

EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Issue 4

Fall 1999



EHS HOLIDAY EVENTS

Dec. 11

10:00 until 4:30

Raffle items on view and entries taken at the community center. (It is not necessary to purchase a tour ticket to enter the raffle.) Raffle drawings will follow closing of tour homes. Call Inma at 594-2386 to donate raffle items. Cookies and coffee will be free. EHS would appreciate any cookie donations.

noon until 4:30

Santa and smokemen figures on display at the EHS museum. Call Elaine at 594-3301 to loan figures for the display.

1:00 until 4:00

Tour of homes. Tickets cost \$6.00 on the day of the tour. Advance tickets will be available for \$5.00 at Eagle Video, Krestan's, and Sidetrack. ♦

EHS Is a Tax-Exempt Entity

The Eagle Historical Society, Inc. has been officially recognized as a tax-exempt organization at both state and federal levels. ♦

ANNUAL MEETING

Nov. 20 – 1:00 at EHS Museum. All invited.

Membership

The Eagle Historical Society currently has 314 members. We welcome the following members, who joined since our last newsletter:

New Members

Robert Baker, Dean Japp, James L. Johnson, Alvin & Dorothy Kau, Richard & Gigi Mueller, Gerald & Florence Neary, Carole Raether, and Sebastian & Loretta Terrana.

Honorary Member

Clara Pierce

Donations

Cash Donations

Mary (Polly) Cramer, \$50 and Cooper Power Systems – Thomas A. Edison Technical Center, \$200.00. (Cooper donated in response to a donation by R. Hartung, a Cooper employee.)

These and future donations will be kept in a separate fund for improvements to the museum.

Item Donations

Richard Baker, Robert Baker, Bank One, Jean Bowey, Lisa Busche, Carol Calkins, Citizens Bank, Mabel Finney, Mary Japp, George & Betty Kau, Karen Kennedy, Dorothy Kramer, Darlene Landmann, Roy Leonhardt, Ruth Ann Mueller, Welthy Mueller, and Janet Radabaugh.

Wish List

Dictaphone (for transcribing oral histories)

Computer scanner ♦

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Letter from Clara Howell Pierce on Melendy Farm History – August 20, 1999

I was happy to receive the framed "Certificate of Honorary Membership in the Eagle Historical Society."

I have lived here since my marriage to Charles Chapin Pierce (1902-1988) nearly 70 years ago. I still live on the Chapin-Pierce family farm in the north-west corner of the Town of Eagle. My husband's folks were in the habit of shopping in Palmyra and my husband went to high school in Palmyra, so I really don't know too many of the Eagle people. There were not many cars when Charlie went to high school and the roads were not plowed out in the winter, so he rode his pony to school – about 6 miles each way. At that time (1915) Ford Model T cars could be bought for \$260 – this was about the time of the assembly line in the Ford plant.

This part of the Town of Eagle is called Melendy's Prairie. The following is from Daniel Melendy's obituary: Mr. Melendy was born at Gilford, Vermont, Feb. 13, 1810. In 1836 he came to Milwaukie (sic) and was there in the winter of 1836-37. Early in the spring of 1837 he made a prospective tour through what are now the counties of Waukesha, Jefferson and Dodge for the purpose of selecting land for a farm house. In April he left Prairieville (now Waukesha) on foot with a sack of flour, a supply of pork and an ax and wended his way westward, finally making a halt on the beautiful prairie (Melendy's Prairie, so named in honor of this brave pioneer who made the first settlement). His first night's rest was under a tree near where now stands the old Stone School House. On the following day he erected for himself a log cabin, six feet square – covered it with bark and called it home. In the newly built shelter he took his second night's rest, which was occasionally disturbed by the howling of prairie wolves. At this time there were no signs of settlement for many miles – consequently he had no visitors for some time, except for the red men of the forest who chanced that way in their travels. In time, Mr. Melendy made 'claim' and secured title to a large tract of land on this prairie and the adjoining oak openings, which presented a beautiful appearance. In the springtime, the prairie was covered with many beautiful flowers, while the majestic burr oaks, standing in groups, graced its borders, lending an appearance of an overgrown orchard in the young pioneer's native state. With these fascinations in nature—and he was a lover of nature in its variety—the young, sturdy pioneer was prompted and encouraged to push forward and make sure of a comfortable and pleasant home in this Edenlike land.

Daniel Melendy later disposed of parts of his land to other actual settlers—some of whom came from Vermont also. My husband's grandparents bought this farm, which had originally belonged to Mr. Melendy, in 1845. Many of the pioneer settlers who bought land from Mr. Melendy emigrated from Cornwall in the British Isles, but Charlie's grandparents, John B. and Emeline (Clark) Chapin, were from Vermont. At that time there were still a few Indians in this area. They had a trail across our farm from Spring Lake to Pretty Lake.

The first house built on Melendy's Prairie other than log was built by Leverett and Sophronia Sherman. They came by oxcart in 1837. Their daughter, Emogene, was born April 12, 1841 at the home of a midwife in the Town of Sullivan. She was said to be the only other white woman for miles around. Three weeks later, on a sleigh drawn by oxen, Emogene was brought back to the newly finished house where she was to remain for 80 years. The house was made of grout—a formula very few knew how to make. This beautiful old house was recently bought and done over by Mr. and Mrs. Dale Schroeder.

In the summer 1999 edition of the Waukesha Co. H.S. Landmark, there is a story about our farm (which has now been in the same family for over 150 years, and was honored as a Sesquicentennial Farm at last year's state fair). It includes old family letters saved from pioneer days and pictures of John and Emeline Chapin.

In 1970 I wrote Historical Gleanings of Melendy's Prairie. which is sold by the Palmyra Historical Society.

I am now 95 years old, otherwise I would be happy to attend your meetings. Thank you again. ♦

Ahira Hinkley and His Pardee Descendants

By Mabel Pardee Thomas

(from an oral history tape)

Mabel's great-grandfather, Ahira Hinkley, was one of the first settlers in what is now Eagle. When he was 25, the opening of "the West" attracted him and his brother Henry (farmers from Lebanon, New Hampshire). In 1835 they moved here to what was known as "the prairie" and settled near a spring in the area of what is now Sprague Road.

After staking claim to a section of land (640 acres) and building a cabin, Ahira returned to Lebanon and married Mary Daniels in 1836. They lived in the cabin and their first three children were born there.

In 1838 Ahira built a cobblestone house, which still stands today (on Highway 59). He brought sand all the way from Pretty Lake and selected the stones by

using a plank with a hole in it to measure them. In this way he was able to make sure they were all about the same size. Three more children were born to the couple while they lived in this house, including Mabel's grandmother (Emeline Hinkley, later Pardee). She was born in 1848—the year Wisconsin became a state. Ahira Hinkley died in 1907 at the age of 97.

Mabel's parents, Don and Florence "Flossie" Pardee, bought the J. J. Lurvey house on Main Street in the Village of Eagle in 1912. Flossie was a long-time telephone operator in Eagle.

Mabel married Gilbert Thomas in 1940, lived in Waukesha for a while, and later returned to Main Street in Eagle. ♦

CORRECTION

This image shows part of a napkin from the Flossie Pardee collection. A previous newsletter article incorrectly identified it as collected by Mabel Thomas.



Second-Place Winner, 1999 EHS History Contest

The Eagle Volunteer Fire Department

By Jarret Heil

The Early Years

The Eagle Volunteer Fire Department was started in 1936. The first fire station was built in 1952. It was built on the same spot that the current fire station is on, Main Street. There were twenty-five volunteer firefighters when the department started, all men. Now there are forty-five.

Calling for Help

When people from the town and village of Eagle needed the fire department year ago, they called on their phones. Volunteer fire fighters had a "fire phone" in their home, the phone that rang when someone was calling for help. When someone called, sometimes ten or twelve firefighters would answer their phones at the same time and the caller would hear ten or twelve "hellos"! A loud whistle would blow to notify all the firefighters to come to the station for a fire call. The sound of the whistle is like the one that blows at noon today.

Fire Equipment

In the beginning firefighters only had a few pieces of protective clothes. They wore rubber helmets and rubber boots. Now firefighters wear clothes called "turn out gear". They now wear a big helmet to cover their heads, a heavy fire-proof coat that comes down to their knees, pants called "bunkers", tall boots, gloves, goggles, a gas mask and breathing equipment.

There are types of equipment the firefighters used years ago and still use. They are: ladders, hoses, axes, and pike poles for poking holes in walls. Long ago ladders were made of wood. Now they are metal.

Fire Trucks and Ambulances

Long ago horses pulled fire trucks. Water was pumped by hand, then steam power was used to pump water. That is when horses were needed, to pull the heavy steam pumpers. Later gasoline powered tractors would be used to pull the steamers to fires. Firefighters learned that they could use the gas engines to pump water and that was the end of the steamers. The Eagle Fire Department's first ambulance was also used as a hearse. Now there are two ambulances, a six-wheeler called a "Gator", and two fire engines. There is one tanker that can carry 3,500 gallons of water. There is also a truck called a "heavy rescue" truck. It is used at car crashes and accidents. There is also a forest fire truck. It is used for grass fires and it is able to drive over fields and rough terrain. This is all very different than when the department first started.

The Past

There never were any fires that burned down the whole town but there have been fires that burned down houses. Those were from natural gas leaks. No firefighters ever died in any fire accidents but some have been burned or badly injured.

The Present

The fire department covers thirty-six square miles. If a fire call is in or not far from the station, it takes about ten minutes to get there. Now there are women on the fire department, three are firefighters and the rest are helpers on the ambulance. Mr. Mealy, the assistant chief, owns a Dalmatian that is a department mascot. His name is Spot. He rides in a fire truck with the firefighters when they come to parades.

Although the fire department has changed since it was started many years ago, some things remain the same. Firefighters still put out fires: grass, house, car and barn. Now when someone needs the fire department they can just call 9-1-1. I hope you learned a lot about the fire department. ♦

Clothesline Exercises

By Dale Mueller

I was considering clothesline and its many uses the other day, recalling how it played many roles in my early life. I thought about the time Daffy Dave, Leaky Larry and I made the bolas and how they considered going to the land of its origin, to escape their mother. There was too, the time I almost lost part of my anatomy by lassoing a goose, but the time my late brother Milt almost lost his life to one sticks in mind.

I think the year was 1946 or thereabouts and on a hot, sultry summer day around noon is when it all took place. It was dinner time there in Eagle and Mom, Dad, brother Milt and I had sat down for lunch. I'm here to tell you it was hot and we had both the front and back door to the kitchen open, screen doors in place. Milt was sitting so he could look out the front door and across the road, to where our elderly neighbor, Lottie Parson, lived.

Lottie was a good enough old soul, didn't have much truck with kids, but probably being in her seventies, who could blame her? She never seemed to do much over there, kept mostly to the house, though she'd be seen grubbing around in her garden some. I never thought she got enough exercise, just when I'd find myself in her garden chasing a ball or something. She yelled a lot at me, the only person who gave her any exercise. I thought she should get more sun.

I don't recall telling her to take more sun or to get out in the air more, but that day, as if by mental telepathy, we saw her dragging out this strange bundle.

Chewing not taking much concentration, Milt and I idly watched to see what she was up to. She started unfolding this thing and that in itself was kinda funny, what with the way she bowleggedly stumped around in her long brown dress.

Pretty soon it was evident what the bundle was, for it unfolded into a hammock of questionable vintage. She dragged it back and forth, rolled it over a couple times (sic) and finally got one end pointed toward a tree, the other toward the house.

Milt had already started grinning and looked like he was working himself up to a laugh. I didn't see any humor.

Pretty soon, she went in the house and came out with this coil of clothesline and started to eye-ball the distance between the already-mentioned tree and the house. It was a far piece, but she had a whole lot of line. First she payed out a length that would reach from the house to the head end of the hammock and stood there considering. A single strand of line didn't seem to her like it would be strong enough, so she doubled it, measured it out and cut what she needed, doing the same to the foot end to the tree.

She tied the whole business together, the head end rope going to a little hook screwed into the house. If I would have "known from gambling," I would have put odds on the hook either straightening out or pulling loose. Milt, on the other had, was betting against the rope. Mental odds layed now, we saw her start testing, back to us, pushing down in the middle of the hammock to get the stretch out of the ropes.

Some people will hold that a hammock is an inanimate object, though I firmly believe they have a mind and can turn on you at any given time. Lottie would have a learning experience and get some exercise, all in one fell swoop.

Satisfied that the ropes were substantial, it was now time to make a real commitment and facing us now, hands firmly grasping the edge at the back of her knees, she started to lower some of her weight.

Milt started a funny burbling noise, real deep down. By this time, Mom and Dad had reversed their seats, to see what was of such vast interest. Lottie sank a little lower, the ropes started to vocally protest by way of creaking. Milt was

Continued on page 6

holding his own, but ready to explode at any moment. Mom and Dad had entered into the thing, watching with the keenest interest. By this time, the hammock was not much more than a foot and a half off the ground; the ropes were crying for mercy and then in a trice, broke! Completely overbalanced, the poor ol' thing hit the deck, rolled onto her back, dress flying up over her head, exposing pantaloons and all. For Milt, this was the complete end and he went into an uncontrolled belly-laugh on the floor in the fetal position. I too could see the humor and joined in as best I could, but couldn't hold a candle to Milt, redfaced and doubled up on the floor. Mom tried her best to "shush" Milt, but didn't have her heart in it, what with laughing along with everyone else. I recall Dad having to wipe tears from his eyes, so he missed some of Lottie gathering her shattered hammock and pride, with Milt still on the floor, throttle still wide open. Mom said later that she would have thrown a pail of cold water on him if she could have lifted one, but we all, including Lottie, recovered.

Yes clothesline has its uses, but it can be dangerous if not used correctly.

(This article was published in the Palmyra Enterprise on December 5, 1991. It is used here by permission of Ruth Ann Mueller, Dale's widow. She was kind enough to share his articles with EHS, and they are on file and available for review at the museum.) ♦



How This Old World Changed

Since I was born some years ago this world has changed somehow,
We use both milk and butter that has never seen a cow.
We have instant coffee, instant tea, instant this and that,
Lots of other instant foods not fit to feed a cat.

We have substitute sugar, substitute for salt,
We have so many substitutes we don't know who to fault.
Boys and girls both dress alike, can't tell one from other,
Same way tho with Mom and Dad, can't tell Dad from Mother.

One more thing that doesn't look right, I think it is a sin,
They moved the cookstove out-of-doors and moved the outhouse in!
I don't know how far this will go, but up until this minute,
I love this old world of ours 'cause we can still live in it!

(Written by a senior citizen) ♦



Eagle Historical Society

PRESENTS

1999 Christmas Tour of Homes

Saturday,
December 11 • 1-4 p.m.

Take a scenic drive through Eagle and tour four homes decorated in the holiday spirit.

The Eagle Municipal Building will be the site of the annual raffle and free refreshments.

Purchase tickets in
advance, \$5.00 each,
available at:

Krestan's Food Store
Eagle Video and Pizza
Sidetrack

or by calling
594-2294 or 594-3382.
Tickets will also be available
the day of the tour at the
Eagle Municipal Building
for \$6.00 each.



Eagle Historical Society
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Eagle WI 53119



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NOVEMBER 26, 1960



BAND CONCERTS were once held in this tiny bandstand, located at the crossroads of Main st. and Hy. 67. A landmark, it was built in the early 1900s by the Eagle Advancement society.