

Eagle Historical Society

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 2, No. 1

Winter 1991

Looking Back On Our First Year

By Diane Thuemling

What a year! It has been a wonderful opportunity for me to be your president this past year. Thank you for your support and help throughout the year. We should be proud of all the things we accomplished. We have a name, a logo and a growing membership. We just adopted our constitution and bylaws. We sold plat maps and postcards. We have acquired many artifacts and have a display case for showing these items. (All we need now is a building.) And several of our committees are going strong. Articles are being printed in area papers about our community and its people. Please continue to support the Eagle Historical Society; it's a wonderful opportunity.

I would like to congratulate the officers for 1991. Our new president is Elaine Raduechel, a devoted and hard-working member, who has many exciting ideas for the upcoming year. Vice president is Irma Jolliffe. She is always on the go and her Oral History committee often has articles printed in area newspapers. Jean Jolliffe returns as secretary. She brings fresh ideas to our meetings and I'm happy to see her in this position. Pat Wilton is treasurer. She knows what's going on around Eagle and is at every meeting willing to help. She handled finances so well last year I'm glad she's back to do it again. On the Board of

Directors are Donna Fanshaw (her term ends in 1993), myself (1992) and Charlene Ritchey (1991). The Board should be a great asset to our society.

I would like to say thank you to Betty Isleb. She did a wonderful job as vice president last year. Betty, we will miss you on the board, but you are still involved in the society in other areas so I won't say goodbye. Thank you for all the advice you give me; you made my job easier.

In closing, I'd like to ask everyone to continue your support of the society. With you, we can accomplish our objective: the society is dedicated to preserving and recording the history of Eagle and the surrounding area. Please join us at the next meeting, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!

1991 Eagle Historical Society Meeting Dates

March 9	August 10
April 13	September 14
May 11	October 12
June 8	November 9
July 13	December 14

All meetings are at 1 p.m. at the Eagle Village and Town Hall.

Oral History Committee Records Memories

By Irma Jolliffe

(At the annual meeting, Oral History Committee Chairman Irma Jolliffe gave a fascinating report on the work done by her group to date. We thought you might enjoy reading her comments.)

Here are some highlights of the folks, some 20 or more, that Joan Menendez and I have interviewed since the Society formed last year.

Last November (1989), we called on James Bovee and his wife, Fern Marty Bovee. Fern has now passed away and James is living at East Troy Manor. He served on the town board from 1933-73. James recalls the Eagle of his early days, when the town's population was about 200. You knew everyone. You would see a lot of them at the dances held in the Masonic Hall on Main St., now an apartment complex. He got his first car, a Model T Ford, in 1912. Mr. Bovee is 95 years old.

Dr. J.J. Fitzgerald came to Eagle in 1895 and within a few years, the home became a hospital. Horse and carriage were turn-of-the-century made. Their speed limited the area a medical facility could service. Dr. Fitzgerald, like most of the medical men of the time, felt it necessary for a long confinement after a birth. Mr. Bovee's mother spent almost two weeks in the hospital. The cost was \$125. The doctor **died in December 1952.**

We met with Eliza Chapman Meredith in December (1989). She is 97 years old and was a school teacher many years. She went to Whitewater Normal School in 1912 to obtain a teaching diploma. At that time, it was a six-week course. She taught at Jericho School from 1929 to 1944 when the school closed.

Our next visit was to see Harold Chapman, another old-timer; at one time, owner of the Standard Station. He is now 93 years old. He also told us of the dances at the Masonic Hall where he met his wife, Ruby Rockteacher. He tells of the bank robbery in 1920. The

railroad brought development to the village. Harold recalls many times in the 1920s the cars would be filled with polished barley for the Milwaukee breweries. He says there used to be a stockyard behind the present village hall. Farmers would bring their hogs and cattle there for shipment to the Milwaukee yards. Harry Smart was the first to introduce the automobile to the village. His business was located where the present Chapman Service Station stands. Eagle also had a pickle factory and creamery.

Last January (1990), we called on Martin Rockteacher. He is 84 years old and was born on the place where Martin and Betty Werner now live. He gave us the history of most of the Waukesha County roads. He married the girl next door, Evelyn Kramer, in 1927. In 1928, Mr. Rockteacher began his 44-year association with the Waukesha County Highway Department. Martin's wage was 60¢ an hour, 10-hour days and six days a week.

In January, an article was published about the Wilton family. Don Wilton is the current town chairman; his grandfather was a town assessor, supervisor and head of the roads; and his great-grandfather was a town supervisor.

Kettle Moraine Antiques (Merilund Farm), Highway X, has been a landmark since 1965. Here is where we visited Mary Ledicker Berglund. Mary was doing lab work with the North Prairie Pet Milk plant (Morey) and later with a co-op that served most of the dairies in southeastern Waukesha County. These included Brookhill, Hawthorne Melody and Wern Farms.

**Harry Smart was the
first to introduce the
automobile to the village.**

In April, we called on the Eagle cobbler, Carol Thurston, owner of Thurston Shoe, Eagle. He and his wife, Eris, have been fixing shoes in Eagle since 1949. Their original store was on Main Street, but now is located as an annex to their Eagle Street home. While in the service, he was sent to southern Australia where he worked with a government facility which kept the troops in footwear.

Since 1916, there has been a person named Mealy in the funeral business in Eagle, said the third-generation Jerry Mealy. His grandfather, Jerome, was the first to live in the house on Grove Street, which has been remodeled during the years to its present state of home/business. Years ago, everything was done in the home.

Lorraine Borre from Palmyra presented the 1884 autograph album of Ida J. Murdock to the Eagle Historical Society. Although Lorraine lives in Palmyra, and last century albums are not prizes for antique dealers, but trophies for historical societies, she feels the album belongs "back in Eagle." Just read the first page, says Borre.

"My album is a garden spot,
Where all my friends may sow,
Where thorns and thistles flourish not,
But flowers alone may grow.
With smiles for sunshine,
Tears for showers,
I'll water, watch and guard these
flowers."

-- Ida J. Murdock, Eagle
January 7, 1884

Louise Breidenbach-Hyland was very interesting. She was 16 years old when her picture appeared on the front page of both Milwaukee newspapers. She was a night-time operator (telephone) at the time of the Eagle bank robbery on Sept. 28, 1924.

Still another Eagle resident now living at the Virginia Nursing Home, Waukesha, is Beulah Silvernail Beyer. She is 95 years old and was born two miles out of Eagle, near the Palestine School. She was also a teacher.

Clara Schmid Burton was born in 1896 in the house on Main Street in Eagle that her father and his brother-in-law built the previous year. She also tells of the Masonic dances and how everyone went.

We also visited Katherine Bovee Howard the same day. Both ladies reside at Avalon Manor, Waukesha. She was born in 1897 in the farmhouse her grandparents put up in the 1840s in the rural part of the village of Eagle, with a population then of nearly 100. Katherine's husband was a dentist at the Diamond Hotel, known now as Sasso's. She was also a teacher. She gave us the records of the Open Door Club, ladies that met in the early 1900s.

We finally got a date with Mike Sasso in August. He is a living source of information for the area. He's often called "Mr. Eagle." Mr. Sasso remembers the good times at the Opera House and the Masonic Hall.

In October, we visited Mary Sasso Crosswaite. She was 2½ years old when her parents brought the Pall Mall Tavern, now Someplace, in Eagle, in 1926.

Orrin Benson, the dog trainer on Hwy. 67, told us so many things, he filled a tape on both sides. His story hasn't been printed yet.

Dick Schroeder's article was published in the November paper. He tells of the importance of the railroad (the Milwaukee Road) to Eagle. We had a Bobby-line; this was the spur track that went from Eagle's main line to Elkhorn. He showed us nice things he made in his house. He is giving us an old set of encyclopedias that we will be picking up.

The cobblestone house on Hwy. 59, outside of Eagle, also has a history. Mabel Pardee Thomas' great-grandfather, Ahira Hinkley, built this home in 1848, the year that Wisconsin became a state. The stones were brought from Pretty Lake and they had a hole in a board, so they would have the same size.

We also met with Arthur Stocks and his wife, Evangeline. He is the fellow that all the women in Eagle call if in trouble with their electrical problems. Art worked for Waukesha County also.

Edward and Welthy Mueller also gave us a good story. The two of them have been 4-H leaders since 1953 -- 37 years! He also was with the ASC office in Waukesha.

He told us of the "Stage Coach Trail," north on Hwy. 67. We are going to look at it because you can still see where it went on Wilton Road.

I found an article on Eloise Richards, published last November. Eloise has been known in Eagle as "the bank lady." She must have been there some 40 years. She is a very active member of the Friends of Old World Wisconsin.

??QUERY??

● Does anyone have a picture of Dr. Fitzgerald?

Alice Baker probably gave the following presentation in the early 1960s. The second part of her "ruminations" will appear in the next newsletter.

Records, Risibilities, and Ruminations Concerning the Hamlet of Jericho and the Village of Eagle

By Alice Baker

Somewhere among the fairy tales is the story of a magic ring. The possessor of this fabulous ring could put it on her table at night and thereby be able to go where'er she wished. I am assuming the possession of that ring and testing its powers by asking it to take me, and you also, not only around Jericho and Eagle, but also stipulating the time at which I and you would like to be there.

Magic Ring, I should like to be in and around Jericho in the early 1800s. What would this country be like? Since there is no written record concerning much of this region, Imagination and analogy must be called into use, a most dangerous practice when writing history. But of this resource I am sure that most of you past the 50-year age can supplement with many others the incidents which I have listed.

The region was a woodsy place, woods more extensive than now and timber much larger than that which now exists. In the 1880s, west of Betts Road, there was a stand of timber so thick that the pond which flanked it could scarcely be seen. From what is now Highway NN (now Highway 99) to Highway 20 leading to Troy Center, there was a region of timber broken only by the farm homes of Francis Baker, Jonathan Betts and John Chapman, Sr., grandfather of Harold Chapman and Archie of present-day Eagle.

But the droughts of 1886-89 thinned that band of trees and today, Alvin Nelson cultivates the land flanking "Sherman's Pond" as my generation call it, as do the land owners south to the John Chapman place, now girl's camp.

Another instance of this expanse of wood, now non-existent, was found at the former John Buell place on Highway 67. Up to 1920, one of the best exhibits of dense primeval woods could be found north of his rambling house. Basswood trees, a yard in diameter, oaks of similar girth, unbranched for 30 to 40 feet, towered toward the sky.

In the extension of the Buell forest which Harold Pardee owned from 1935 to 1947, I found the stump of a common chestnut tree. This stump was easily a yard in diameter, hollow, and from the outside still live rim, shoots ten to 15 feet high were growing. I know of no other evidence of the common chestnut in this region. Do you?

Magic ring, take me to the animal trails which led to the sources of water. These trails helped the Indian to the same source, and in some instances, were the basis of highways for the white man. I should have liked to watch the deer, raccoons, skunks, woodchucks, minks, weasels, martins, bear, wolves, and even a few lynxes, as they quenched their thirst at Hinkley's spring, or Wm. Sherman's stream or springs, streams at Eagleville or the pond. There was no lake at Eagleville till Dr. Daniel Bigelow put the mill dam in December or early January of 1836-7.

Potawatomi Village

It would have been a pleasure to meet the friendly Potawatomis, to see their villages, one of which was large, down near the bridge on Highway 83. Both Jericho and Eagle figured as their hunting grounds. Proof of this fact is found in the fact that most of you present today have Indian arrowheads picked up on your farm property. In the 1880s, my father, whose farm was in Section 33 of Eagle, found many arrowheads, some large, of heavy flint for deer and bear. Some smaller for birds and other small animals. I suspect the arrowheads you found were the weapons that missed their marks, for the Indian would have saved the ones that brought down the deer or bear. Many of you here today may have collections of these same artifacts.

Vicariously, I should, and no doubt all of you would, have liked prospecting this region. There was a time when trappers were the one type of whites who had knowledge of this region. The many marshes in Eagle and Mukwonago made ideal homes for mink, martin, a few beaver and many muskrats, hence a right region for men who knew how to trap. Many of the first settlers did prospecting. A.R. Hinkley, his brother Henry and Andrew Schofield prospected this region a full month before settling on their properties. T. Wm. West, Thos. Sugden and Joseph Smart looked around before choosing their claims.

I should like to have been with the Chas. Cox family when they selected a site on the property now owned by Mr. Acker, the northwest corner of the intersection of Highways E and 99 (Hwy NN). Cox, his wife and two adopted children by the name of Smith decided that the spot was right. The factors of that decision were:

Water, nearby in the creek; trees in abundance with which to build a cabin; game in the woods; and grass for horse or oxen; their covered wagon a home till a cabin could be built. Cox and his family had come from Indiana and found the spot in June of 1836. Cox is credited as being the first settler of Mukwonago, but his tenure here was short, since he died in July 1838 and is buried in the little cemetery around the corner at Jericho. Time and weather have obliterated any marking on his tombstone and since there are five such marble slabs, his burial plot is not easy to find.

First Settler

In early days, there was much controversy as to who was the first settler. It would have been interesting to be present that Sept. 20th, 1836, when A.R. Hinkley cut his initials on a tree with such celerity that Andrew Schofield is credited with saying, "Thee is quick with thy knife, Ahira!"

Why did Hinkley decide with such haste on the acres in Sections 11, 12 and 14? Water in a nearby spring. Their trail that morning has led to the big spring still flowing on Highway NNN, just south of the railroad track. There was timber for a cabin, plenty of it, and clearings south and west provided fields for many crops without labor for clearing the lands.

There is still some controversy as the first settler of Jericho and Eagle. Mrs. Caroline Barber Ford of Lake Geneva doubts that Hinkley was ahead of her grandfather who took up land managed by John Lueck. To Sherman much credit must be given for he has put into written record a history of his life and his coming to Jericho. His record does not, however, have the day of the month when he found Chas. Cox in his covered wagon. Since he left Ripley, New York, in August 1836, crossed the state of Michigan with horse and wagon, skirted the Lake to Chicago and took a sail boat to Milwaukee, I think the assumption is clear that Hinkley was first since Hinkley left Milwaukee with three companions on Aug. 14. Suffice it to say that Sherman could have preceded Hinkley. In that fall season, he, Sherman, felled trees for a 14-by-14 log house, cut enough hay to feed his horse during the winter, and started back to New York by Nov. 1.

There was a friendly rivalry between Hinkley and Sherman and in their later days, Hinkley always wanted to outlive Sherman. Hinkley lived 97 years from 1810 to 1907; Sherman lived 100 years, lacking one month from 1809 to 1909.

I suspect that again water played an important part in Sherman's decision to choose Section 24 or he might have had an eye to beauty, for, even today, there is no more beautiful setting for a home that that John Lueck and his family enjoy.

TIME TO RENEW!

It's time to renew your membership for 1991. Our membership year runs from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31. If you haven't already paid your dues, an application is enclosed. Or pass it along to someone who might be interested.

Do you know. . .

- how Eagle got its name?
- why they call it Diamond Hill?
- when your house was built and who lived there before you?
- what it was like living here 100 years ago?
- where the first settlers in Eagle lived?
- that Eagle had a mill, a hotel, a hospital, a bandstand and a pickle factory?

Eagle Historical Society
217 West Main Street
Eagle, Wisconsin 53119

EAGLE
Historical
Society

Discovering
and Preserving
The Past



"In the summer of 1836, when three young English landseekers, Thomas Sugden, John Coats, and W.C. Garton, came to a beautiful prairie, they saw a large bald eagle soaring about, whereupon they called the locality Eagle Prairie, from which is derived the name of both the town and village."

J.H.A. Lacher
Southeastern Wisconsin
A History of
Old Milwaukee County

That fall of 1836, A.R. Hinkley filed one of the first claims in the Town of Eagle by carving his name upon a tree with a jack knife. But Hinkley, who did not build a cabin or bring his family until 1838, was not to spend the winter. The first to do so were Ebenezer Thomas, a native of Wales, and his wife, Isabelle Elizabeth DeWolf Thomas.

Ten years later, Wisconsin was not yet a state, but the people of the Town of Eagle had built homes, sawmills, schools and a hotel; established a Methodist church; sent men to the territorial legislature; opened blacksmith shops and taverns; and found a 16¼ carat diamond.

Eagleville, Palestine and Jericho were busy settlements by 1851 when the railroad came through Waukesha County and the Village of Eagle.

"All too often we take the importance of our history for granted. In our fastpaced world, moving at a speed that reduces all to a blur, we pass dates, places and names without a thought. The names and events of the past may not evoke a memory or an appreciation for their contributions to the quality of life we are able to enjoy. As well, standing next to you may be a newcomer, totally unaware of the rich legacy this county offers. Gain not only an appreciation for the past, but share it with others as you add substance and meaning to where all of us live."

Waukesha County
Historical Society Newsletter

As a member of the Eagle Historical Society, you can help preserve our heritage. Join us in saving Eagle's history so that the contributions of the past are not forgotten and future generations can learn more about themselves from this legacy. The projects and committees you can become involved with include:

Whose house?
Oral history
Conservation
Written History
Geography and History
And Others

Membership Application

Return to:

Eagle Historical Society
c/o Alice Baker Library
217 West Main Street
Eagle, Wisconsin 53119

Please check membership desired:

- ☐ Individual \$10.00 annually
☐ Family \$15.00 annually
☐ Seniors (65 & Over) \$8.00 annually
Membership year ^{Jan.} Nov. 1 to ^{Dec.} Oct. 31

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Interests: _____

Amount Enclosed _____ Date _____

Please make checks payable to:
Eagle Historical Society

☐ I would like to hear more about
the volunteer program.

Meetings Second Sat. ea. month
1 p.m. Eagle Village/Town Hall

A Note From The President

By Elaine Raduechel

Congratulations to this year's new officers and board members.

With our second year well under way, a look back shows that in a short time, we have accomplished and collected a great deal thanks to our members and to the generosity of many others. We appreciate everyone's interest and many contributions of money and artifacts.

I would like to echo much of what Diane said previously, and recognize especially Betty Isleb's contributions. She wrote our much-needed constitution and by-laws and guided us in other ways, in addition to her responsibilities as our vice president. Without her our society would not be -- yet. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH, BETTY!

I would like to thank Diane Thuemling for her many contributions as our first

president. Thank you also to Charlene Ritchey, recording secretary; Jean Jolliffe, corresponding secretary; Pat Wilton, treasurer; and all of the committees.

Thank you for your support in electing me president. I'm proud to be in this position and will do my best. I know I will need all of your advice and support, and I look forward to a great year working with all of you.

Thanks,
Elaine

1991 Eagle Historical Society Officers and Board Members

President	Elaine Raduechel
Vice president	Irma Jolliffe
Secretary	Jean Jolliffe
Treasurer	Pat Wilton
Board Member (1991)	Charlene Ritchey
Board Member (1992)	Diane Thuemling
Board Member (1993)	Donna Fanshaw

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