

Waseca County Historical Society

History Notes

Volume 39 Issue 1 Winter 2017



www.historical.waseca.mn.us / LOOK FORWARD TO OUR PAST



Photo: The Cobb River on a recent visit by Joan Mooney

Township N^o 105, N., Range N^o 22 West of the 5th Mer.

The Spring Main Floor Exhibit—

First Settlements Remembered: Towns & Villages of Waseca County



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WCHS HOURS: Tuesdays-Fridays, 9-5;
 Closed Mondays



Casalona Club



Cobb River this week



Where is Empire?

Dear Members

A quarterly message from the Co-Executive Directors

Happy Spring, we hope! The changing of the season always sparks excitement and anticipation. A rejuvenation of energy held captive by the cold, dark days of winter, unleashed by an extra hour of sunlight, kind temperatures, and the return of the sun. We are so ready for spring!

Traditionally, we have hosted the Spring Luncheon Lecture Series and the annual Chautauqua. Both of these events were made possible by grants from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, the E. F. Johnson Family Fund, and the Rosenau Legacy of Angels Fund through the Waseca Area Foundation. This upcoming spring and summer season, we will *not* be hosting either event. We are rethinking our current programming and exploring new program ideas. One such idea is a new program for area schools entitled, "Teachable Moments at the Museum," which we are offering in April. So far we know that Waseca 6th graders, as well as JWP 6th graders will be attending.

Other Happenings

WCHS is partnering with five other historical museums in southern Minnesota to market history in our area. Out of this marketing plan WCHS will be able to draw visitors to our region to experience our communities, parks and natural areas, shops and restaurants. It's called "SoMN History." There will be a website with framed tours and information for weekend and mid-week tourists who may be families, couples, retirees, family historians, home-schoolers, and others. All the participating historical museums are less than an hour apart. Watch for more information soon.

The Hofmann Apiaries Project Phase One is underway – funded! Thanks to the Minnesota Cultural Heritage Fund, the Waseca Area Foundation, and generous donors, the critical construction documentation is in development. SMSQ Architects of Northfield have been selected based on their long experience of working on historic structures. The large Minnesota Cultural Heritage grant request for the restoration is due in July 2017.

Did you know? That Cultural Heritage and Agri-Tourism, and the Leisure and Hospitality industry bring an average of \$14 million in gross sales annually to Waseca County. WCHS, Farmamerica and other southern Minnesota cultural organizations are embracing the opportunity to highlight local and regional his-



The Timeline Project has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota through the Minnesota Historical Society from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. WCHS is also grateful to the Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation, the First National Bank-Waseca, Principal Financial Foundation-John Priebe, and Bill and Patti Hoversten for match support to the Implementation Phase.



Visit: www.hofmannapiaries.org



First Settlements REMEMBERED

Towns & Villages of Waseca County

The towns and villages featured in the spring exhibit and this article were the first recorded settlements in Waseca County. A few still stand in part but most have disappeared. Each memory village has its own story as to how it began, what was located in the village and why it didn't succeed. One by one, they disappeared, either completely or leaving behind a cemetery or a few old buildings. Waseca became a County in 1857, and Minnesota a state in 1858.

This research was compiled by Linda Taylor. Sources used were county newspapers, *Child's History of Waseca County*, Waseca County Landowners of Record-1879, Township files, Village files.

WILTON

The village of **Wilton** was surveyed and laid out in the autumn of 1855 by six men of Owatonna and Wilton. The actions and subsequent reputations of these men deterred the erection of buildings in the village for a year. The opposition to the persons having control of the village was adjusted in the fall of 1856 by the establishment of a sawmill owned by John C. Ide and A. B. Cornell. The village was legally platted in 1856.

ST. MARY

Pioneers began settling in **St. Mary** during the spring and summer of 1855. The first marriage was at the home of



Norton House, St. Mary



Bernard Gregory on January 2, 1856. Catholic services were first held at the home of Andrew Lynch in 1856. A cemetery was established in 1857 and the first person buried in it was said by some to be a Mr. Crossman or possibly a Mr. Morris. The village of St. Mary was platted February 1857 and came to challenge both Wilton and Empire for the county seat in 1857.

EMPIRE

Early in 1856 the village of **Empire** was platted on the southeast quarter of Section 20 in Iosco Township by H.W. Peck. Spencer J. Willis and S.P. Kellogg built the Tripp Hotel in Empire. The first hotel was built in 1856 by John Wheeler. It was a large

log building, two stories high and 30 feet square on the ground. Mr. Long, father of Seth W. Long, the ex-sheriff, brought a saw mill to this village. It remained here for many years, then finally removed to Janesville township. A store was built, but only lasted one year. Alderman Willsey ran a blacksmith shop in 1856, then tore it down one year later.

WATERLYNN

Waters and Chamberlain, two speculators came in 1856 and bought the claims of George and William Robbins. They laid out a village they called **Waterlynn**. The land was located across the Le Sueur River from the village of Wilton on Section 6, Otisco Township. There was a store, and a hotel that burned down in 1858. The store discontinued business shortly thereafter and that was the last of Waterlynn. There is nothing left to mark the spot.

OLD JANESVILLE

Old Janesville had its beginning in 1856 when Caesar De Regan, a Frenchman, included in the plot he had surveyed, a portion Section 28 in Janesville Township, which he called St. Caesar. He then changed the name to New Albany. Old Janesville, when located in Section 28 was also known as the Ike Terill Trading Post. Shortly after this J. W. Hosmer purchased a half interest in the town site and in a short time, he gave it a new name, Janesville, after Jane Sprague. It was situated on the banks of Lake Elysian. In 1857 there were eight or ten log huts west of the channel. Mr. Hosmer had a sawmill and Tuttle had a brick yard. Another sawmill was built, also a hotel, several stores, and a livery stable. There were a number of saloons in Old Janesville. There was a physician, lawyer

each originating from *hokah*, meaning *heron*. This is referring to these localities as nesting places of herons. In 1857 a steam saw and flouring mill were erected. Later, Mr. Buckout and Mr. Couplin turned the sawmill into a merchant flouring mill, and for that purpose, they razed the building and rebuilt it.

ALMA CITY

Alma City was platted in Section 4 of Alton/Freedom Township by S.E. Stebbins for S.H. Larrabee in June of 1865. "Uncle Sam" Larrabee was known as the "father of Alma City". It is said that Larrabee named the village after Alma Hills, daughter of Elijah Hills, one of the first settlers in Alton.



Alma City Creamery building today



Matawan business, Coates Grocery Store, c. 1920

and a Justice of the Peace. A school house was built to accommodate 100 children as there was no other school nearby. This building was also used for religious services. East Janesville was platted in August 1869. That year, and in 1870, all of Old Janesville was moved to East Janesville.

OLD OTISCO

The village of **Old Otisco** was laid out in Section 29 and 30 in Otisco Township by Warren Bundy and S. S. Goodrich in July 1857. It had a store, post office, blacksmith shop and sawmill. This location of Otisco village, on the Le Sueur River existed for only a short time and various circumstances caused its downfall. With the building of the M&StL railroad, the present Otisco "station" was laid out and remains.

OKAMAN

Okaman was a former village on the northeast shore of Lake Elysian, in Section 1, Janesville Township, platted in May 1857, and extended also north into the edge of Le Sueur County. This Sioux name has nearly the same meaning as *Okabena* in Jackson and Nobles Counties,

PEDDLERS GROVE

Peddler's Grove was located in Section 3 of Freedom Township. A search was done to find when the village was platted and none was found. The cemetery was platted April 26, 1874, but little trace of it remains. Our local history books do not describe Peddler's Grove; however, stories have been passed down through generations. The official recognition of Peddler's Grove occurred in 1863 after the Winnebago Indians living on the nearby reservation were removed and the acreage comprising the reservation was parceled and sold to farmers.

CREAM

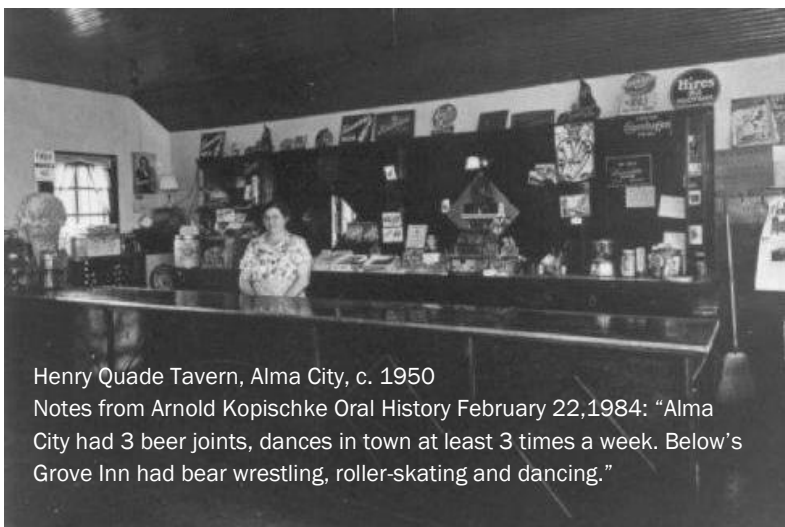
Cream was a small village located in Section 7 of Freedom Township and extended over the county line into Medo Township, Blue Earth County. Cream began with the building of a creamery in 1894 and the organization of a creamery association. Over the years, the town grew on both sides of the county line.

MATAWAN

The year 1907 saw the inauguration of the village of **Matawan** in section 31 of Byron Township. The village came into existence through the extension of the Alphabet railroad, which laid the foundation for a depot on the G. E. Brubaker farm in Byron Township. The company named the village and platted 80 acres of land there for sale to enterprising places of business.

VISTA

Vista is a Scandinavian community in Otisco Township. There was never an actual town. It was centered around two churches. By August 8, 1858, fourteen Swedish families had taken land at Vista. They assembled for a devotional hour in the open on a prairie hilltop.



Henry Quade Tavern, Alma City, c. 1950
Notes from Arnold Kopischke Oral History February 22, 1984: "Alma City had 3 beer joints, dances in town at least 3 times a week. Below's Grove Inn had bear wrestling, roller-skating and dancing."

All 36 residents were enrolled as members of the new Swedish Lutheran Church.

PLUM VALLEY

From *A Touch of Waldorf History* by Judy Joecks

"... The land on which this village was built was owned by either Fred Stiernagle or by Samuel Hodgkins. Samuel came to Minnesota from New York in 1870, and it was all unbroken prairie then, wild geese and ducks by the million. . . . without any roads or a bridge anywhere. The prairie grass was from two to seven feet tall. . . . The name Plum Valley was very appropriate as the area . . . was densely covered with plum trees."

Between 1905 and 1908 its name became a controversy. Some wanted to change the name to Hodgkins, after its founder. The railroad took matters into its own hands and erected a sign by the depot using the name "Waldorf" which survived – both the name and town!

Last year's Waldorf exhibit displayed a comprehensive look at Waldorf's history based on Joecks' book and artifact collections of Marty Tesch and Clark Meyer.

PALMER

The platted town of Palmer is located in the SW corner of Section 13, Iosco Township. Everything regarding Palmer started shortly after the

Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad platted its north-south route through Waseca County in 1877. Palmer was first known as Palmer Station. Although there was activity, the town of Palmer would not actually get platted until 1915.

We are grateful to area resident Robert Hagen, a lifelong native of Iosco Township, for sharing his newfound pas-



sion – the history of Palmer, Minnesota. We are grateful to Hagen for inspiring the WCHS staff to present this exhibit of all the First Settlements of Waseca County.

Please visit us and learn much more about these "first settlements." There are more photographs of then and now, original survey maps, the early plat maps, and a few artifacts. Remember, these towns existed for varying periods of time, mostly over 100 years ago.

As we go about our lives each day,
think ahead: What will be the traces
of *our* lives and places in the
long years ahead?



tory, architecture, arts, lakes, parks and trails for southern Minnesota visitors to explore and enjoy.

Summer Saturdays!

We are very proud of the **Waseca County Timeline** exhibit located on the WCHS museum balcony. We will be busy with several reunions again throughout the summer, as well as extending our hours for Summer Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. (If you would like to be a volunteer host for a Summer Saturday, please call us, 835-7700.)

Our Busy Library

The Bailey-Lewer Research Library receives visitors from all around the United States. Some are serious genealogists. Some are writers, or film makers. Some seek



cemetery information, and some are just curious. The P.C. Bailey House is on the National Register of Historic Places and has a colorful history to share. The P.C. Bailey House Gardens host the Annual Waseca Garden Tour on the first Sunday in August. The gardens are open to the public all during May – September.

County Fair Time

This summer the Waseca County Free Fair will be held July 12-16. We'll host activities and concession treats at Hodgson Hall as usual, enjoying over 3,000 visitors who pass through our doors during the run of the fair.

Sesquicentennial in 2018

The City of Waseca will be celebrating its 150th birthday in 2018. The main Sesquicentennial event and the Waseca All-School Reunion will be held **Labor Day weekend 2018**. WCHS staff will be assisting the Sesquicentennial Committee, providing access to historical information, records and images for the celebration.

An Immigration Story

Co-Executive Director Sheila Morris will be sharing her family story in a production at the **Minnesota History Theatre, "The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin", March 18-**

April 9. The play is written by Jessica Huang and directed by Mei Ann Teo. Many from our community will be attending this incredible presentation, so relevant in understanding the challenges immigrant

The Paper Dreams Of Harry Chin
MARCH 18-APRIL 9, 2017

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MAR 16 7:30PM P	17 7:30PM P	18 7:30PM O	19 2PM A
23 10AM 7:30PM	24 7:30PM	25 7:30PM	26 2PM A
30 10AM 7:30PM	31 7:30PM ASL/AD	APRIL 1 7:30PM OC	2 2PM A
6 7:30PM	7 7:30PM	8 7:30PM	9 2PM A

families endure seeking a chance for a better life in America--a generous sharing of an intensely personal story. Tickets are still available online:

www.historytheatre.com

We wish you all a wonderful Spring/Summer season. We look forward to new program offerings and events at WCHS, and we appreciate the support we receive from our very special members!

Thank you! Joan and Sheila

We are grateful for so much generosity!

From January to March 3, 2017

These are the quarterly renewals and new members, donations, and acknowledgements. The Annual Report will list all members.

New Lifetime Members

Born, Suzanne
Peterson, Arlene

New Members

Baumann, LaDonna
Beall, Danny (CA)
Curran, Colleen
Flaherty, Terri (WA)
Schroeder, Molly
Thornberg, Julrene (OR)
Wegner, Geraldine

One-Year Sustainer Members, \$100

Goehring, Larry and Pam

Renewed Members

Baker, Dale
Boje, Cory
Byron, Jean
Byron, Mark
Foels, Arlene
Gray, Mark and Janet
Habeck, Bill (FL)
Hagen, Tom and Nyla
Johnson, Michelle

Jones, Karl
Kinkade, James and Jennifer
Korsmo-Kennon, Peggy
Kramer, Robyn
Mann, Dave
Metzdorff, Thomas and Kristin
Rudolph, Janet
Tesch, Marty
Walter, Bonnie
Wesley, J. Willis
Zika, Dave

**Year-end Annual Fund
& Other Donations**

Beckmann, Diane, via Thrivent Choice
Crystal Valley
Mediacom Communications
Servicemaster of Mankato/Waseca
Madel Jr., R.P.

Special Gifts

John Oblak, 10 copies of the E.F. Johnson History, for sale in our Gift Shop

Memorials

Remembering Bob Hodgson, Ralph Lorenz, and Rolland Lorenz
by Linda L. Lorenz

In memory of Alan J. Kunz

by Dale and Judy Joecks
by Dave and Melissa Dunn

In memory of Helen Bagne

by Rick and Sheila Morris
by Donna Fostveit

In memory of Don Priebe

by Rick and Sheila Morris
by Donna Fostveit
by Dale and Judy Joecks

In memory of John Conway

by Donna Fostveit

In memory of Gerald Kingston

by Donna Fostveit

In memory of "Willie" Mahler

by Donna Fostveit
by Dale and Judy Joecks

Appropriations

Woodville Township, \$150

Volunteers

Karl Jones
Dave Dunn
Marty Boom
Dave Zika
Roger Haug
Margaret Hasslen

Support WCHS!

Shopping Online?
smile.amazon.com

Designate "Waseca County Historical Society"—and a portion will be donated!

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Hofmann Apiaries Project Update

Architectural Construction Drawings

Thanks to everyone who contributed to Phase One- Construction Documentation and Scope of Work: Minnesota Cultural Heritage Fund, Waseca Area Foundation, Dave and Melissa Dunn, Pauline



Fenelon, Dan and Cheryl Forrest, Donna Fostveit, Boyd Fuller, Linda Grant, Joan Mooney, Sheila Morris, Judy O'Brien, Kal Perry, Tony Staloch and Dorothea Sutter.

PHASE TWO: SMSQ Architects are providing the construction documents and scope of work for the roof and window repairs/restoration. The information will be applied to a Minnesota Cultural Heritage Legacy grant request pre-application due July 2017. Final application due September 2017. Matching funds are not required for the Legacy grant, however cash donated for this project makes our grant request stronger. **Estimated Project Cost: \$120,000**

How To Donate

Make your tax-deductible check payable:
"Waseca County Historical Society"
and write on the check memo:

"Hofmann Apiaries Capital Improvement Fund"

Mail to:

**Waseca County Historical Society
315—2nd Avenue NE
Waseca, MN 56093**

If you have any questions, please contact
Joan Mooney, 507-835-7700, or
program@historical.waseca.mn.us

Visit: www.hofmannapiaries.org

Advisory Board:

Larry and Jan Hofmann, Newell Searle,
Gregg Johnson, Boyd Fuller, Jurgen Peters,
Ron Purcell, Colleen Carlson,
Jim Jewison, and Joan Mooney



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Membership Renewal Date



The Need for Volunteers

If the budget can't grow, then the work ahead will have to be accomplished with added volunteers. More volunteers are needed to open the museum for extended hours and/or to assist with regular tasks. We have started gathering new member/volunteers together to learn about these responsibilities. We have new guidelines and lots of flexibility. Contact Sheila or Joan for more information or to sign up for a Volunteer Coffee Gathering—no commitment necessary, call —**835-7700**

- Collection Processing**
- Office/Mailing/Proofreading**
- Oral History Interviewing**
- Lifting/Repairs/Painting**
- Social Media**
- Advocacy**
- Saturday and Event Hosts**

