master Gardener's and Mr. Schwenn for the generous donation of their time and talents.



Pictured are Dave and Joanne Gorak, and Phyllis Both, kneeling.

Historical Society Hosts Sheriff Spencer Memories

It isn't every day that your mother gets elected Sheriff of Sauk County. That's what happened to the children of Mike and Dolly Spencer in the 1960s when their father could not run for a third consecutive term as Sauk County's Sheriff. Although everyone knew that the arrangement would be the same, Dolly Spencer, officially became the Sheriff of Sauk County with husband, Mike, as Undersheriff.

Three of the six children of Mike and Dolly Spencer, (L-R, Terry, Diane, Bob) spoke to a large crowd at the Sauk County Historical Society of their experiences during the terms of their parents as sheriffs of Sauk County.

Through the use of family photos and stories of growing up in the old red brick jail, which once stood at the southwest corner of Broadway and Second in Baraboo, they entertained the crowd with reminiscences of some of the things that happened in their youth. Members of the

audience also shared their stories as they recalled their remembrances of the Spencer family. The Man Hunt of 1961 which was a tense time in Sauk County was also discussed.

The Sauk County Historical Society would like to thank the Spencers for sharing their memories.



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Lost Cousins Reunited

LOST cousins were recently reunited as a result of information on our Sauk County Historical Society's Web site.

Margaux McFetridge was able to locate James B. Delacour, a first cousin once removed, that she had never met, when she emailed the SCHS regarding a series of photos that Mr. Delacour had donated to the society, and which are on the society's Flickr Web site. (www.flickr.com/photos/sauk_county_historical_society).

Margaux wrote: "I am the great granddaughter of William H. McFetridge and Blanche Budd McFetridge, granddaughter of their son Britton McFetridge, and I just found the amazing photo collection on your website and Flickr submitted by James B. Delacour. I was wondering if there was a way that you could connect me with him. If you have an email address for him, do you mind sending him my contact info and this request?"

Linda Levenhagen, of our museum staff, forwarded Margaux's request to Mr. Delacour, and he let us know what happened. "Thank you so much for forwarding the below e-mail to me. My cousin and I are now communicating for the first time. It is great fun!"

We are happy that we were able to help reunite these two long lost families.

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Podunk!

By Bill Schuette

YES, Virginia, there really was a town called Podunk in Sauk County. If you venture north on Hwy 23, out of LaValle, you'll come to Kalepp Road. A short distance down this dead end road, sits a large building, constructed of field stones. It's a long forgotten potato warehouse—the only structure left in Podunk, and was once used by the Reedsburg Hunt Club.

In 1873, when the Chicago and Northwestern railroad came through the area, the location was a stopping point for the trains which picked up farmer's potatoes and lumber.

The word "Podunk" is generally believed to be a Native American name which means "lowland". Many communities named Podunk generally exist in swampy, low lying ground, which is also true of Sauk County's Podunk.

Another derivation of the word may have come from the sound that a mill wheel makes as it turns around: "po-dunk, po-dunk, po-dunk."

This location is noted on an 1878, map of LaValle Township, and is also found on maps dating up to 1955.

In C.W. Butterfield's 1880 History of Sauk County, Wisconsin, he writes: "... still another mill is doing a flourishing business at a switch on the railroad, called Podunk, owned by a Milwaukee man. Large quantities of railroad ties, wood and timber are bought here. A store, boarding-house

and blacksmith-shop are in operation at this point."

H.E. Cole also made note of Podunk, writing in 1912 about place names in Sauk County. [Podunk is located on] "a railroad siding between LaValle and Wonewoc. The farmers in the neighborhood called it Poor Dickie and finally it simmered down to the meaningless word, Podunk. The place is sometimes called Crossman's Crossing, for a land owner there."

Today, all that remains of this once thriving little community is the old potato warehouse, (pictured here) constructed of field stones. It's located next to the bed of the old Chicago & Northwestern railroad tracks, now the 400 trail.



Recent Artifact Donations

- Land atlas and Plat book, 1976 from Betty Trachler
- 6 bottles, Effinger Beer, from Paul Wolter
- Political sign: Recall Walker from Dick Pfaff
- 3 booklets, including one on Baraboo National Bank from Charles Sarahan
- 1 photograph, Island Woolen mill from Kut Hut
- 5 souvenirs, Baraboo from Kathy Waddell
- Research manuscript: Man Mound (on CD) from Sarah Tate
- 2 Books by local authors from Joan Litscher
- School book, arithmetic from Alice Jensen
- 57 Baraboo postcards, calling cards, invitations, tickets
- meal tickets, raffle tickets, business envelopes, advertisements, booklets, stationary, product brochures, receipts, warranty deeds (Sauk County), insurance policy 1865, tax receipt 1866, mortgage 1882 from Richard Wilkinson
- Scrapbooks from Doris Litscher Gasser
- Al. Ringling Theater corporate records (approx.. 500 linear feet) from Charles and Mary Clayton-Jones
- Ringling family memorabilia (approx.. 100 cubic feet) from Charles and Mary Clayton-Jones
- Research collection pertaining to the CCC in Devil's Lake used in book of similar name, 5 linear inches from Robert Moore
- Print of the Courthouse Square, from Betty Trachler

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July/August 2012

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