

Celebrating 100 Years



Confluence

Volume 17, Issue 3 - November 2010



Now Available!

The **Heritage Cookbook** features comments, photographs of the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, and 175 family recipes.

The **Centennial Calendar** is more than the usual calendar; it not only features scenes of Beloit, but also allows you to record your remembrances and activities.

They make great gifts and are great mementos of the Society's long 100 years in Beloit.

Are We There Yet?

By Paul Kerr

First they arrived by horse and buggy, by train, then by motor car. By the time of automobiles, a traveler could rest his weary bones at one of those newfangled creations called a motel. Something that began making its appearance on the national scene in the 1960's. A lot of folks, though, liked to choose among the many handsome hotels to stay at in downtown Beloit. And Beloit, from the 1840's to the 1940's, was well adorned with a variety of hotels from the grand to the simple. They became the destination for many who may have asked, did ask, *Are We There Yet?*

Beloit's first hotel was quite simple being part of Caleb Blodgett's original house. Caleb was Beloit's first white settler (1836-37). With improvements and additions, this structure of his became known to the public as the Beloit House, and also as the Rock River House, and served the visitor as a hotel since 1838. It was originally established at State and St. Paul. The hotel moved several times in its life making room for other buildings and city development, finally ending at State and Public in 1853. It was, at that time, known as the Dunbar House because



Rock River House

a far from simple hotel in downtown Beloit. Arguably this hotel, the Bushnell House, would become Beloit's finest, standing four stories high and proud in the year 1854.

Built of Milwaukee Brick, this magnificent edifice cost \$27,000 and fronted State Street for 98 feet and East Grand for 97. Financial difficulties led the Professor to sell his hotel. For a brief time it became known as the Finwick House and then in 1868 Samuel Goodwin bought it. Samuel renamed it the Goodwin House and he lost no time



Goodwin House

renovating the place. He added an Opera House in 1869 and, in the late 1880's, cast iron balconies that faced East Grand Avenue. It was in hotels like this, and there were others, where the best cuisine of the town was offered. There were a variety of dishes such as oyster and chicken soup, boiled Winnebago Trout with claret sauce, stuffed white fish, boiled salmon with egg sauce. There were roast dishes of sirloin of beef, saddle of mutton, millets of pork, stuffed turkey, braised leg of pork, ham, and boned leg of veal and... It's a long list and we haven't even reached the offerings of fruits, vegetables, and desserts. The Goodwin House remained one of Beloit's finest hotels, serving the public until 1904, when the building was converted to office spaces. It became popularly known to Beloiters as the Goodwin Block and lasted 60 plus years until being demolished in 1969.

Contemporary with the Bushnell/Goodwin House were the American House at 450 Broad, the Russell House located on property eventually owned by Freeman Shoe Co. just off of Shirland avenue, and the Commercial House on West

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Beloit Historical Society

Confluence

845 Hackett St.

Beloit WI 53511

Address Service Requested

Visit our web site at beloithistoricalociety.com

The Vision of the Beloit Historical Society is to make history a focal point of community pride and to serve as a constant reminder to the community of its great and diverse heritage.

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Newsletter Contributors: Paul Kerr, Dwight Alton, Dick Gerhart, Ann Hallock, and Judy Nichols; layout by Jen Scott.

Board meetings are the third Thursday of every month at 4 p.m. and are held at Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett Street.

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 web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

The Society welcomes our newest members: Nancy Wallace, Tim Ramsey, L. David, Diana and Everett Collins, and Vicki Johnson.

Past Events

The **Birthday celebration for Mary Bartlett** [11 July] was an enjoyable success. The event attracted over 125 people who shared stories and memories they had of the diminutive Doctor just barely able to peer over the steering wheel of her car. Some of the stories have been collected and along with some of the Doctor's belongings make up a permanent exhibit on display at the Homestead. Stop in and take a look.

About two months later the Homestead & Lincoln Center had open houses to celebrate **Heritage Days** [12 September]. Between both locations the Historical Society registered 280 visitors and a good number of them bought cookbooks, calendars, and other items. At Lincoln Center staff and volunteers could hardly keep up with the popcorn needs of visitors. It was another festive and popular occasion for the Society.

The Beloit Historical Society will host Chamber of Commerce's **Business After Five** at Lincoln Center on the 10th of November. It will officially open its exhibit entitled *When We Were Kids*, the 1930's-1960's. From 5-7 p.m. we will open our doors to what is hoped another crowd of people who will partake of a little walk down memory lane. Door prizes and refreshments will also be offered. Cost to a Chamber member is \$5 and to a non-Chamber member \$10.

During the first weeks of November, the Society will approach all of you for additional financial support with its **Annual Appeal**. Last year's Appeal was very successful and we're again hopeful this year. We hope you all can spare something knowing full well every little bit helps and that we are deeply grateful for your contributions.

We thank Gary Alseth, Sue Drevdahl, Joe Drevdahl, Terry Karow, and other volunteers for a grand time with **Trivia Night** [1 October]. An interested crowd of 85, forming 13 teams, came to this newest event of the Society's ready to compete, answering a variety of questions. Refreshments, drink, and almost three hours later, the Bass-o-Matics, emerged victorious with a team score of 78. The AV Club, came in second with a team score of 76. This was yet another enjoyable evening for the Society and one which attracted a good number of new people.

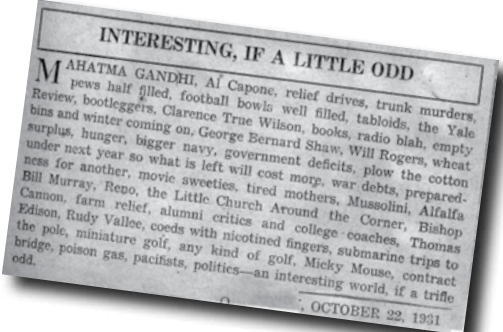


Upcoming Events

From the scrapbook of Minnie McIntyre Wallace

Our World Today, interesting, if a little odd Oct. 22, 1931

Mahatma Gandhi, Al Capone, relief drives, trunk murders, pews half filled, football bowls well filled, tabloids, the Yale Review, bootleggers, Clarence True Wilson, books, radio blah, empty bins and winter coming on, George Bernard Shaw, Will Rogers, wheat surplus, hunger, bigger navy, government deficits, plow the cotton under next year so what is left will cost more, war debts, preparedness for another, movie sweeties, tired mothers, Mussolini, Alfalfa Bill Murray, Reno, the Little Church Around the Corner, Bishop Cannon, farm relief, alumni critics and college coaches, Thomas Edison, Rudy Vallee, coeds with nicotined fingers, submarine trips to the pole, miniature golf, any kind of golf, Micky Mouse, contract bridge, poison gas, pacifists, politics - an interesting world, if a trifle odd.



What's Cookin'? Trivia Answers (From page 3) by Ann Hallock

cruller - donut

A cruller is a fried cake which takes its name from the Dutch word krullen meaning twisted cake. Originally it was made by twisting a strip of dough and frying it in deep fat. The French cruller is round, made from a cream puff batter and deep fried in fat.

mock duck - beef steak

A beef steak is wrapped around dressing (known as stuffing today), sewn or pinned together and baked. Small portions were sometimes called beef birds. At the end of this recipe it reads "If you do not see the wings and legs, you will think you have roast duck"

croquettes or croquet - leftovers

Left-over cooked meat, vegetables, or fish was mixed in a heavy sauce to bind the ingredients, shaped usually in small mounds and fried in fat.

chow chow - pickles

The recipe used a variety of vegetables: green tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, cauliflower, and green peppers.

floating island - pudding

A stove-top stirred custard made with egg yolks with islands of meringue floating in the pudding. The islands are made by dropping spoons of meringue in boiling water. When set, the meringue islands are placed on top of the cold custard.

mince pie - chopped meat

Mince pie was originally called mincemeat pie and used finely chopped meat to which fruits such as apples, currants, or pears might be added with a mixture of spices such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and allspice. Today's mince pie is meatless and made with raisins and a mixture of other fruits with a mixture of spices.

Johnny cake - corn bread

It is believed that this name came from the Indian custom of carrying cornmeal mush wrapped in leaves on a day's journey. The "journey cake" was baked on a hot rock. This cookbook has several recipes which call for Indian meal, another name for corn meal.

saleratus - baking soda

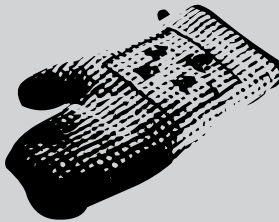
Saleratus was an earlier unrefined form of baking soda. It came in a lump form and had to be finely crushed before using. In baking, it was frequently used with Cream of Tartar. Baking soda was also used in cleaning household items and soothing sunburns and bug bites.

mock oysters - corn fritters

Although I found this recipe in the "oysters, clams, and fish" section, it contains only fresh corn, grated from the cob, eggs, milk, and flour. I found no explanation for the name.

little pigs in the blanket - oysters

This title reminds me of the popular pigs in a blanket appetizer where small hot dogs or smoked sausage are wrapped in biscuit dough and baked. This "little pigs" recipe calls for wrapping large oysters in bacon and frying in a hot pan until the bacon is crisp.



Are We There Yet?

Continued from page 3

Harley was affectionately referred to as the “Mayor of State Street” and named the hotel for his wife in the late 1950s. The Caroline was torn down in 1971. It had three floors and 50 rooms and was located at State and St. Paul’s. Then there was the Lorlen. Located on one of the more historic downtown sites the Lorlen sat at the southeast corner of Broad and Pleasant and opened as a hotel in 1928. It ran until 1960. The site was that of Beloit’s first Presbyterian Church built for \$10,000 in 1850. In 1907 the church moved to its present location on Prospect and the building at Broad and Pleasant was converted to Beloit’s first major hospital. For a couple of decades the hospital operated from there before joining other doctors and hospitals converging at



The Caroline

one central location on Olympian Boulevard in 1928. The Beloit State Bank bought the Lorlen in February of 1960. A year later the hotel was razed to make way for extra parking for the bank.



Hotel Lorlen

For a list of other known hotels in Beloit, please refer to the inset on page three. There were not too many downtown hotels into the 1950s and ‘60s, but there were some and earlier on there were plenty enough hotels awaiting to answer that age old question, that impatient lament- *Are We There Yet?*

In the Collections

by Judy Nichols

There are treasures galore in the Luebke Family Memorial Library.

Among the scrapbooks lies a brown, well-worn legal ledger. In some places the brown ink is illegible and the spelling incorrect but in this ledger one can discern the charges, highlights and resolutions of the first recorded criminal court cases brought before the Justice of the Peace in Beloit, Rock County, Territory of Wisconsin, 1846. Even though it was two years before statehood court cases were plentiful. Justice of the Peace Jacob Banta's first case was between Saunders W. Cooper and Stephen H. Cheney for money owed with the Plaintiff receiving \$15.07 plus court costs of 99 and 1/2 cents.



To a genealogist the best of these entries was tucked among the court cases. They are the first marriage licenses issued by J.P. Banta beginning 24 December 1846. Early vital records such as these are difficult to come by and are only sporadically recorded in the County Court system. Any evidence that someone's family was in a specific area makes the genealogy-search worthwhile, and when hidden records are discovered you want to shout *Eureka!* I am in the process of indexing these many treasures so these fabulous resources can be utilized.

Are We There Yet?

Continued from cover

Grand Avenue across from St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. The extreme southern point of Beloit’s Business District was where the Russell House was located. The Goodwin was at its northern most point. Since the late 1850s the Russell was quite competitive with the Goodwin being close to Beloit’s first train station on Shirland and those travelers who would emerge from the cars. This happy situation lasted until the train station moved and by the middle 1860’s the Russell House disappeared. The American House fared much better. Built in 1857 and managed for a long time by “Shoe Peg” Wood, this hotel rested at Broad and Pleasant where Goodalls gas station would eventually settle and where the Ace Hardware store is today. The American House was a rendezvous of pioneers and Civil War veterans. It ran as the American House till 1904, and as the Transient Hotel until 1915, and as the Marion Hotel until 1922. The Commercial House was built by one of Beloit’s most notable businessman A.B. Carpenter probably around 1870. Within 14 brief years, however, it was burned to the ground by a disgruntled brakeman who was refused credit at a nearby bar. The Commercial House was his target.

These were not Beloit’s only 19th century hotels. There were some grand ones like the Grand Hotel of 1889 at the southwest corner of State and St. Paul, the Brannigan of 1890 at 209 State and the Central House of 1890 at 217 State. The Grand became the Clark in 1902, the Chandler in 1912 and back to the Grand in 1917 when it disappears from the downtown scene. The 50 room Brannigan had the longest life of these three. It was started by Thomas Brannigan and was managed by his daughter, Mrs. Frank Munn, and it ran as the Brannigan till 1941 when the name changed to the Marvin Hotel. The Marvin ran from 1942-1963. It was condemned in 1964 and torn down. The Central House had a relatively brief run of 32 years closing down in 1902.

The Carlton and Hotel Hilton were both built in 1904 and

were among Beloit’s earliest 20th century hotels and are ones that many Beloiters of present day will remember. The 3 story, 75 room Hilton had a longer run as a hotel at the southwest corner of Pleasant and East Grand than the Carlton did at 144-146 State Street. It was the more elegant, had a good number of famous people visit it, and it still stands today with the rooms converted to luxury apartments. But the Carlton had its interesting history as well with its 55 years in downtown Beloit. It, however, went through three different teams of management. As the Carlton it ran till 1937 when it then

became the Blackhawk Hotel and continued to run till 1946, when it became the LeClaire running till 1959. Mrs. Edna Fink managed the LeClaire’s 32 rooms for a good number of years tending to its patrons of railroad employees, traveling businessmen, transients and regular out-of-towners.

Of the same decade as these were other hotels possibly remembered by Beloiters of today such as the Grand Avenue hotel starting up

in 1907, becoming the Radway in 1917, the Doris in 1930, the Gateway in 1941 and, before going out of business in the early 1950s, the Beloit Hotel in 1951. These transformations took place at 500-502 East Grand Avenue. And there was Harley Hanaman’s the Caroline.

Former Beloit Hotels

- Perkins - 121 East Grand Ave., 1907-1914
- Savoy House - 451 Broad, 1907-1910
- Park - (becomes the Brunswick) 4th and West Grand, 1900-1904
- Rex - 630 4th Street, 1914-1930
- Avenue - 211 East Grand (1924-1928) and 145 West Grand (1928-1930)
- Broadway - 548 Broad, 1926-1933
- Elite - 211 Pleasant, 1926-1928
- Gordon - 615 Broad, 1926-1933
- Keeley - 121 East Grand, 1915- ?
- Y.M.C.A. - 514-530 Public, 1915-1965
- Wedgewood - 332 West Grand, 1946-1949

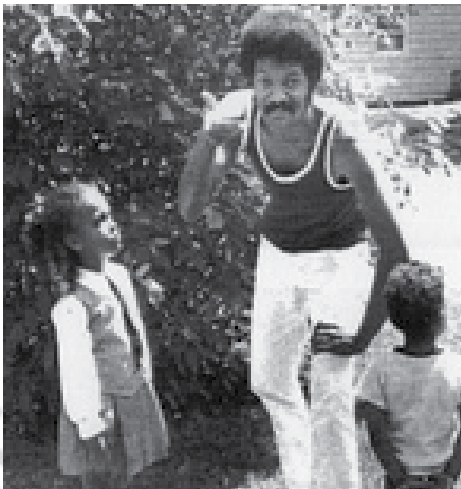


Hotel Hilton

Profiles

Byron Gilliam

Byron was a South Beloit who left his hometown for an absorbing dancing career in Los Angeles, California. Voted best dancer by his senior high school class in 1958 he went on to join his uncles who lived in L.A. with aspiring hopes of landing a good job. His break came three years later when he landed a job as dance instructor at a place called The Factory, a popular club at the time and one jointly owned by Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis Junior, and Paul Newman. It was Peter Lawford who offered him the job. Some of Gilliam's customers were Zsa Zsa and Ava Gabor, Steve Allen, Jane Meadows, Barbara Rush and Joline Slaughter. The latter celebrity was the wife of George Slaughter, the producer of the popular T.V. show Laugh In. Gilliam became a regular on the show. This exposure landed him other jobs and one he confessed to loving the most: Opening act for the Fifth Dimension for a summer tour. Byron Gilliam visited home often and never forgot his Midwestern roots.



Johnny Watts

Johnny was born in 1913 at New Albany, Mississippi and died in Milwaukee some 88 years later. As so often mentioned in newspaper accounts and one as recent as March of this year Johnny was one of the most outstanding sports figures to come out of Beloit High School. He was excellent in baseball, football, and track but it was in basketball that he achieved Wisconsin State fame. He made Beloit's Junior varsity team as a sophomore and came to dominate the game being instrumental leading the Beloit High School teams of 1932, 1933 & 1934 to State Championships. And the 1932 game was especially memorable with Johnny playing with his arm in a splint in only the latter part of the fourth quarter. That's because Beloit was losing to Wausau. With Johnny's entrance to the game, the momentum swung to the Beloit team and with a winning basket from Johnny the fate of the Wausau team was sealed. Johnny Watts was the first African American basket ball player in Wisconsin to dominate the tournament. After tours with the Harlem Globetrotters and touring the country with his own created team, the Harlem Aces, Johnny settled down in Milwaukee. He did live to see the high school, Milwaukee Vincent, tie Beloit's three-peat in the late 1990's (1996, 1997, and 1998).



Wisconsin State Championship Basketball Team, 1933.
Coach H. L. Jacobson; Casper Scalia; Robert Cahoon; Elbert Petroski.
John Watts; Logan Swinehart; Paul Connors; Lawrence Dibbert; Casper Farina

Daniel Torrissi

Back in the early 1900's Beloit had a problem with what became known as the Black Hand, an Italian underworld crime ring. It was Daniel Torrissi, Beloit's Chief of Detectives, who is credited with ridding the town of this ring. Daniel worked with the Beloit Department of Police almost from the moment he arrived in Beloit in 1910. He was born in Italy in 1885, came to the United States in 1902, and died in Beloit in 1968. From roughly 1911-1925 Daniel served in the Police Department and as Chief of Detectives is credited with having solved numerous crimes involving the Black Hand. Even Police Chief of Madison, Mr. Shaughnessy, with the murder of Patrolman Herbert Dreger by the Italian Black Hand, had the good Torrissi help with the investigation. Daniel retired from the Department in 1925 to pursue other interests but left an indelible mark on the history of that department and on Beloit. Daniel was also the founder of Beloit's Italian-American Club.



What's Cookin'? Trivia by Ann Hallock

In this issue, we offer a new twist on our standard history questions. The information was taken initially from "The Family Cook Book compiled by the Ladies of the Epworth League of the Methodist Church," Coxsackie, N.Y., published in 1896. This is one of several very old cookbooks found in the Vedder Research Library. Follow-up information regarding terms used, was obtained from the "Woman's Day Encyclopedia of Cookery," published in 1965.



In Column A are the names of food items or ingredients found in this cookbook. These foods or ingredients may be known by other names today. Column B includes the current name of the food or the ingredient. The question for you is, *which item in Column B most closely relates to the item in Column A?* The easiest way to link the answers is to draw a line between the two items. The answers and information about the items is found on page 7.

Column A

cruller

mock duck

croquettes

chow chow

floating island

mince pie

Johnny cake

saleratus

mock oysters

little pigs in the blanket

Column B

pudding

pickles

baking powder

oysters

leftovers

corn fritter

beef steak

donut

corn bread

chopped meat

The difference in names, ingredients, and directions from today's cookbooks make reading old cookbooks an interesting hobby. Of special interest are the old family cookbooks or those which have hand written notes about favorite dishes.

