



Old Sauk Trails

July/August 2013

African American Baseball in Sauk County – Presentation July 16th

SAUK County, like the state of Wisconsin, has a strong baseball history. Baseball in Sauk County dates back to the 1860s when the sport was starting to evolve. As the game progressed, racial prejudices erupted in American society. In the late 1880s, African Americans were banned from professional baseball, which lasted until Jackie Robinson reintegrated the game in 1947.

African Americans searched for ways to continue playing baseball competitively, the most successful was through barnstorming. The Barnstorming Era is the years that segregation in baseball existed (1880-1950). Sauk County saw a great deal of barnstorming African American teams come through the area throughout the 20th century. With a close proximity to Chicago, the hub of black baseball, teams often stopped on their way through the state of Wisconsin. As African Americans traveled across the United States, teams

such as the Piney Woods Giant Collegians, Van Dyke Colored House of David and the Palmer House All Stars made their way to Sauk County to play against the locals.

Matt Carter, Executive Director of the Dunn County Historical Society, will be coming to Baraboo to give a presentation on the various teams that played in Sauk County during the Barnstorming Era. “Baseball provides the most ideal way to study American history,” noted Carter. “It encompasses all aspects of our nation’s history; from segregation to reintegration.”

The event will be held on **Tuesday, July 16th 2013 at 7 p.m.** at the new Sauk County History Center, 900 2nd Ave, Baraboo. Admission is free, and the presentation is open to the public.



More than 100 people attended the dedication of the Sauk County History Center on May 18. Favorable weather allowed the presentation to be made in front of the building, after which visitors toured the inside of the new facility and enjoyed refreshments. Baraboo Mayor Mike Palm, Sauk County Board Chair Marty Krueger, Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee Chair Judy Ashford and McFetridge descendant James Delacour all made remarks along with Society President Paul Wolter. The history of the woolen mill, the restoration and renovation of the building and its future were presented.

Master Gardeners Tend SCHS Flower Beds

MEMBERS of the Sauk County Master Gardeners 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 Historical Society headquarters on 4th Ave.

The SCHS has also accepted a generous donation of flowers and foliage from Society member, John Schwenn, a “garden hobbyist”, as he describes himself. He recently traveled from Walworth to deliver Giant Red



Salvia, Yellow Marigolds, and Sun Coleus. These flowers will greatly enhance the appearance of the grounds at the Society mansion.

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

Pictured are L-R: Phyllis Both, John Schwenn and Gladys Proctor.



The SCHS annual Founders’ Day Picnic was held in early June at the hangar of Bill and Deb Johnsen at the Baraboo-Dells Airport. Over 80 people enjoyed delicious food catered by Geffert’s Catering of Reedsburg and then heard about World War II pilot Josh Sanford who flew with the famous Flying Tigers. Tom Thomas of Madison, a board member of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame, made the presentation telling about Sanford’s life and service in the military. The Society would like to thank the Johnsens for the use of the hangar which made for a fitting and comfortable spot for the annual Society picnic.



Mike Spencer, left, Prisoner Nutley, center, Don Mattie, right

The Manhunt of '61 Presentation August 22

IT was about 2 o'clock in the morning on an August weekday of 1961 when Lake Delton Policeman Bob Kohl and Sauk County Traffic Officer Jimmy Jantz pulled over an Oldsmobile with stolen Illinois plates. The pair had staked out the car and followed it after it pulled out of the Ishnala restaurant parking lot. The trio of men inside had aroused suspicion for the past several days living it up at the Dell View Motel and reportedly lighting cigars with \$20 bills. The traffic stop soon proved deadly as the men gunned the two officers down, killing one of them, and sped away. What ensued was the biggest manhunt in state history led by de facto sheriff Mike Spencer, husband of Sauk County's official sheriff Dolly Spencer. A presentation on the Manhunt of '61 will be given Thursday, August 22 at 7 p.m. at the Kay Mackesey Administration Building located at 50 Wisconsin Dells Parkway South in Lake Delton. Television footage from the manhunt will be shown along with artifacts including part of the bullet riddled Oldsmobile. Find out how the story ended and how life in Sauk County changed.

Pillars of Progress Donors

History Center donations since our last newsletter

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Total contributions since the last newsletter =
\$550.00

New Look for Flickr Site!

IF you haven't visited our photo sharing Flickr Website recently, you may be in for a surprise. The Flickr people have redesigned the site, including that of the SCHS, and it is now much easier to navigate and view the over 14,000 images of Sauk County from our photo collection. Pictures dating back to the mid and late 19th century up through the 20th century are easily accessible on these Web pages. So, if you have a few spare hours, you may wish to browse these historic images from our area's past. Go to: http://www.flickr.com/photos/sauk_county_historical_society/

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Recent donations

- Catherine Fanara concluded her talk about her Great, great, great Uncle, William Canfield by donating the photograph of him drawing water from a well that sparked her interest in him, and in genealogical research, along with a page from his diary that had been passed down through her family;
- Bill Schuette donated a gyroscope, blank postcards, a Texas Instruments TI-1500 electronic calculator with instructions on back, jacks (game), picture postcards of Sauk County Health Care Center, Reedsburg, Mid Continent Railway steam engine crossing Seeley Creek, Viking Village Shopping Center, Reedsburg, “Greetings from Reedsburg” and St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in Loganville, photographed by Bill Schuette;
- Eugene Denman donated a diploma/ teaching certificate from the Sauk County Training School awarded to Mabel Schneider in 1915;
- Mary Van Allen donated a large can labeled “Baraboo Best Shortening, Baraboo Foods, Co.” and a lace bedspread that belonged to Mary Rudy Hutter;
- Sauk County Atlas; Plat book, merchants’ and manufacturer’s guide; 1921 received from Virgil Hartje;
- Souvenir album, Devil’s Lake State park, was received anonymously through the mail
- Close to 300 family photographs from the Baker, Baron, Bartlett, Baurngardner, Broockman, Cline, Clough, Corneil, Cushman, Dawson, Day, Dowling, Hathaway, Hiney, Hoxie, Huntley, Lemons, Loomis, Mason, Norris, Payne, Reusch, Richards, Sealove, Smith, Thomas, Thomson/Huff, Werla, Williams, and Wright families with some papers, an Autograph Album, Genevieve Bartlett, 1885-1909; 4 penmanship workbooks, belonging to Marguerite Bartlett; and 2 Diaries kept by Jennie Bartlett, 1930 -33, and 1934-37.

Writing descriptions for photographs is fun and an easy way to learn the techniques used in cataloging artifacts. If you would like to learn how, please contact Becca DuBey, Curator, at curator@sauk-countyhistory.org. We have plenty to choose from and a newly outfitted lab ready and waiting for your volunteer contributions. No previous experience necessary!



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. Twenty-seven photos were submitted. First prize of \$100 goes to Morgan McArthur of New Berlin, WI, for his photo entitled, “Storm Door,” depicted here. Second prize of \$75 goes to Nathan Anderson of Minnetonka, MN, for “Historic Harrisburg One-Room School.” Third prize of \$50 goes to Heather Wedekind of Baraboo, WI for “Old Baraboo Train Depot.” Entries are on display in the West Square building near the West entry, and also on our Web site.

North Freedom Native is WWII B29 Pilot

GARVIN Kowalke was born in 1922, and raised on a rural North Freedom farm. When WWII broke out, he recalled in a 2005 interview, "I had a real desire to be a pilot. Planes were flying over from the Dells, they came over the farm, and I just loved airplanes. For some reason, I said, I think I'll go and be a pilot."

He was sent to California to train as a P38 crew chief mechanic, but his real love was flying. He signed up to become a pilot, and went to Randolph Air Force base in Texas to learn the trade. After graduation as an instructor pilot, he went on to teach other pilots in advanced aviation.

During that tenure, he attended an air show at Randolph and noted that, "I went back there and looked at all the airplanes and there she sat! They had a B29, and that was the most beautiful piece of machinery that I had ever seen, well, almost. I went through it and said, 'This is it, I want to be a B29 pilot, I want to fly this girl.'"

He was sent to Roswell, NM for combat aircraft training in a B29. Garvin said that, "The B29 was one of the most beautiful airplanes I have ever flown. It was brand new, just came out of the factory. It was firm; it was solid and just as stable as your kitchen table."

In early 1944, Kowalke was assigned to a B29 crew which was training in atomic weapons delivery systems. "We'd spend our weekends in the hangar going over a training session with the atomic bomb itself," he said. "They had the models there and we'd go through everything about it, its mounting, and the delivery system, how it's all wired, everything." Up until that time, Kowalke had never flown a combat mission. But that

was about to change.

He was subsequently assigned to firebombing missions over Japan. "We took off from Guam and hit targets in Japan, all the way from Nagasaki clean up to Hokkaido," said Kowalke. It was good training for the strategic mission that he would later command.

On one particular mission over Japan, his B29 was damaged and one engine was shut down. Shortly after that, a second engine failed. Garvin prepared the crew for ditching in the ocean. "I alerted the crew that we're going to have to ditch this bugger," he said. Fortunately, everyone survived with the exception of one crew member.

Kowalke was then assigned as Commander of another B29, and he named it "The City of Baraboo", and that was painted on the nose of the airplane. He flew 10 missions in this plane, and noted, "Two of those support missions were for the Hiroshima bombing, when I flew the weather reconnaissance the day before to" [answer the question], "Is it storming over Hiroshima?"

"The day after [the atomic bomb was dropped], we got a radiologist and got all the radiation detection equipment and hung it from the airplane, we looked like a porcupine, then we took off and went right over Hiroshima, changed altitude and made sure that the levels were there, if it was necessary to put anybody in there, so they would know what was going on. I took pictures of the bombing drop, of the damage and all that. My main comment on

that was that we hit a couple of targets in Japan, we were close to 90% of destroying the whole city."

After the war, Kowalke enlisted in the reserves. He was called up again during the Korean War and flew jet aircraft. Then the Viet Nam War came along, and he signed up for that too, and spent a year flying observation planes.

Garvin passed away in Baraboo, in 2011 at the age of 90.

This is only a short excerpt from the interview with Garvin Kowalke. To learn more about the missions that he flew, and the exciting adventures that he experienced, go to our web site: www.saukcountyhistory.org.



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History Center, 900 2nd Ave., Open 12-4 p.m. Weds - Sat
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www.saukcountyhistory.org

In Memoriam

LONDON H. RISTEEN, a society member, died on April 30, 2013 at his home in Chicago. He was born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin in 1927. Risteen moved to Baraboo, Wisconsin in 1930, and called Baraboo home until he graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a teaching degree in 1950. Risteen's teaching plans were interrupted by service in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Korean War. After he returned to civilian life in 1952, Risteen taught high school English in Stoughton, Wisconsin. These years turned out to be the springboard for his entry into the educational publishing business with Scott, Foresman & Co., a career he continued for 35 years. He worked his way up through both sales and editorial divisions of the company and counted as the highlight of his career his years as Editor-in-Chief during the 1970s when the company was America's largest school-book publisher. During the past several years, Landon has been a great help in proof reading our newsletters. His learned grammatical, punctuation and sentence structural suggestions have benefited us immensely in making our newsletter a more professional publication.

President's Report

By Paul Wolter

THE May 18 dedication of the history center was a day I will not forget. Scores of people turned out to see the new facility and learn about its past, present and future. I would like to thank Baraboo Mayor Mike Palm, County Board Chair Marty Krueger and Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee Chair Judy Ashford for their remarks and help in dedicating the new building. I would also like to thank James Delacour for his remarks and for making the journey from the west coast along with his sister. Mr. Delacour is the grandson of William McFetridge who, along with his brother E. P. McFetridge, once owned and operated the Island Woolen Mill. It was neat to have two descendants at the event. This reminded me once again that there really are descendants out there of many of the old Sauk County names that many of us are familiar with. Though they may not live in or near Sauk County anymore, their ties remain strong. This is the case with many of our members who live out of the area or out of state. I am always interested to read the residence locations of our members on the back of our newsletters. Our supporters range from Washington to Maryland. There are deep roots in Sauk County but there are also broad branches that reach across the country and indeed around the world. This was especially true during the two World Wars. This year, as we focus on "Sauk County – Above and Beyond" with an emphasis on Sauk County aviators, we are learning more about Sauk County's involvement in world affairs. The story of Garvin Kowalke in this newsletter serves as a reminder that World War II took Sauk County residents to the ends of the earth and that their stories came back with them. Stories like this are archived at the Sauk County Historical Society for future generations. With the opening of the new history center, we are in a good position to collect even more. Your support helps us do that and has helped us open this new facility. On behalf of future generations, I thank you.

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Greater Sauk County Executive Director Karen Sacia congratulates Sauk County Historical Society President Paul Wolter on the newly established Sauk County Historical Society Endowment Fund funded by an anonymous donor.

July/August 2013

The Sauk County Historical Society

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