

EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Issue 1

Winter 1999

EHS News

BOARD MEMBERS

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Jean Bowey, Richard Harthun, Donald J. Ledrowski, Bea Marquardt, Margo Morner, Edward Mueller, Welthy Mueller, Bernice Nowicki, Jeffery Nowicki, Esther Stead, and Marcie Winzenried. ♦

Reminder

It's time to renew your membership. If you have not renewed, please use the application form on page 8. As of January 11, 1999, we have 114 paid members. Our goal for the year is 300 members. Invite your neighbors and friends to join and help reach our goal. The Eagle Historical Society is an important asset to the community.

Patrons \$100 and over – Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hegwood, Mr. & Mrs. Chet Poetsch. **Sponsor** – Polly Cramer **Sustaining** – Gene & Marion Fleckenstein, Galen & Susan Harris, and Mr. & Mrs. Scott Simon

NEW MEMBERS – Pat Arnold, Jim & Sue Bauman,

Kathleen Chapman, Tim & Beth Conrad, Mae Dahms, Robert & Polly Dake, Rosanne Day, Martha Falada, Paul & Sandra Fisher, Gary & Sharon Gonwa, Phillip & Barbara Hall, Sandy Hanson, Gail Harding, Mary Japp, Helen Johnson, Ras & Donna Kalnes, Kari Kinjerski, John Klingele, Juli Koestler, Bill & Ann Krestan, Harold & Agnes Krueger, Frank & Pat Latona, Julie K. Lenz, Edward & Susanne Mack, John & Shirley Matters, Cath Norris, Jerry & Kay Perkins, Mrs. Walter Pipp, Bill & Mariangela Pledl, Wayne & Jan Radabaugh, John & Kay Reilly, Jon & DeAnn Scrabeck, Carl & Lynn Seitz, Sonjay & Shaila Singh, Vince & Elizabeth Skidmore, Judy Solfest, Russell & Jill Steinhart, John & Mary Vymetal-Taylor, Bill Thiele, Harvey Wambold, Kenneth & Joan Watts, and Bill & Judy Zell.

A warm welcome to all our new members for 1999

Curator's Corner

By Elaine Ledrowski

The museum will continue to be open on Friday from 9 A.M. to noon and on Saturday from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Many interesting items have been donated since our last newsletter, including music books from St. Theresa Catholic Church and Eagle United Methodist Church. The music used at St. Theresa's was sung in Latin; many of the books have the names of former choir members written on them. Bea Marquardt compiled a list of all of St. Theresa's choir directors from 1935 through 1975. One of the books from United Methodist is entitled "Songs for Young People" and has an 1897 copyright date.

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Ward School

The Ward School at Old World Wisconsin is unique in that it is on the same spot it has occupied since its construction in 1849. From 1849 until 1957 the school ably served students of the Town of Eagle's District #3. During the initial years, district families were of Yankee, or New England, stock and placed a high priority on the education of their children. They farmed the fertile Eagle Prairie area while establishing this educational foundation for the more than 1,000 district children, who were taught by more than 100 teachers during the school's colorful history.

Finally, in 1957, the school closed its doors when the district consolidated with others in the area. It was then sold at a public auction to become rental housing until the state Department of Natural Resources, at the urging of the State Historical Society, bought the building in 1980. The following year the school was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Anna Kohlhaas Chapman taught at the school from 1921 to 1923. "The school year was from September to May," she said. "There had to be 180 days of lessons. Of course, we had neither snow days nor teacher conferences as excuses." She had 38 children in attendance within grades one through eight.

"Beans were brought from home to be soaked and put on to cook for our noontime meal. Other times other ingredients would be carried for fixing of scalloped potatoes or ox tail soup."

The coal-burning stove in the classroom provided warmth and also helped dry the mittens and hats which were placed on the stove's jacket. Banking the stove at night was a responsibility of the students.

Not all her pupils walked to class. Parents who had milk delivery for the Eagle dairy plant would carry their children as another dropoff.

(The preceding is a composite of an article by Joan Holman, Waukesha Freeman, October 18, 1991 and a story by Martin C. Perkins from the Wisconsin Architect, Nov/Dec '90.)

In May of 1934 Vivian Betts Baker gave the following speech at her eighth-grade commencement:

In the summer of 1837 my great-grandfather Betts made a trip into what is now Wisconsin. At that time it was known as the Northwest Territory. He like it so well that the following year on the 12th day of July he and Francis Draper came here and made it their permanent home. They traveled on foot, as that was the only transportation they had.

On the way here they stopped at Fort Dearborn, where Chicago now stands. A land sale was taking place, but Mr. Draper wanted to come farther west into what was then wheatland. He didn't think land around Fort Dearborn would be a good investment, as it was mostly swamp and marsh. The few houses that were there were built on stilts to keep them out of the mud and water.

They came here and Mr. Draper took up the 160 acres where Johnsons live. Great-grandfather homesteaded the 80 acres of the original farm and bought the 80 acres across the road at \$1 an acre, which was a large sum at that time, as interest was 25% on a dollar.

At one time he raised 1100 bushels of wheat and sold it for \$1 a bushel, but another time he hauled wheat to Milwaukee with oxen and received only 36 cents a bushel.

Where Eagle now stands was only a prairie in 1839. Eagle town was a part of Mukwonago and this a part of Genesee. In 1841 or 1842 the first town meeting was held in the house of Andrew Scofield. The town received its name in a peculiar manner. Thomas Sugden, John Coats, and Mr. Garton went prospecting near the Leon Thomas farm. They saw a very large eagle. From then on, this territory has been known as Eagle.

The first store in the town was built by William Harrison in 1842 at Palestine. Another was built at Eagleville in 1844. The first post office was also started there at about the same time, Mr. Scofield being the first postmaster.

The Village of Eagle was started in 1851 or 1852 at the time the railroad was built. It was called Eagle Center.

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The first land to be broken was where the big curve is beyond Mrs. Merdith's down past where this school now stands.

The first schoolhouse stood somewhere back of where Mrs. Merdith's barn now stands. It was an old frame building. A Mrs. Van Denburg and Helen Regan were teachers there. They boarded around and received a few dollars a turn as pay.

That schoolhouse couldn't have been used more than 8 years, as this one was built in 1849, a year after Wisconsin became a state. The first settlers took their homestead titles from Presidents Polk and Tyler, as Wisconsin was part of the Northwest Territory and called Milwaukee County.

A Mr. Otis, an uncle of Colonel Draper's, built this foundation and Norm Markley was the carpenter. The lumber was hauled from Milwaukee, which was only a trading post with seven houses on stilts, as Milwaukee was a marshy swamp. All the neighbors—Bigelows, Wards, Bettises, Drapers, and others—drew the lumber with oxen. The round trip took a week.

The school was not divided into grades, there being an ABC class and each child doing the work the teacher thought him capable of doing. The school year was divided into fall, winter, and spring terms. The teachers were hired by the term. Usually a man teacher taught the winter term, as many large scholars attended then. All went to school a term or two a year, if possible, until they were over twenty.

Ward School had many spelling matches and many a good time was had. When one knew enough reading and arithmetic, they went out from this school and taught at other rural schools. A few who attended here also taught here. The wages were \$20 to \$40 or so until after World War I, when prices went up.

Per Vivian Betts Baker, the land on which Ward School stands was given by a Mr. Ward, and the school was named after him. ♦

Curator's Corner

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The following is a donor list from October through January:

Pat Arnold, Jean Bowey, Aileene Damman, Virginia Dudzek, Eagle Business Association, Eagle United Methodist Church, Mary Fleming, Mabel Finney, Jeff Hanson, Rick Harthun, Ron and Jean Jolliffe, Kettle Moraine Riders, Darlene Landmann, Bea Marquardt, Edward and Welthy Mueller, Eleanore Normington, Dr. Robert Owen, Marge Paulkner estate, Conrad and Elaine Potrykus, Jan Radabaugh, Saint Theresa Catholic Church, Esther Stead, Heidi Thessix, Joan Turner, Betty Werner, and Marcie Winzenried.

Jan Radabaugh allowed me to copy her postcard collection; Judson Mayhew let me copy photos.

Wishes do come true; Conrad and Elaine Potrykus donated 2 desk phones, one with an answering machine. If you have any questions or comments, leave a message at 594-8961. Connie and Elaine also donated a paper cutter. The membership sign in front of the museum was designed and constructed by Connie and Elaine. Watch the sign to see how our membership is growing. Thanks to the efforts of Rick Harthun, we now have a computer system donated by Dr. Robert Owen, director of Cooper Power Systems of Franksville. Rick donated a color printer. With this system we'll eventually be able to update our documents, print forms, and create attractive labels for display cases.

Wish List

Eagle Historical Society newsletters published before 1996 ♦

Miss Katherine Bovee narrowly escaped death Saturday afternoon while in the village with her Dodge touring car. She backed through the railing at the furniture store and up the high cement steps before she was able to stop the car. Fortunately, no one was in the way. Help was near at hand, the auto was moved to a level place, a new inner tube placed in the rear tire and all was ready for the home trip.

--Eagle Quill, June 20, 1922 ♦

Mealy Funeral Home

By Irma Jolliffe

The Mealy Funeral Home in Eagle was started in 1916 by Jerome Mealy, Ken's father (Jerry's grandfather). He came to Eagle from Waterford and started the funeral business. This was their home then, as the preparation of the body, visitation, and the funeral were conducted in people's homes at that time. The body was taken from the home to the cemetery. The hearse was horse-drawn and had two big windows on the side so the casket could be viewed. Two people rode on a seat up on top in the front. It had only been used about two years when they started using automobiles; a hearse was then rented from Whitewater. Since there was no room to store the old hearse, it was torn apart.

In about 1930 the funeral business started to change. People were living in smaller homes and apartments and no longer had a parlor where a service could be conducted. The trend then was to go to funeral homes. The funeral service has not changed much over the years, but there have been changes in other things. Paperwork requirements now are very different from those of years ago. There are more forms to fill out. Funeral directors now are required to continue their education in order to retain a license. At present 15 credits are required every 2 years. Much of this training centers on change of laws and requirements, not only in this state but in other states as well. (Sometimes people die in other states and the local funeral home handles the funeral.) There are also changes in embalming fluids and in preparation practices. Jerry is a past president of the Funeral Directors Association and part of his duties has been to set up seminars for directors to receive the required training credits.

Eagle has 4 cemeteries, 2 of which are old ones that are no longer used. The plats for the old cemeteries have been lost, and there were burials with no markers, so no one knows where all the burials are. Therefore, these cemeteries are maintained but no new burials are accepted.

The Mealy Funeral Home is run by Ken and Jerry without outside help. Ken graduated from high school in 1935 and went to work for the Waukesha Motor Works. He didn't like it, and went to embalming school. He now has 50 years of mortuary service experience. Jerry went to mortuary science school, then worked in larger funeral homes in Milwaukee and Waukesha before coming here, where the work is more personal. The Meleys make certain that there is someone available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. They are a part of the community and as such often know the deceased and family well. They feel that the most important part of their job is helping the family deal with grief. They have books that will help people of all ages deal with death; these are available for loan. ♦

Fourth-Grade History Report

Alice Baker

By Chelsea Biba

In the late 1800s and the early 1900s, Alice Baker was a pioneer with her family on Waukesha Road, in what is now the Walsh house.

A big job was husking corn for her and her sisters. Her favorite pastime was making quilts. Wool was used to make bedspreads and mattress covers called coverlets.

When Alice graduated from Whitewater in 1910, she started her teaching career at Eagleville School and then taught at Viroqua School. Soon she went to Montana and became a botany teacher. Later she returned to Wisconsin to teach at Whitewater High School, Lancaster, and Eau Claire.

Her brother Earl had gone to China in 1915 to unify China's communication systems. In 1934, Alice visited him in China and remained 2 years to teach at the Kuling School in Peking. Her students were the children of American businessmen and missionaries.

She returned to Eagle in 1936 and taught at Eagleville School again, then went to substitute work. She retired in 1945 after teaching in Shullsburg.

Alice Baker was a member of the Writer's Club and wrote many articles for "Landmark," the Waukesha County Historical Society's publication.

Having a public library in Eagle was very important to Alice Baker. She put in much time and effort to make it possible. At the age of 91 she died on April 15, 1974, without the knowledge that a library would be built within the next few months and that it would be named in her honor.

Today the library offers many programs and services to the community. One of these activities is called "Story Hour." It is where kids get stories read to them and then after the stories, they do a craft related to the story/stories. The library also has a ton of books and several videos, too. ♦

A Sea Of Wheat

*I look at waves on a golden sea,
On a sea that has no foam,
A sea that tosses and ripples and shines,
And a sea that does not moan.*

*No madcap breakers ever crown your waves,
Or storms ever bring despair,
But the comforting good of wholesome food
Is nurtured and treasured there.*

*A sheet of pearls overspreads your waves
Pearls that are good to eat.
In all the world there is no sea
So rich as a field of wheat.*

- Alice Baker

The Eagle Diamond Sequel

By Alice Baker

“Yes, the Eagle diamond was stolen along with other gems from the American Museum of Natural History on the night of October 29, 1964,” wrote an official of the museum this winter. “All the other gems were recovered with the exception of the Eagle diamond, a number of other diamonds, and an emerald mounted in a ring. I presume that the thieves had it cut up in order to realize something of its worth and to be sure it lost its identity.”

The Eagle diamond gained notability by being numbered with the Star Sapphire of India, the DeLong Ruby, and the Midnight Sapphire of the Tiffany-Morgan Collection. In this group of superlative gems, the uncut Eagle pebble was most vulnerable—its lack of renown slated it for a sacrifice.

Any one of the former mentioned jewel greats, taken to a lapidary, would have incriminated the thieves on sight; but the Eagle gem could be cut with impunity.

The Eagle stone was a “haul” to the three jewel thieves. Its 15 3/8 karat size would cut into jewels for many rings. It was a yellow instead of a blue diamond, and it would be subject for shrewd bartering. But the lapidary would have the edge in any transaction.

The jig was up for Kuhn, Clark, and Murf, “the Surf”. They slightly over-played their delusions of inexhaustible wealth. Their lavish display of dollars was their own undoing; and they were caught. From now on, they are well-marked jewel thieves, and surveillance will keep them poor.

The people of Eagle who knew of the diamond’s discovery and who followed the many vicissitudes which shadowed its existence will learn of its lapidary surgery with regret and wish that its true owner might have received even a small fraction of its worth.

And Tom Devereau somewhere in the Great Beyond will some day say to the trio with a kindly smile, a sparkle in his bright blue eyes, and in his high pitched tenor voice,

“Ye spalpeens, didn’t ye know that a dozen of me Irish shades was taggin’ ye and bringin’ ye to justice?”

(Ed. Note: The Eagle Diamond was discovered in yellow clay, forty feet below the surface during the digging of a well for Tom Devereau in the Village of Eagle the hot summer of 1876. It was the largest of the uncut diamonds in the United States... a dodecahedron crystal with curved facets. Its discovery caused “quite a stir” hereabouts, with lawsuits and salted diamond mines.

The gem sold for a dollar to a jeweler in Milwaukee and then for a mere \$840 to Tiffany’s in New York. There it remained until J. P. Morgan bought the Tiffany collection, including the famous gems mentioned in the above story. Morgan exhibited his collection in the American Museum of Natural History. The Eagle diamond had then reached a value of \$25,000. The above three thieves were caught, tried and sentenced to three years in prison. The F.B.I. recovered most of the other gems, but not the Eagle Diamond.)

-The Waukesha County Historical Society Landmark

Pioneer Art: Quilts

By Alice Baker

Although the pioneer woman never looked upon her creative ability in making quilts as an art, never-the-less there was that quality to a greater or lesser degree. The standard of merit was limited by the need of the family, but given a relatively free hand as to materials and a fragment of time, she often created beautiful quilts.

There were numerous patterns for quilts, among them the relatively simple ones: Four Block, Nine Block, Necktie, and Wild Goose Chase. More complex patterns included: Wind Mill, Bear's Paw, King's Crown, Irish Chain, Double Irish Chain, Double Wedding Ring, Dresden Plate, Grand Mother's Flower Garden, Sun Burst, and Drunkard's Path.

The artistry of the quilt was shown by the color combinations of blocks and the accuracy with which they were made, contrast in dark and light shades making the design effective.

Making a quilt was an extended project requiring sometimes weeks, a winter, or even years. But it was a pastime which fitted admirably into the housewife's program of many and varied duties. While she waited for food to cook, or for a husband's or child's return, she could cut out or fashion a block.

Quilting was reserved as a summer job, especially when log houses comprised the home. Oftentimes it was the quilting which gave the quilt its sanction of artistry. It also gave permanence to the quilt and some of these old quilts past the century mark in age are existent because the owners, appreciative of the hours that the stitching took and also its beauty, used these bed covers sparingly.

Quilting was a very specialized form of needlework. The quilter must use a needle very little more than one inch in length and she must make stitches no longer than one-sixteenth of that measure. If she worked for profit, she charged by the number of 100-yard spools (2, 3, 5) she sewed into the quilt.

One of the most renowned quilts in existence today is that owned by Mrs. Lila O. Burton of Eagle. Its pattern is that of the Double Irish Chain made of 16,500 half-inch blocks. There are three colors, red, white and figured with a light blue flower.

This quilt was made by Sarah and Margaret Parsons probably in the 1870s before the present owner was born. Out of gratitude for the many farm products which the Drapers, Lila's mother and father, gave to them, they decided to repay in some way and so they made this quilt, never dreaming how permanent a memorial of kindness their cover would make.

This quilt was always cherished by Mrs. Draper and now more than ever by her daughter. In 1933 at the World's Fair, at the request of Rob't Ripley, Mrs. Burton consented to exhibit it; but she specified that it must be insured and placed under glass while being shown.

Mrs. Burton keeps the quilt wrapped in tissue paper; and only on special occasions does she display it on her four-poster bed. At her death she has willed it to the State Historical Society at Madison, Wis. There it will delight the many handcraft experts and charm women, who know the hours of patient stitching it required, for years to come.

-The Waukesha County Historical Society Landmark

(NOTE: Members of the Eagle Historical Society will be making a quilt this coming year. Anyone interested in helping with this project, please contact Welthy Mueller at 594-2316.)

**1999
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Return to: Eagle Historical Society
PO Box 454
Eagle WI 53119

Please check membership desired:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ Individual \$10 | _____ Sustaining \$25-\$49 |
| _____ Family \$15 | _____ Sponsor \$50-\$99 |
| _____ Senior (65 & over) \$8 | _____ Patron \$100 & over |

Membership year is January 1 to December 31 and dues are collected annually.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

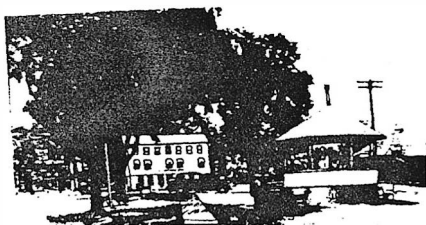
TELEPHONE _____

Amount enclosed _____ Date _____

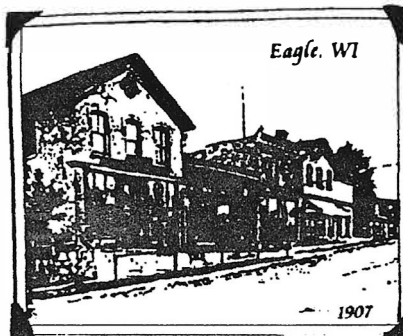
Please make checks payable to: Eagle Historical Society

Sweatshirts

Sweatshirts are available to members for \$12.00. There are three designs to choose from (see below) in sizes medium to XXL—the XXL sells for \$14.00. Please note that this is a price increase because of increased cost to the society.



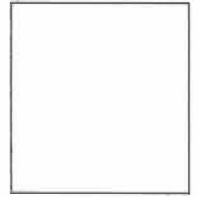
EAGLE, WI



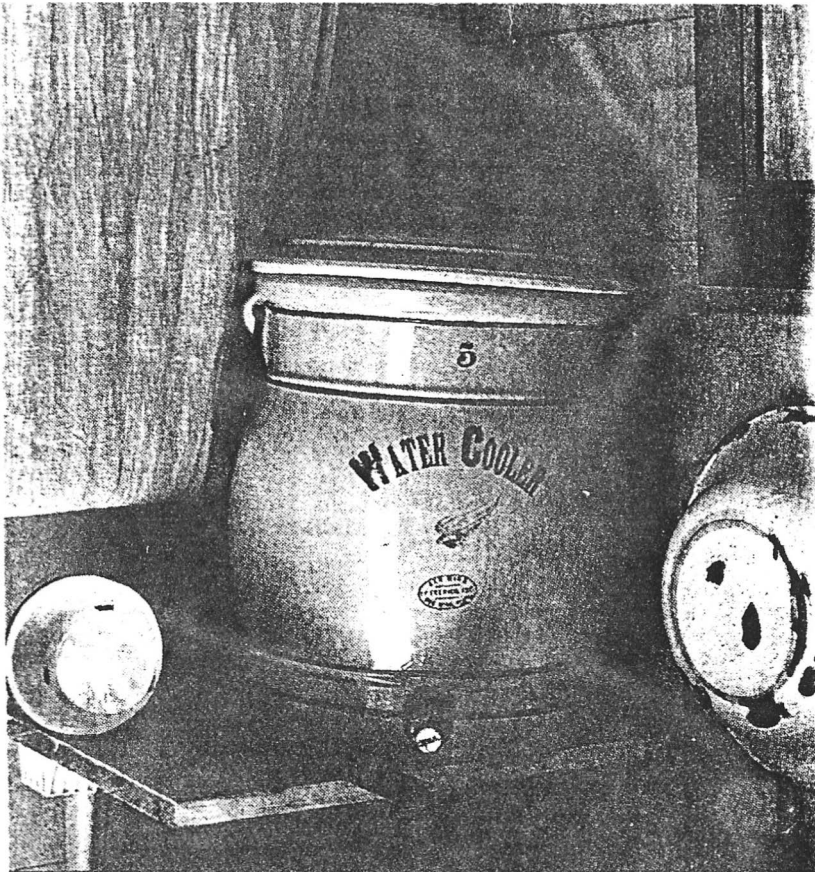
1999 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| DATE | BOARD MTG. | NEWSLETTER | EVENTS |
|------------|------------|------------|--|
| Jan. 09 | 1 p.m. | | |
| Jan. 15 | | copy due | |
| Jan. 31 | | mail date | |
| Feb. 16 | | | bake sale 7a.m. |
| Feb. 20 | 1 p.m. | | |
| Mar. 20 | 1 p.m. | | |
| Mar. ? | | | 4th grade writing contest reception |
| Apr. 06 | | | bake sale 7 a.m. |
| Apr. 15 | | copy due | |
| Apr. 20 | 6:30 p.m. | | History of Early Lighting - 7 p.m. program |
| Apr. 30 | | mail date | |
| May 07-08 | | | community rummage sale |
| May 18 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| June 15 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| June 25-27 | | | KM Days? |
| July 11 | | | band concert/ ice cream social 2 p.m. Village Park |
| July 15 | | copy due | |
| July 20 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| July 31 | | mail date | |
| Aug. 17 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| Sept. 21 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| Oct. 15 | | copy due | |
| Oct. 19 | 6:30 p.m. | | |
| Oct. 31 | | mail date | |
| Nov. 02 | | | election bake sale |
| Nov. 20 | | | annual meeting 1 p.m. - committee heads submit reports |
| Dec. 10 | | | tour of homes setup |
| Dec. 11 | | | tour of homes |

Eagle Historical Society
217 W. Main Street
P.O. Box 454
Eagle WI 53119



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



I Remember
by Pat Arnold

We had a water cooler at Ward School. We all had chores to do and one was to keep the cooler filled from the well out back. It was a refreshing drink at recess and lunch time. I also remember the out houses at the back of the lot. If you drank to much water it seems as if they were five miles away.