



Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 27 Issue 4

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July/August 2020

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**"EVERY TOWN HAS TO
HAVE A PLACE TO KEEP ITS
HISTORY, OTHERWISE IT
WILL BE LOST"**

John Patrick

Beloit Historical Society Makes History!

110th Annual Meeting held remotely due to Covid-19 Pandemic



Donna Langford, Executive Director, shown attending the annual meeting using the Zoom online video conference app.

Highlights of the meeting were:

President **Teri Downing's** exemplary service and guidance during the past 5 years of transition was recognized. A donation of \$1,000 to BHS from current and former board members was given in appreciation of her wonderful leadership. The money will be used towards matching funds for our **Women's History Project**. Although Teri has reached her board term limit, she will stay involved as a member of the collection's committee.

A thank you to **Jennifer Scott**, former board member, for creating the 2017-2019 **Strategic Plan Report** (the plan is available on the BHS website as a PDF under the "About" section)

The highlights of the Strategic Plan Report were shared. The completion of many of the goals provides a foundation for the next phase of strategic planning that includes a survey, creation of an interpretive plan and development of financial and marketing strategies to complete the goals. (see page 10 for details)

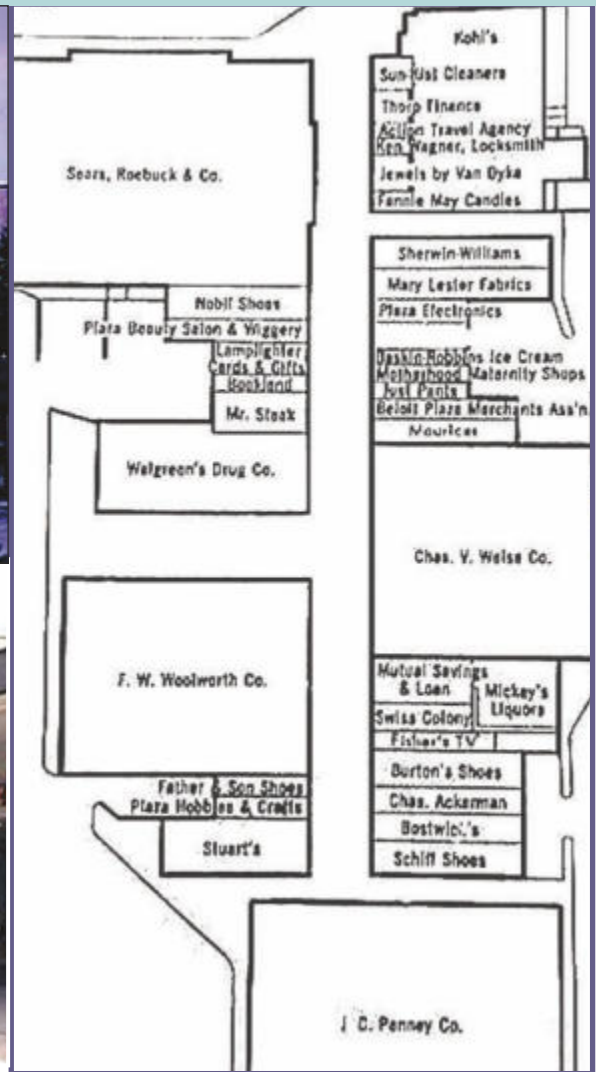
A summary of successful programs and partnerships from 2019 was shared.

Treasurer Dick Gerhard provided a financial report and stated 2019 had been a good year for the society. New board members Tom Larsen, Ellen Joyce, Diana Brooks, Rick Dexter and Jackie Jackson were voted into office.

The Annual Meeting closed with a report on our gradual reopening.

Looking Back

Morse Hills Golf Course (page 6-7) made way for the construction of the first major shopping center in Rock County - Beloit Plaza. It opened in 1966 with over 60 stores and services. A covered roof was completed in 1981 and the plaza was renamed the Beloit Mall.



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Introduction to "The Deadliest Season"

By Carol Mankiewicz

Historians all agree that the "Spanish" flu did not originate in Spain! Spain was neutral in WWI, and therefore was not subject to censoring of the press with respect to the outbreak; there were no fears of giving the enemy information about deaths and disease, or of affecting troop morale. Spain reported freely and, consequently, has been burdened with the association with the 1918-19 flu pandemic.

There is no consensus on where the flu actually did originate, but one possibility is Haskell, Kansas.

Experts are not certain, but it is believed it came from a farm near Fort Riley. They believe both a bird flu virus and a human flu virus, neither of which could be transferred to each other, joined in a pig. Viruses can mix and mutate in animals which can then jump to humans.

Here's the timeline gleaned from the Center for Disease Control website. In March, 1918, 100+ soldiers came down with the flu at the camp in Fort Riley. In earliest April of that year, 3 flu deaths and 18 severe cases were reported in Haskell, Kansas, suggesting that recruits from the Haskell area might have accounted for the March outbreak. These troops, in turn, were deployed to war zones, thereby contributing to what would become a pandemic.

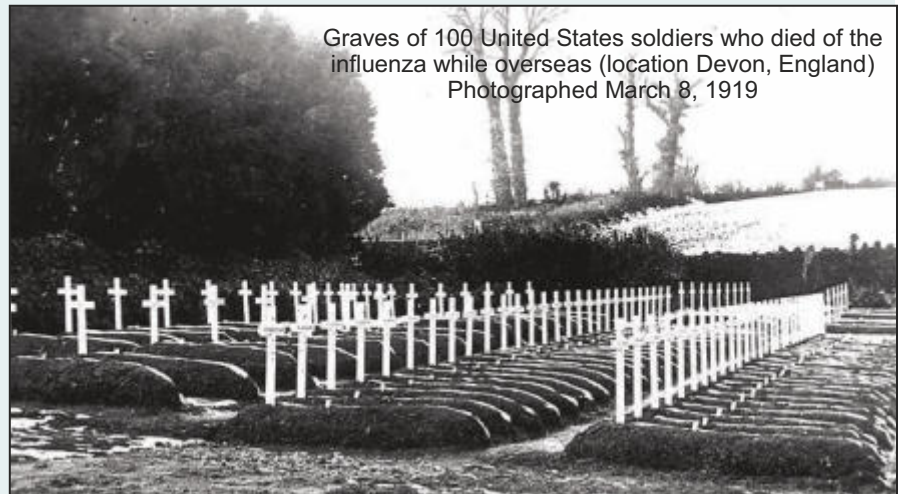
A training camp and a naval facility near Boston were hot spots for the second wave of the virus in fall 1918. This extremely fatal second wave and its effects on Beloit are discussed in the following article beginning on page 4 that was originally published in the **Summer 2001**

Confluence. The population of Beloit in 1918 was probably a bit more than 50% of the 37,000 population today, so double the horrible death and infection statistics of 1918 in Beloit to get a rough comparison to current local covid-19 statistics. This second wave in 1918 hit all of the U.S. hard, from California to the New York Island! A third wave of the flu in winter and spring 1919 also spread across the continental U.S., but was less fatal and had a reduced effect in Beloit.

It is estimated that one in every three people on earth were infected with the virus and between 3-20% were killed. Exact numbers do not exist because of poor record keeping during that period.



Soldiers with influenza crowd into an emergency Hospital near Fort Riley



Graves of 100 United States soldiers who died of the influenza while overseas (location Devon, England)
Photographed March 8, 1919

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Autumn 1918: The Deadliest Season

By Scott Reichard

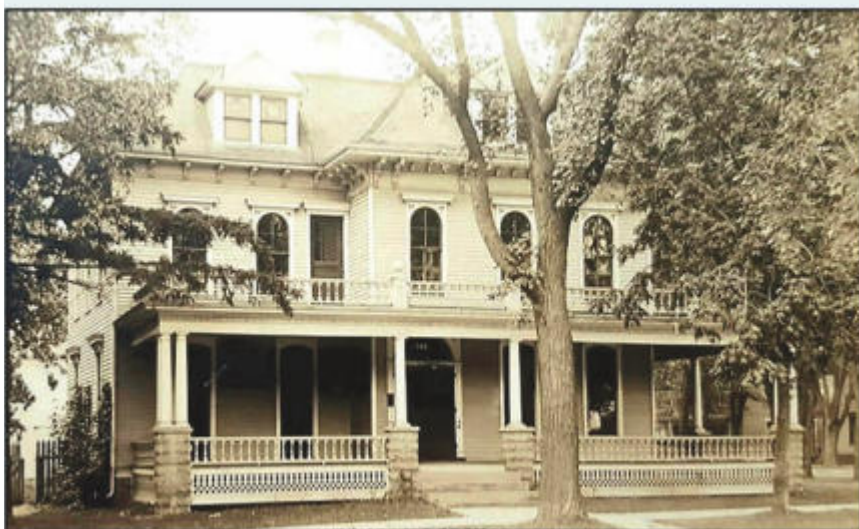
There are few today who recall that within living memory the worst epidemic in U.S. history occurred. As WWI raged across Europe, the autumn of 1918 saw the world swept by what became known as the Spanish Influenza. Estimates of how many people died from the disease world-wide range from 20 to 40 million, and in the United States alone over 25 million were infected with over 670,000 dying.

From the end of Sept. 1918 through the end of the year, Beloit had over 5,000 cases of the "grip" as it was called, and over 100 deaths. The first fatality in Beloit attributed to the flu was Kenneth Dales, 19, of South Bluff, on Sept. 27, 1918. Typical of the Spanish Flu and unlike what was usual with other fatal influenza, **most deaths occurred in those between the ages of 20 and 45**, the very young and very old usually being spared. The flu struck rapidly and without warning.

Symptoms of pain, fever, and general malaise would come on suddenly, and in a quarter of all cases pneumonia would develop. As temperatures soared to 105 degrees, lungs would start bleeding, a horrific, blood-filled cough would ensue, and patients would literally drown in their own body fluids. It was a gruesome death.

As Sept turned into Oct, more and more cases were being reported in Beloit; by Oct 2 there were 200 cases in the city. On the 3rd Beloit College quarantined its quarters, and the football schedule was canceled until further notice. On the 4th it was reported that Gaston School had over 100 flu-related absences.

With the epidemic escalating, and the need to prevent the further spread of the disease, the Beloit Board of Health took a remarkable step: On Oct 5, it was resolved "that all moving picture shows, theaters, dance halls, public schools and churches and all places of public assemblage be closed to the public beginning Monday, Oct 7, until further notice." Dr. W.L. Holt, Beloit's Health Officer, in issuing this resolution, estimated that there may have been 1,000 cases of influenza in the city at that time. The Board of Health even deputized all Beloit's citizens to enlist them in the fight against the epidemic, and doctors were to report new cases to the Board daily. It was requested that there be no "indiscriminate sneezing, spitting or coughing," and the "thorough airing of every room in the city was urged at least once a day." Professor T.L. Wright, secretary of the Beloit College faculty, announced that the entire college was being isolated.



In 1918 Beloit had three hospitals

- General Hospital at Broad & Park (left)
- Beloit Hospital at Broad & Pleasant
- Strong Emergency Hospital on 3rd floor at Grand & State.

They filled up as the epidemic exploded, even having to turn patients away. A partial solution was devised Oct 15 by turning the **Red Cross House** on West Grand (just west of the old high school) into a temporary hospital. In less than a day it was converted, and it was a great help in relieving the strain on the other hospitals.

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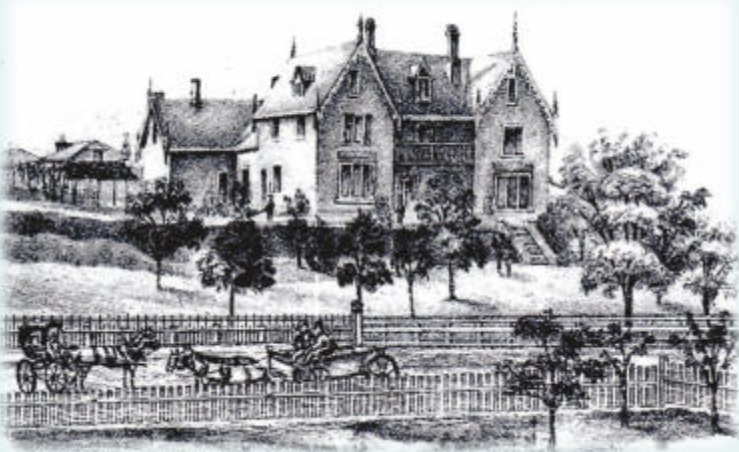
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Red Cross House—formerly the residence of A.L. Field
Field Park is named after him (corner of Bluff & Grand)

Scattered throughout the pages of the newspaper at this time were the death notices of those overcome by the influenza:

"William Gundlack, 1202 Elm St., died this morning (Oct 7) from pneumonia following the influenza...He was 23 years old...and....is survived by his wife and a child, two weeks old..."

"Mrs. Ida Klingberg, 745 11th St., died yesterday afternoon (Oct 8), after a short illness with influenza...She was the wife of Frank Klingberg, who, together with five children, survive. She was 37 years old..."

"Mrs. John Hoard died yesterday (Oct 13) at her home, 611 E. Grand Ave., after an illness of about a week, with Spanish influenza and pneumonia. Her sister, Mrs. K.E. Ringberg, who suffered from the same disease, preceded her in death by only a few days...A double funeral service was held..."

"E.J. Cork, colored, an employee of the Fairbanks-Morse plant living in one of the company's camps on the River Road, died yesterday (Oct 24) of pneumonia following an attack of influenza...A brother of the man, living at Grand Rivers, Kentucky, has been notified..."

Spanish Flu fatalities in Beloit peaked over the weekend of Oct. 19-20 when 12 died from the flu. The undertakers were so busy that one unnamed establishment reported that it had 5 bodies waiting to be embalmed. The hospitals were handicapped from sick nurses and other staff, including Beloit General's janitor Mr. Markley dying due to the flu.

By November 4 it was felt safe to send kids back to school, in light of declines in new cases and the fact that the Spanish Flu wasn't nearly as dangerous to those under 20 years old. But the students had to bring a note stating that they did not have the flu now nor had it in the last 10 days; more than 700 pupils did not report the first day, and over a hundred high school students were sent home because they had forgotten a note.

New cases had declined to the point that it was felt that the danger of greatest infection had passed, so on Nov 8 the ban on public assembly was lifted. Finally after 6 weeks churches could again hold services, theaters could resume their schedules, and "the social whirl would begin with a dance at Cosmo Hall..." But the Board of Health also required that "the managers of the theaters and moving-picture houses...exclude anyone who sneezed or coughed...If anyone does have to sneeze or cough in a public place they are urged to catch the germs in their handkerchief..." The Wilson, Rex and Strand Theaters took out a full-page ad announcing their re-opening on Sat the 9th.

As Nov and Dec wore on, the epidemic stabilized and then started to decline. There were still new cases as winter changed to spring, but the disease lost its virulence, and fatalities from it greatly declined. Overall the heaviest toll from the disease had been in the minority and immigrant communities concentrated on Race St. (now St. Paul Ave) and along Pleasant and Eclipse; the main causes cited were overcrowding and poor living conditions.

The Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 seemed to be all but forgotten for years, due in part to its occurring during the "war to end all wars." Even at the time, it was usually pushed from the front pages of the newspaper by news of the war in Europe. Also, it was a very unpleasant memory, and many chose to forget. In any case, it was a remarkable time in Beloit history, and no family was left untouched.

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“NEW FAIRY GOLF ASSOCIATION WILL BUILD LINKS HERE”

This was a headline for an article in the Beloit Daily News in September, 1925. The golf association mentioned was named the Fairbanks-Morse Golf Association and the new links they were planning was the Morse Hills Golf Club.



Laying of pipe during construction of the new Morse Hills course



“Rulers of the Morse Hills Links”

Photo headline in the fall, 1929 Beloit Daily News

L to R: Earl Chase, Jerome Annin, Fred Merrill & George Schmidt

Golf was becoming much more popular in Beloit and the only golf course in the city was the Beloit Country Club. Golfers from this area were traveling to neighboring cities with municipal or green fee courses. In July 1925, the City of Beloit Parks Department had also announced plans for acquiring land to build a municipal course.



The Fairbanks-Morse Golf Association chose temporary officers to move ahead with plans for the new nine-hole golf course. Two hundred members had joined the new golf association. Fairbanks-Morse already owned land north of their foundry which had previously been a “Tourist Camp”. In earlier years it had roads, paths, fireplaces and leveled platforms in the hillside to park early autos, ponies and teams. The new course would have boundaries of Riverside Drive on the west, Henry Avenue on the north, Park Avenue on the east, and Fairbanks Foundry on the south. The Beloit Public Library is currently located on the south end of this tract of land and the Eclipse Center on the north end.

“Here you see the undefeated Fairbanks Morse and Co. inter-departmental foursome champions. These crack mashie manipulators played 14 matches during the year. Their highest team score being 168 and their lowest 155. Their average was 162. They defeated teams from: Stores, Accounting Dept., Hospital, Large Engine, Time Clerks, Pricing Dept., Laboratory and Field Services.” Beloit Daily News fall of 1929

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Members photo taken September 19, 1936

The main purpose of the golf association was to promote golf in the city and give Fairbanks employees a place to learn the game of golf. The course was designed by **Archie Ayde**, the golf professional at the Beloit Country Club. He had designed other courses around this section of the country. The plan was to clear underbrush from the area and get a small portion of the course ready for golfers to practice on in the fall of 1925 and complete construction in 1926.

The course was built on rolling hills with plenty of trees. Hole number one was 250 yards long running along the edge of a gravel pit. The fifth hole was 220 yards in length and a frog pond on the property was turned into a water hazard for this hole. That frog pond had been the site for the famous 1916 Beloit City Pageant (see *Confluence* March/April 2017). Hole number eight was located by Park Avenue and at 500 yards was the longest hole on the course.



Eventually the golf course was closed, and the Beloit Plaza was built in the 1960s on the land of the former golf course.

Beloit Historical Society has several photos of Morse Hills Golf Club in its photo collection in addition to those shown here.



"Full House" at the clubhouse
Photo taken circa 1945

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Many streets have changed names over time. On the east side, the uninspired names First, Second, Third and Fourth became **Bushnell, Chapin, Emerson** and **Clary**, respectively. On the west side, C, D and E became **Portland, Roosevelt** and **St. Lawrence**, respectively.

Few streets, however, have changed names as often as the section of **Wisconsin Ave.** between **Grand** and **Woodward** Avenues. On the 1837/38 "Kelsou" survey, the plan for what would become Beloit, this section was labeled **Hydraulic**, possibly for its proximity to the mills and mill race off of Turtle Creek lying just to the south. Apparently, by 1873, the street had been renamed **Union** as a post-Civil War remembrance and celebration of the Union's victory. Nearing the turn of the century, "Union" was used only for the part north of Woodward; the stretch to the south became an extension of **Prairie Ave.** And such it remained for over two decades. The 1922 City Directory was the first to use the name "**Wisconsin**," which was adopted for the entire street with **Prairie** being reserved for the NE-SW-trending road, as it is today. So, **Hydraulic - Union - Prairie - Wisconsin** in a span of less than 85 years!



Which brings us to the sepia-toned postcard labeled **Prairie Avenue**. It was actually taken from what is now the NW corner of East Grand and Wisconsin Ave., looking north. Given the label of "Prairie," we can surmise that the picture for the postcard was taken between about 1900 and 1922; the 1922 postmark puts this photo in the earlier half of that range.

An historic note about sepia toning....This was a process used during development of black-and-white photographs. It served two purposes: to soften the photograph's appearance and to reduce the aging of it. A chemical is added during development that converts elemental silver to a more stable silver sulfide. The chemical originally used was in the ink of a cuttlefish, which belongs to the genus *Sepia*, hence the name of the process.

Welcome Summer College Interns

We are extremely pleased to have three summer college interns who will be working remotely under the guidance of Exec. Dir. Donna Langford and mentors Nicolette Meister and Rick Dexter. Morgan Lippert and Sergey Tagashov are working on collections management as part of their museum studies program at Beloit College. Their projects are focusing on increased access to the BHS collections using various internet platforms. Sergey will also be working on new mounts for the military items that are on display. Fiona Cismesia is an intern through the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) program. Fiona is researching Beloit history to develop up to three exhibit scripts. The scripts will be used to create physical traveling and virtual exhibits.



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Confluence Editor/Producer Mary Herrmann



This issue of *Confluence* finishes 5 years in my position as the editor/producer of our newsletter. It was a big jump to go from our 4-page black and white newsletter sent 2-4 times per year to a 12-page color format sent 6 times a year. Since it was my idea, I was "blessed" with the job of making it happen.

The newsletter involves many hours of work. As editor, I write articles, assemble photos or other materials and lay out the content. **Nancy Wallace**, with her artistic flair (of which I am extremely envious), does the graphic design, coloring, framing etc. Her help is invaluable and we have a much more attractive publication as a result.

Our recent isolation provided much time for me to re-evaluate my affiliation with the seven groups with which I am involved. I want to scale down my activities so ranked the seven in order of personal satisfaction and enjoyment. I was very surprised to realize that my association with BHS was my number one choice.

I am not a Beloit native. I came in 1968 to teach at Beloit Memorial High School. From that first day here, I have loved Beloit; its people, history, location and "can do" attitude. As I delve into research for articles, I come across many engrossing details which make me want to head down multiple paths in addition to the one I am pursuing. Without my responsibility for the newsletter, I would not be learning these amazing things about my community.

I am in awe of the people, groups, businesses, ideas and events that created our fantastic city. My research on the Wright & Wagner Dairy, for example, filled me with pride when I realized what an impact one forward-thinking person can have on an entire city. My wish would be for every Beloiters to feel the pride in this community that I have found. I am anxious to continue to discover our history and pass it to everyone who has a connection to Beloit. So, it appears, you might be stuck with me for a little while longer while I continue to help with our mission statement:

**Sharing Beloit's History
to Enhance Community Pride**

We are sad to report that Beloit Historical Society member **Eileen Finnegan** passed away on April 13, 2020. She was born in Beloit and spent her career working at the Beloit Public Library.



We received memorial contributions in her honor from:

Vonnie Adams
Edgar Bergmann
Linda Beyer
Annie Collins

Tim & Laura Hauser
Angela McKinley
Darlene Nelson
Pamela Rood

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: Beloit's oldest church (180 years) is beautiful **St. Paul's Episcopal** on Grand Ave. In 1890 the congregation voted to begin paying the rector's salary from member pledges. How was the salary paid before that decision?

Answer: Previous to that change by the membership, the rector's salary came from the rental of pews; and when a member gave up a more expensive one for a less expensive one, or decided to take only half a pew,

Welcome New Member

Edgar Bergmann
from Hofheim, Germany

Correction: It didn't take an eagle-eyed reader to catch the huge mistake in the last issue of *Confluence* honoring the memory of Bill Bolgrien. Anyone inducted into the Beloit Hall of Fame would have had to be a minimum 40+ years old to have merited such an honor. To be inducted in 1914 as the article stated, would have meant Bill would have died at age 150. Sorry, it should have read inducted in "2014".



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Director's Report From Donna

"The only constant in life is change"
Heraclitus.

This has certainly been true for BHS this year. Business as usual changed with the Safer at Home Order as the society closed and staff began to work remotely from our respective homes.

The Lincoln Center is reopening gradually with staff returning to the office for work and preparations are underway to set up new safety protocols.

The most recent change is the resignation of Kelly Washburn as the Programs Director to attend to her family. Kelly was the public face of BHS for the past four years and in that time recruited countless volunteers, developed and presented creative programs, and took care of the facilities. We wish her the best with her future endeavors.

The Beloit Historical Society is facing the changes with flexibility and creativity as we continue to develop new ways to share Beloit's rich and diverse heritage with the public. Three summer interns are developing new exhibits from topics illustrated by artifacts in the collection. The plans will create exhibits that are physical as well as virtual. We are looking forward to an exciting summer!



BHS Receives Grants

BHS applied for and received \$7,947 from the Payroll Protection Program through the Small Business Administration to help retain staff employment during the coronavirus pandemic. Staff was able to work remotely to continue society operations.

BHS is also honored to receive \$7,492 through the Wisconsin Humanities Council CARES Relief grant for general operating support. Funding for this grant was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan. The Wisconsin Humanities Council supports and creates programs that use history, culture, and discussion to strengthen community life for everyone in Wisconsin. Both grants provided needed general operating support during this time of change.

Summary of accomplishments of 2017-19 Strategic Plan

(from page one)

- Hiring an Executive Director
- Establishment of an endowment to help support salary of Executive Director
- Increasing membership, sponsorships, grants
- Creating a new mission statement
- Partnerships with community organizations
- Improvements in handling and storing museum collections with assistance from museum studies students from Beloit College
- Using grants to hire part-time archivist Leith Rohr
- New branding of BHS using an adaption of the Beloit City Flag
- Progress towards facilities issues at Hanchett-Bartlett and Lincoln Center

A Big Thank You to Kelly!



We sadly report that Kelly has resigned from Beloit Historical Society to attend to family matters. Kelly's hard work, passion for history and love of community were essential to helping BHS emerge as a community treasure.

Everyone who worked with Kelly was greeted with a sincere warmth and interest. She gave the society countless hours of time, energy and care. Her outreach into building relationships in the community will be difficult to match.

Kelly, we deeply appreciate you and all that you did for us. We send our best wishes along with you.

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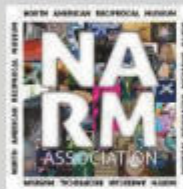
1. Six issues of *Confluence*, the BHS newsletter
2. Free access to the Luebke Memorial Library
3. Free admission to the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead
4. Discounts on BHS programs and services
5. Affiliate Membership in the Wisconsin State Historical Society
6. Voting privileges at the Annual Meeting
7. Opportunities to get involved as a volunteer or board member



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Sustaining Memberships



Sustaining members get all the same benefits as a typical BHS membership, but they also receive a North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association membership. Their NARM card provides access for free or with membership rights to over 1,000 other museums.

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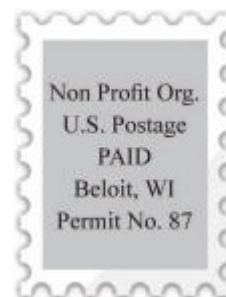


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