

Neighbors In The News



Joan Holman

Remembering the past

Women help restore Eagle's history

EAGLE — The year was 1896. Clara Schmid Burton was born in the Main Street house in Eagle that her father and his brother-in-law had built the previous year.

The next year, 1897, Katherine Bovee Howard was born on the farm her grandparents put up in the 1840s in the rural part of the village with a population then of nearly 100.

Schmid said they had been acquaintances. Then Schmid married and left Eagle in 1917. Her husband died shortly after in an army camp of the influenza. She returned to Eagle in 1920 and married Burton in 1922.

Nowadays these ladies are together at Avalon Manor, able to help the newly formed Eagle Historical Society get the facts regarding the village and town.

Both women agreed the Masonic dances were social events. "Everyone went," said Bovee, "they were family occasions; we arrived as a group. We danced with whoever would ask us."

"Even when we didn't want to suffer through the hand pumping rhythm of some of the men," said Schmid. "We would accept; we didn't want to be rude."

The women said the music was usually provided by Alma Klessig, Milwaukee, and her all-woman orchestra. The hall with the music combined to reunite Schmid with George Burton.

Since Burton worked for Buick Motor Co., he was asked to relocate to Chicago. They were there until the 1926 return to Eagle.

In 1932 George died. But in 1940, his older brother Harold, a widower, married Schmid. This Burton served as county highway commissioner. Schmid-Burton continued in village activities. She was the first president of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Harold died in 1950 and Schmid-Burton lived in the Maple Avenue house until 1979 when she moved to Avalon Manor where she and Katharine Bovee-Howard again met.

Bovee met her husband, Dr. Allan Howard in 1920 at a Masonic Hall dance. He had graduated from Marquette dental school in 1919 and had office hours at the Diamond Hotel, known now as Sasso's, twice a week while his Waukesha practice was beginning.

Meanwhile, Bovee was teaching in Kenosha, coming home to spend weekends with

her parents to enjoy friends and functions.

From 1923-25, Bovee left Kenosha to take further courses at Carroll College. She speaks fondly of these years at Carroll while she was majoring in education and oral English.

"Oral English consisted of speech and drama," said Bovee, "At that time, May Rankin was head of the department. Rankin was DRAMA. Under her tutelage were such names as Alfred

Lunt. She died in the '30s but certainly left her mark with those she taught."

Bovee said she never had the desire for a stage career, but Rankin made her aware of her talent and how it might be nurtured. When she returned to Kenosha to teach, she said, there might have been some of her students benefiting from the once removed Rankin style.

In 1935, Bovee resigned at Kenosha to marry Dr. Howard and make 1316 E. Broadway her address until his death and her move to Avalon Manor.

Both these women provide a wonderful way to record history. As they talk and their words are taken down, we realize history is humanized.

(Joan Holman is a Kettle Moraine Life correspondent.)