



EAGLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Come celebrate the **19th Annual Eagle Pumpkin Party** on **Saturday, October 31st from 2–4 PM** in downtown Eagle. Enjoy goodie bags, games, treats, a free slide, a pet costume contest, and a carved-pumpkin competition that's sure to bring out everyone's creativity. The **Eagle Historical Society** grounds will be open with fun, not-too-scary activities for kids and hands-on entertainment for the whole family. It's a perfect way to enjoy Halloween in Eagle with plenty of smiles and seasonal fun.

Artifact Donations

Thanks to the following donors:

Janet Evans	Stephanie Kalnes
Ty Howard	Carolyn Rosprim
Wayne Ray	Pat Hawes

Mystery Artifact

Can you identify this item?
Made of wood and stands
about 3 ft tall
(See page 5 for answer)



In This Issue

Eagle Pumpkin Party.....	1
Generations In the Soil – The Shearer & Von Rueden Families	2-3
Halloween Traditions.....	4-5
Programs & Events.....	6
2026 Open House.....	7
Obituaries	8

Generations in the Soil – The Shearer, Von Rueden, & Lumb Families

By Mike Rice

The story of Eagle, Wisconsin, is rooted in the families who shaped its land and community. Among the most enduring are the **Shearer, Von Rueden**, and **Lumb** families—early settlers whose lives reflect the blending of Yankee, British, and Prussian immigrant traditions. Much of this history is preserved thanks to family historian Jaime (Saddy) Socolick, who safeguarded the records of her grandmother, Roberta (Shearer) Saddy.

The Von Rueden Pioneers

In 1852, Jacob and Theresa Von Rueden arrived from Prussia with six children, joining the earliest German-speaking settlers in the region. Using the **Pre-emption Act**, they secured a homestead north of today's Highway 59, establishing one of Eagle's foundational farms. Their operation grew from wheat into a diversified mix of grains, dairy, and livestock, and the family became long-standing members of St. Theresa's Catholic Church, helping shape Eagle's early cultural identity.



Jacob's son Frederick expanded the farm and built the distinctive rural Italianate farmhouse that still stands. The home became central to family history: Frederick died there in 1930 after a medical procedure performed on the same dining room table where his son Joseph had been born in 1921. Joseph later guided the farm into the mechanized era before selling the land to the Wisconsin DNR in 1963. When the farmhouse faced demolition in the 1990s, the State Historical Society intervened, preserving it and placing it on the State Register of Historic Places in 1995.

The Lumb and Shearer Connection

At the same time, the Lumb family, also of Prussian origin, settled in East Troy and Troy Township. Their daughter Lettie Lumb married James William Shearer in 1880, joining British-Yankee and Prussian farming lines. Their son, Clarence Lumb Shearer, born in 1883, would become a key figure in Eagle's civic life. The families formally united on November 28, 1905, when Clarence married Theresa Marg Von Rueden, linking the Shearer-Lumb and Von Rueden lineages.

Clarence and Theresa raised three sons—Waldo, Robert George, and Howard—and the family gradually shifted from agriculture into public service. Clarence served as postmaster, ran a Main Street grocery, worked for the Waukesha County Highway Department, and held long tenures as village president and village clerk.

His son Waldo Shearer became one of Eagle's most recognizable civic leaders. After growing up on the family dairy farm on Eagle Drive, Waldo and his wife Irene

Kramer purchased the homestead, and the roadway was later renamed Shearer Drive in his honor. Waldo served 15 years as Town Supervisor, 24 years on the school board, and 44 years with the Eagle Volunteer Fire Department, including decades as treasurer and Fire Commissioner. When Waldo's brother Robert lost his wife, Alice (Von Rueden) Shearer, Waldo and Irene lovingly raised their niece Roberta from infancy.



The Continuing Von Rueden Line

Civic service continued through Gerald J. Von Rueden (1913–2003), who managed Brittingham & Hixon Lumber Co. for 42 years, served as village clerk, and volunteered extensively with the fire department. The family lines intertwined again when Robert George Shearer married Alice Von Rueden of Cashton, Wisconsin, a distant cousin on his mother's side.

Today, the legacy of these intertwined families remains visible across Eagle—on Shearer Drive, in the preserved Von Rueden farmhouse, and in the records and artifacts safeguarded by the Eagle Historical Society. Their story is written not only in documents but in the very landscape they helped shape, a testament to generations who built and sustained the community.



Stained glass windows at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Eagle, dedicated to the Von Rueden family read:

(Left) GIFT OF FREDERIC VANRUEDEN
(Right) IN MEMORY OF MR & MRS JACOB VANRUEDEN

Image by Steve Gulgowski

Halloween Traditions

By Dana Houk

It all began across the shores of the Atlantic Ocean over 2,000 years ago when our European ancestors observed the Celtic festival of Samhain ("summer's end") on October 31st to celebrate the harvest before the onset of the winter dormant season. The early Irish and Scots believed that on this one night the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead was transparent. People were inspired to burn bonfires and to wear fierce costumes and masks to scare off roaming haunted spirits. In the 8th century, the Roman Catholic Church created the All Saints' Day (aka All Hallows' Day) to honor saints each November 1st. The night before was known as All Hallows' Eve which we recognize today as Halloween.



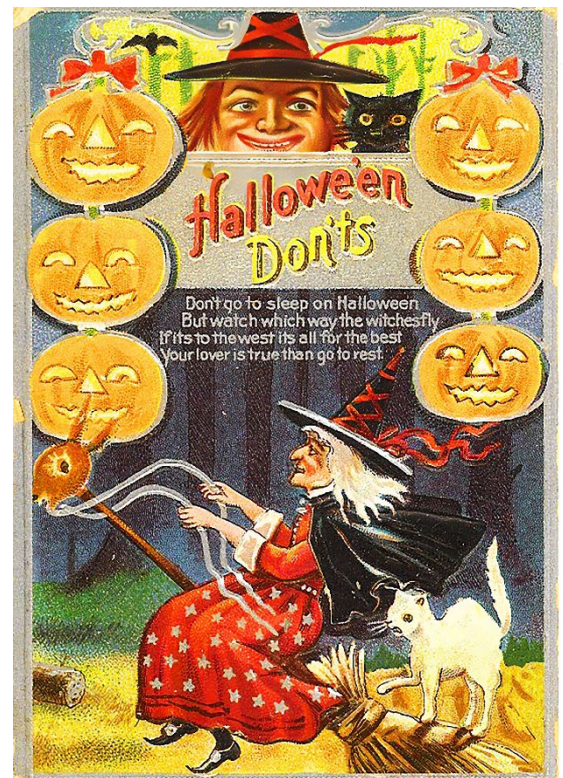
<https://www.history.co.uk/articles/samhain-and-the-pagan-roots-of-halloween>

The colonists banned the All-Hallows' Day customs when they built their communities on the New England coastline with Puritan Protestant principles. Maryland and the southern Catholic colonies, however, adapted their inherited All Saints' Day rituals to neighboring native tribes' belief in supernatural powers by invoking spiritual favor with songs, dances, and legendary ghost stories. Halloween wasn't widely celebrated in the U.S. until the late 1800s per Lesley Bannatyne, author and Halloween historian.

<https://www.marthastewart.com/8159960/why-black-orange-traditional-halloween-colors>

Black and orange are synonymous with Halloween, likely because in Autumn, hues of orange appear in leaves, pumpkins, gourds, and squash. Black is associated with the shorter days of the season, and the dark of night holds the aura of suspense.

Carving pumpkins into Jack-a-Lantern faces to ward off pranks of mischief on Halloween became an early tradition in the 1900s. Decorating with howling ghosts and skeletons, cackling witches with warty noses, black cats and flying bats, and "things that go bump in the night" makes a joke of normally spooky images. After all, we like to be scared when it's in jest, right? Candy companies capitalized on the marketing



Vintage Halloween Postcard
Courtesy of Eagle Historical Society

opportunities in these organized community festivities. "Trick or Treat" became the modernized version of the ancient European "guising" where participants wore costumes and performed for food handouts.

(<https://www.history.com/articles/history-of-halloween>)



In the 20th and 21st centuries, we annually channel our pagan alter-egos and Celtic imaginations into creative costumes and antics on Halloween. Recalling his childhood of the 1950s in the Village of Eagle, Dan Houk remarked that trick or treating with his siblings and cousins was always at night on October 31st.

Returning home, their candy bounty was poured onto the living room floor for his parents' inspection, and father Gerry (aka "Ponch") would snatch a few pieces. Chris, Dan, Sue, and Jeff would then trade for their favorite sweets. Dan was a student of St. Theresa of Avila Catholic School where UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

milk carton boxes were distributed for the "Cents for UNICEF" nationwide Halloween collection campaign. He was a proud participant in a worthy cause while having fun. It's a mystery why this philanthropic campaign isn't continued today.

The Eagle Historical Society has hosted a Pumpkin Party since 2008. Activities on the museum grounds have included food and frolic, games and goodies, monsters and music, pumpkin carving and prizes. The October 2010 newsletter featured an article, "Halloween...How Did It All Start?" by Jean Cisler, and entertaining reminisces by our readers of Halloween nights in Eagle from the early 1900s - 1960s.

Do you have Halloween memories or photos to share with our readers? Send them to:

curator@eaglehistoricalsociety.org.



Jean Bowey 2008

(Mystery Artifact Answer- from page 1).

An **antique wooden clothes stirrer, laundry fork or wash stick**. It allowed people to push down, stir, and lift heavy, boiling garments out of large laundry kettles without burning their hands or exposing them to harsh lye soaps. The two-prong design allowed the user to easily grab fabric from the hot wash water without tearing it.



Ice Cream, Patriotism, and Community



The Eagle Historical Society's **2026 Ice Cream Social** became a warm celebration of **America's 250th anniversary** and the strength of small-town community. More than 150 people gathered in Eagle Village Park on July 12, settled under the pavilion and big shade trees for an afternoon of music.

The **Palmyra-Eagle Community Band**, directed by **Jim Neist**, performed a moving America 250 program featuring American patriotic music. Their concert created a peaceful, reflective atmosphere that felt like stepping back into a simpler time.

Families made the event their tradition, volunteers baked and served desserts, and the Hen House Café provided ice cream. The 2026 Social stood out as a heartfelt celebration of history, music, and community togetherness.



Picnic With the Police on August 8th offered Eagle residents a welcoming opportunity to meet local officers, enjoy food, and explore displays from community groups and first responders, including guests from Milwaukee.

The Eagle Historical Society's "Games & More Games" theme invited families to try classic children's activities such as jacks,

yoyos, clothespin in the bottle, and juggling balls. The most popular attraction was the 19th century Game of Graces, enthusiastically played by kids and even EHS President Jeff Nowicki. EHS distributed magnets, pins, and bubbles; all well received. Attendance was about 200 people.

EHS Board

President

Jeff Nowicki, 2028

Vice-President

Eloise Hall, 2027

Secretary

Carrie Peavy, 2028

Treasurer

Jim Neist, 2027

Financial Officer

Board Members

2027

Steve Gulgowski

Richard Moeller

Carrie Peavy

2028

Scott Bovee

Janet Evans

Jim Neist

Jeff Nowicki

Art Peavy

2029

Diana Hall

Eloise Hall

Julie Mann

Gina Neist

Mike Rice

Curator

Elaine Ledrowski

Newsletter Editor

Mike Rice

Webmaster

Mike Rice

Facebook

Elaine Ledrowski

EHS Museum

262-594-8961

Open Hours

Wednesdays,

Fridays & Saturdays:

9 am-Noon

Like us on Facebook!



2026 Open House

On Friday, August 21st, the Eagle Historical Society hosted its annual Open House, celebrating the completion of the Erikson exhibit/storage building and honoring the memory of Karen and Gordon Erikson. Their generous donation—joined by contributions from many others—made this long-planned project possible. The building's exterior is now finished, highlighted by a striking barn quilt designed by Jessie Ledrowski and beautifully

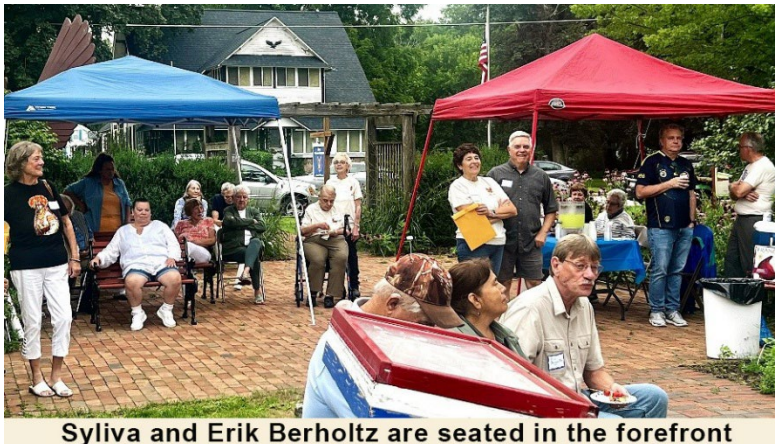
constructed and donated by Mary and Jerry Pratt. The quilt has quickly become a signature feature of the site, welcoming visitors as they arrive.

Guests enjoyed an evening of music from the Harmony Cornet Band, along with delicious snacks prepared by local members and volunteers. Beverages were provided by the Historical Society, creating a relaxed, neighborly atmosphere. The event offered a meaningful opportunity to thank the many volunteers who helped build the facility and shape its interior design. Special appreciation was given to Erik and Sylvia Berholtz;



Karen and Gordon's nephew, Erik, worked closely with EHS throughout the entire process, providing guidance and support. Additional thanks should be extended to Curator

Elaine Ledrowski and EHS President Jeff Nowicki for the countless hours they dedicated to preparing these new interactive exhibits for the grand opening.



Sylvia and Erik Berholtz are seated in the forefront

Although the building is now open, much work remains—adding additional exhibits, refining interior displays, and constructing a brick walkway connecting the new facility to

the museum. The Erikson exhibit/storage building represents a meaningful new chapter for the Eagle Historical Society; a true jewel added to our community that we are honored to share with Eagle.

Obituaries

Visit our website at <https://eaglehistoricalsociety.org/collections-archives/news-publications/obituaries/> to view complete obituaries for those listed here. Simply enter the person's name in the search box.

Patricia Hawes



Patrica R. Hawes, 90, of Eagle, Wisconsin passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, June 25, 2026, at ProHealth Mukwonago Hospital.

Richard A. Harthun



Richard A. Harthun, 77, of Eagle, Wisconsin passed away on Sunday, July 19, 2026, at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center in Milwaukee.

Daniel Rockteacher



Daniel M. Rockteacher, 67, of Eagle, Wisconsin passed away peacefully on Sunday, June 7, 2026, at his home.

William D. Beck



William D. Beck, 68, of Eagle, Wisconsin passed away peacefully on Sunday, August 2, 2026, at his home with his loving family by his side.