

The Beloit Company by Paul Kerr

Late in January of 1848 John Sutter, having discovered gold, hoped to keep it secret. If ever there was a failure to keep a secret this was it in spades. The discovery became known and gossip abounded giving life to myth and stories of an El Dorado out west where gold nuggets could be had for the taking. No matter the skepticism borne by a few it didn't deter in the least one of the largest and most intense migrations west to the Sacramento area of California. Beloiters, numbering a hundred or more, participated in the mad rush for gold.

The greatest rush occurred during the years 1849 & 1850. It was in 1850 that two groups were formed in Beloit. This first group called itself the Badger Gold Hunters. It was a relatively small association of men numbering about 30 and among them some rather prominent Beloit citizens such as Samuel G. and J. B. Colley. This group was the first to leave for the "gold fields" which was the early Spring of 1850. According to reports they made the journey to California in record-breaking time: sixty-nine days. The other contingent was called The Beloit Company. It gathered together on the banks of the Missouri on the 6th of May in 1850 and drew up a set of rules with Preamble and Resolutions. This document was made known to Beloit College Professor R. K. Richardson by Raymond Adams of Chapel Hill, N.C. Adams explained the importance in a letter to Richardson which was made public in a Beloit Daily news article of 1951.

It would be most welcome and keenly interesting to talk about these two groups and their respective trips west. To read about the sights encountered, the diurnal hazards and arduous tasks entailed but alas these details are not forthcoming from any resources at hand. But the document is an interesting piece and something we do know about.

What we do know is that we have a copy of a notable broadside, the original of which is very rare and significant as a unique piece of early frontier printing. At the time of the Daily News article only two or three such publications were known to exist. From it we know the names of those who went- seventy signed up to go. We know where they came from. We know the appointed Captain: Beloiters Lewis Clark. Other companies heading west had documents of some sort with governing rules of operations, too, but Adams thinks this one special for its details. We reproduce it here for your perusal with the hope that you will enjoy one more tiny detail of Beloit History you might not have known about.

(The broadside was published in Kanesville, Iowa- which is now Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1850. It was published by the Frontier Guardian Printing company, a Mormon owned company. The information we have indicates the piece is still in the archives at Chapel Hill, N.C.)

BELOIT COMPANY

At a meeting of a Company of Californians on the Banks of the Missouri, May 6th, 1850, the following Preamble and Resolutions were unanimously adopted and names entered.

Whereas we are about to leave the frontier and travel over Indian Territory, exposed to their treachery, and knowing their long and abiding hatred to the Whites; also many other privations to meet with. We consider it necessary to form ourselves into a company for the purpose of protecting each other and our property, during our journey to California.

Therefore Resolved, That this company shall be known as the "Beloit Company."

Resolved, That there shall be one selected from the company, suitable and capable to act as Captain or Leader, and to hold his office until removed by a two-thirds vote of the company.

Resolved, That there shall be someone selected from the Company, to act as Assistant or Aid to the Captain; to advise with him, what is or may be best for the Company, and to hold his office until removed by a two-thirds vote.

Resolved, That we, as men, pledge ourselves to assist each other through all the misfortunes that may befall us on our long and dangerous journey.

Resolved, That the Christian Sabbath shall be observed, except when absolutely necessary to travel.

Resolved, That each and every member shall pay strict and proper respect to the feelings of each and all the Company.

Resolved, That there shall be a sufficient guard appointed each night regularly, by the Captain.

Resolved, That in case of any disputes arising between any members of the Company, they shall be referred to three arbiters, one chosen by each party, and one by the two chosen, whose decision shall be final.

Resolved, That in case of a member's dying, the Company shall give him a decent burial.

Resolved, That the Company be divided into four divisions, each to choose a Wagon Master, each division taking the lead in rotation, and the Wagon Master of the division that arrives at the camp ground first shall be the Camp Master for the night, and all the divisions shall keep within hailing distance.

Resolved, That by a majority of votes these resolutions may be altered or more added at any time.

The following officers were elected. – Lewis Clark, of Beloit, Wisconsin, Captain; Jabes Pierce, of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, Assistant Captain; O. Crain, of Angola, Ind., and John Penman, of Beloit, Wisconsin, Chaplains; Dr. S. L. Grow, of Clinton, Wisconsin, Surgeon and Secretary.

Beloit Historical Society

Founded 1910

Officers

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Treasurer Maggie Janke
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Terry Karow Steve Kinkade
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Executive Director Paul Kerr
Facilities Manager Dwight Alton

Newsletter edited by Jen Scott
Other contributors to this issue:
Paul Kerr

Dates of Next Board Meetings:
February 19, 2009, 4 p.m.

The Newsletter, *Confluence*, is published quarterly for the membership of the Beloit Historical Society to inform readers of Society activities as well as educate them on the history of Beloit. The Beloit Historical Society manages two sites, Lincoln Center Museum with main offices at 845 Hackett St. and Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave. For further information please call (608) 365-7835 or e-mail us at Pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Or see our new website which can be found on the web at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

Farewell Phyllis Morrison

The Beloit Historical Society says goodbye to Phyllis Morrison who died this past December. She was a great asset to the Beloit Historical Society for over a decade. We thank the Morrison family for making the Society recipient of memorials in her name. They totaled \$625.00.

Beloit's African Americans

February is African American Month and in this issue we pay tribute with a brief accounting of Beloit's African Americans.

Beloit was barely three years old when it became home to African Americans. The Emmanuel Craig family moved here in 1839 followed by the Gillian Perry family in 1846. Two years later the Joseph Bowling family moved here from Raleigh, N.C. William Waffle with brother and mother settled in 1858. William was among the first blacksmiths to work in the area. The Strothers family settled in 1863 and the Bond family around 1865.

By 1900 thirty to forty African American families called Beloit home. Many more came as a result of a major recruitment campaign by Fairbanks Morse & Co. 1914-1920. Many of these folks, men

mostly, filled factory positions vacated by their white counterparts who signed up to fight in the big war- World War I.

The Society has over 180 photographs of African Americans in its collection. Here is just a sampling of them. Pictured top to bottom: Charles Hobson (1934), Sussex Bradford (1940), Ada Johnson (1925), and Ocie Nunn (1919).



The End-Of-The Year Appeal

We started our appeal for operating monies back in November 2008 and ran it till the first week of January and are proud to say it was very successful. Considering the economic climate of late this is most pleasantly surprising. The Historical Society heard from 126 donors and took in \$18,305.00. This was more than \$3000.00 over what we hoped to raise. Many thanks to all of you for your generosity- it makes all the difference in the world to us.

**"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you have to keep moving."
- Albert Einstein**

Wish List

A box of copy paper

A set of
cordless phones

Digital camera
with zoom

Sponsor for this year's
Volunteer Brunch-
\$350.00

Up-Coming Events

Quilting classes start soon. They begin in February and run through March. Scheduled dates are the 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th of February and March 2009. They will be held at Lincoln Center located at 845 Hackett St. beginning each Saturday at 9:00a.m. and running till 3:00p.m. Cost is \$12 for members and \$14 for non members.

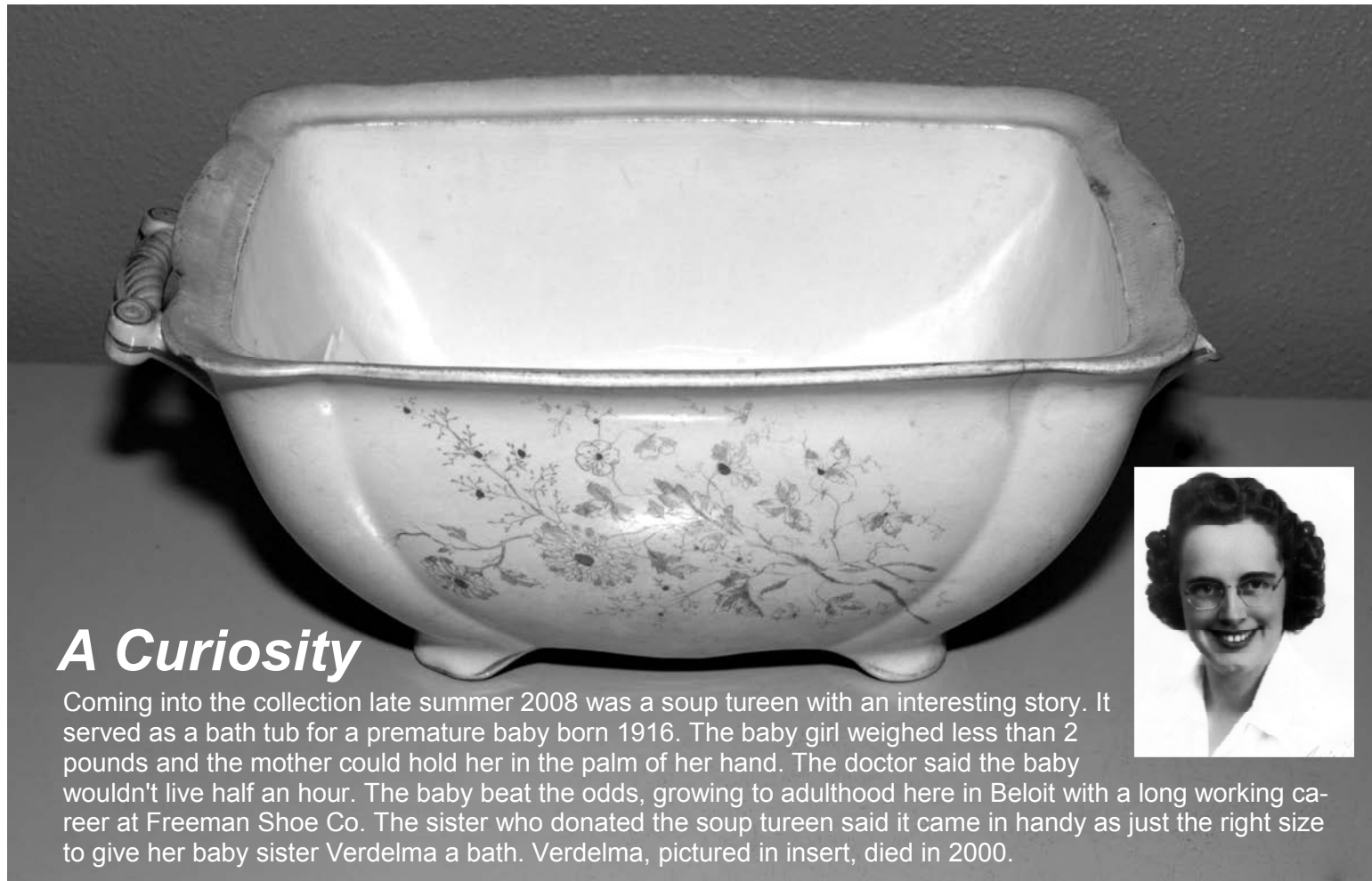
An Evening at Lincoln Center with program by John Eastberg is scheduled for 20 February 2009 with social hour to start at 6:00p.m. and meal to follow. John's program for the evening which will be highlighted with slides is entitled: Gone But Not Forgotten: Milwaukee's Lost Homes of Grand Avenue. John is the historian for the historic Pabst Mansion in Milwaukee. Please join us for an evening of good food, wine, dessert and entertainment here at Lincoln Center located at 845 Hackett St. Phone in your reservation and send checks to the above location. Cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for non members. Our menu for the evening is Baked Tilapia with herb butter, Roast Pork Loin with Sauce Chausser, Garden Blend Long Grain and Wild Rice, Parsley Buttered Potatoes, Francais Blend Vegetables and Dinner Rolls. And for dessert: Lemon Berry Cream Cake. Wine, Coffee, Water and Iced Tea will be served with the meal.

Our **Volunteer Brunch** is slated for 2 April 2009 and we invite all Historical Society volunteers who work for us in numerous ways to join us. Program for the occasion is provided by Clark Kidder who will give a talk entitled "Orphan Train Rider: One Girl's True Story". The talk is accompanied with photographs. So join us for fun and entertainment at this year's Thank You brunch for the volunteers. Brunch is served at 11:30 a.m.

The Society's **Annual Dinner** is to be held 17 April 2009 with appetizers offered at 6:00p.m., meal to follow. We are proud to have Linda Bachant present a musical program of Lerner & Loew. Cost of meal, wine, dessert and program \$35 for members and \$40 for non members. We will conduct a brief meeting of business, election of officers and present a financial report. Please phone (365-7835) in your reservation and send payment to the Beloit Historical Society at 845 Hackett St., Beloit WI 53511.

Membership

Since July of 2008 the Historical Society has signed up 14 new members. Our newest members: Dennis Craddick, Family Search Library, Richard and Katherine Hulbert and Joyce Lillie.

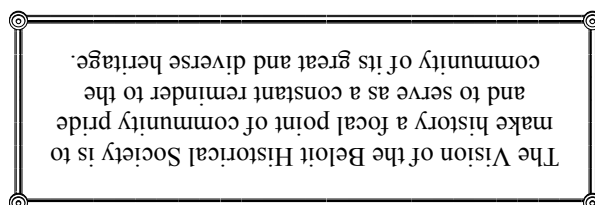
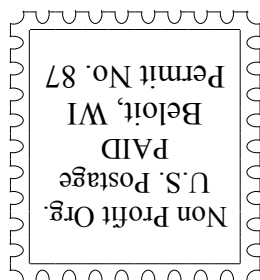


A Curiosity

Coming into the collection late summer 2008 was a soup tureen with an interesting story. It served as a bath tub for a premature baby born 1916. The baby girl weighed less than 2 pounds and the mother could hold her in the palm of her hand. The doctor said the baby wouldn't live half an hour. The baby beat the odds, growing to adulthood here in Beloit with a long working career at Freeman Shoe Co. The sister who donated the soup tureen said it came in handy as just the right size to give her baby sister Verdelma a bath. Verdelma, pictured in insert, died in 2000.



Visit our web site at
beloithistoricalsociety.com



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