



Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 27 Issue 6

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Nov./Dec. 2020

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Covid-19 has presented many challenges for BHS because we are closed. We are adapting programs, exhibits and gatherings to continue. One solution is to provide virtual tours of our exhibits.

Virtual Quilt Show

Beloit Historical Society will present a virtual quilt show the week of November 16th.

The show will feature many unique quilts from our collections.

The virtual show begins with a series of five videos produced by BHS Executive Director Donna Langford, posted on the BHS YouTube channel and BHS website <http://www.beloithistoricalsociety.com>. The link to Donna's videos on YouTube will be available on the BHS Facebook page and our website.

The videos feature Donna speaking on:

- Quilt conservation
- Dating fabrics in quilts
- Types of historical quilts
- Crazy, Signature and Redwork quilts

Every day there will be a new 15 minute video by Donna. Questions and comments can be posted on the BHS Facebook page. The virtual event concludes with a 3D virtual exhibit of all the displayed quilts which can be viewed through Facebook using the 3D photograph feature.

Donna has been quilting for over 2 decades and enjoys helping others preserve their family memories. She has a Master of Arts degree in Textile History/Quilt Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



A crazy quilt piano cover dating to the late nineteenth century was donated to BHS by Mrs. Grace Lewis Nelson in November, 1965.



A part of Beloit's history has been lovingly preserved by artist Kathy Piccione on the exterior brick wall of La Casa Grande on 4th St. Originally the site of McGavock Grocery (1910), the mural had been covered for years and suffered great deterioration.

Top left corner read →

**"McGavock Grocery
Grocers & Butchers
McGavock Bros.
Coal, Lumber, Lime etc."**

The advertising
featured **Coca Cola**
and **Galvanic Soap**.

Coca Cola was introduced in 1886 and contained enough cocaine to give the drinker a buzz and more caffeine than in today's beverage. No wonder the ad bragged it would "relieve fatigue".

Galvanic Soap was introduced in 1884 by B. Johnson Soap Co., one of nine Milwaukee soap companies (not related to Johnson & Johnson). At that time it was in demand because it was made of coconut oil which was white. Other laundry soap was yellow, thus women preferred to work with a white soap thinking it would produce whiter laundry. The company continued to experiment and in 1898 developed a soap made from palm and olive oil which was green. The company later changed its name to Palmolive (get it?) which is now a division of Colgate-Palmolive.



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BHS Board President Richard Dexter examines the Beloit Daily News composing room diorama built by John Vesper



Rick Dexter with boxes from Beloit Daily News

BHS Receives Local Newspaper Clipping Collections

The **Beloit Daily News** and the **Beloit Public Library** have recently donated their newspaper clipping files to the historical society. The Beloit Daily News has been instrumental in the creation of a community memory through their articles and photographs.

Their donation of the newspaper "morgue" includes:

- 18 file cabinets of newspaper clippings and negatives,
- Reels of microfilm recording 14 different papers dating from **1863 – 1926**
- Microfilm reader machine,
- Boxes of negatives, prints and contact sheets
- Model of the newspaper's composing room built by John Vesper

The donation also includes the racing go-cart which was used in the downtown Grand Prix races. The go-cart joins the Beloit Daily News "Soapbox Derby" cars that had been previously donated.

The donations from both the Beloit Daily News and the Beloit Public Library expands local history information and topics in the historical society's subject files and archives. Plans are underway to make both donations available to the public for genealogy and other research purposes. BHS intern Autumn Oakey, a student at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater stated, *"As a student interested in pursuing Archival Research as a career option, access to these donations means a lot of potential for hands-on experience dealing with papers that quite literally reiterate Beloit's history. I'm excited to see what "new" information will be available to the Beloit community."*

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Many people who have lived in Beloit for a long time fondly remember a wonderful department store called Chester's which was highly praised throughout Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. Most would be surprised to find out that by all rights, the store should have been called **Tjostolfson's**, the actual name of the Norwegian man, who in 1845, left with his wife Gunhild, son Lars and daughter Kari to build a life in America. Unfortunately, he would die on this journey and be buried at sea. The rest of his family settled in Leroy, Boone County Illinois, where they changed their name to Chester because they found people had a great deal of difficulty pronouncing their real name.

Both children and Gunhild found employment and saved \$60 to buy land. She was a hard worker and son Lars was 14 and could help her with the farm work. They slowly purchased additional acreage from settlers moving farther west. One of these transactions required payment in gold. Lars walked the 16 miles to Beloit to procure the gold coins worth \$1,500. Lars grew into an energetic and progressive farmer. He married Anna Olson Stensbole and the couple eventually had 12 children. **Three of these sons would have a huge impact on Beloit.**



Original E.L. Chester Store, est 1894

The White Front

L to R :clerk, customer, E.L. Chester, Martin Chester, clerk



E.L. Chester & Co. After enlargement early 1900s

On Nov. 20, 1894, the first department store was established in the city. Most of W. Grand Ave. (then Bridge St), was a woodland and hay market with horses and buggies, unpaved streets, Kerosene lamps and pot bellied stoves. Beloiters talked of shopping at the "White Front" because Edward L. Chester, founder of the "**Dry Goods and Hosiery Store**," kept the front painted a fresh clean white. His brother, Oscar, owned a similar store in Capron where Edward gained experience. He selected a modest store front in the **Swale building**. He had faith in Beloit, and under his guidance, the store grew. It was enlarged in 1905, 1908 and again in 1910.

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His brother Martin was his business partner. The stock they offered for sale was: imported dress woolens, outing or tennis flannel, oil cloth, corsets (from 18" waist on up), and black lisle or cotton hose at 25 cents a pair. This new business, based on fresh stock, right prices and sincere friendliness, prospered with Beloit. Soon another brother, Henry, joined the business, and the firm was called E. L. Chester and Company.

A blast and fire leveled the store Dec. 5, 1930, forcing the brothers to move to a temporarily spot a few doors further east. In 1934, the beautiful new three story building was opened with great ceremony. An orchestra played and customers were given roses. Chester's continued to add clothing, jewelry and many other lines of merchandise and became a destination for people from miles around. After E. L. passed away, Martin managed the store and finally Henry. All three brothers were civic-minded and gave generous support to Beloit.



Chester's rebuilt in 1934 after the fire (notice 'Swale' on building to right - still there in 2020)
Right: first floor interior of new building

In June, 1964, the firm was sold to H. F. Pfister, Jr., who had been connected to the apparel business for over 25 years. He added many new features to the store and increased offerings of merchandise.

In 1970, D.J. Stewart Company of Rockford bought the store. Each of these businesses was battling the new competition coming from shopping malls and each failed.

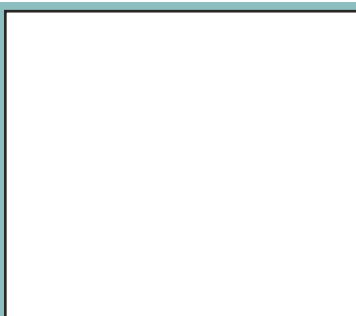
The building has had multiple uses over the past decades. However, the beautiful Chester's building remains as one of Beloit's best-known landmarks.



Top to bottom:
E.L. Chester
Martin
Henry



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Mc
OF BELLOIT | Bucciferro Family

If someone asked you “**What competition was held in Beloit in 1878 that attracted New York newspaper reporters and the world champion from France?**”, would you know the answer? Most Beloiters would be at a loss for a response.

Christmas week the upstairs of Hanchett Hall (where Lincoln spoke - State/Broad) was bursting at the seams with a cheering crowd to witness a **6-day** “go-as-you-please” walking race for the championship of the Northwest. At the time, six days was the longest any “public amusement” could go since these were not allowed on Sundays. The race was narrowed to four competitors: Alfred Buckeridge (butcher), Madame Exhilda Lachapelle, (French champion of the world), Nicholas Moran and George Follant

The racers lined up listening for the firing of the gun to begin. The winner was the person who clocked the most miles at the end of the 6 days. The course was 19 laps per mile. Madame Lachapelle took the lead, setting a brisk pace. She was a 5'2" brunette wearing bloomers and a blouse.

During the middle of the week several Beloit College boys were invited to pace the walkers, however they did not last very long. Now and then the racers would stop for a few minutes for refreshment, but all through the 24-hour day they kept up their ceaseless grind except for designated rest times.

Saturday, the last day of the race, sports enthusiasts from distant places along with sports writers from all the big papers came to watch the struggle. Madame had lost the lead on Wednesday to Buckeridge who had a safe margin. The main competition was for second place between Madame and Moran. All Saturday there was no time for rest or food. The haggard bodies struggled on until the time was called. Buckeridge was winner with 520 miles, Madame, 516, Moran, 511 and Follant, 500. Buckeridge and Madame walked over **86 miles/day!** Buckeridge won 19 out of his 21 walking matches.

It wasn't long until “pedestrianism”, the most popular spectator sport, gave way to bicycle races which were faster and more interesting to watch. Some walking competitors got bad reputations for fixing the races or doping by chewing on coca leaves. Baseball was beginning during this period and as you know, when that took hold “**the rest is history**”.



1850s Hanchett Hall - farthest large building center/left



Interior of Hanchett Hall upper level today

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EARLY PIONEER LIFE WAS DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS

Pioneering in its most primitive form, seemed to be conducive to hazardous living. The manner of resettlement often lent itself to self destruction in one form or another. Carelessness or thoughtlessness invited frequent injuries often resulting in death. Many of the injuries may have been the result of sheer loneliness or the inability to cope with emotional pressures in establishing a new life in a bewildering and frustrating environment. Wives and children of the pioneer settlers were by no means immune.

Death certificates and notices in the papers gave many reasons for demise:

- "Buried alive digging a well. Well caved in."
- "Drowned in creek (or river)"
- "Thrown from horse (or buggy)"
- "Fell into well and drowned"
- "Ran over by horse (or wagon)"
- "Burned"
- "Hit by lightening"
- "Clothing set afire"
- "Dragged by frightened horses"
- "Pistol discharged"
- "Shot with intent to kill"
- "Frozen to death"
- "Fell off tree (or fence or hay-mow)"
- "Fractured skull"
- "Ruptured hernia"



Dane County Asylum for the Criminally Insane - Built in 1845
(Janesville Insane Asylum was not built until 1881)

In 1880, it began providing for longer term care for people who were discharged from the state hospital system

A few deaths were suicide by persons unable to adjust to the environment; people burdened by hardships beyond comprehension. Some took the painful way out by jumping into the water or drinking poisons. It seemed to be nature's way of exacting toll from those who could least afford it. Some attempting self-inflicted damage to themselves were removed to Madison Insane Asylum (see picture above). Some of the casualties were caused by chronic ill-health, domestic trouble, anxieties, menopause, fright, jealousy, death of a loved one, over-exertion, drinking, worn out by a too rapid succession of child bearing and epilepsy.

CIDER - A SUBSTITUTE FOR MILK AND WATER

With the advent of the first apples in Beloit, cider became a somewhat standard beverage. When milk was scarce, sweetened cider diluted with water was given to little children. Other fermented fruit juices were also popular. Also, cider was converted into vinegar which was used in preserving and cooking. Cider was also resorted to for drinking purposes in the event the well became contaminated or had a low water level which interfered with the taste of the water.

Before the advent of soft drinks into this area, it was not uncommon for families to make root beer during the summer months. The mixture consisted of the extract, sugar, yeast and water which was then poured into a crock and allowed to ferment in the sun or other warm place. When the mixture had fermented for several days, it would be cooled and served as desired.

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BHS WELCOMES COLLEGE INTERNS

Helen Griffin is a Duffy Scholar at Beloit College and will be interning at BHS during their second academic module (Oct 19 - Dec 8). Helen will be working with Donna Langford and Julia Schoenthal to share BHS resources and programs with the community.



My name is **Autumn Oakey** and I am excited to have started as a new intern at BHS. I grew up in Durand, Illinois, about 20 minutes southwest of Beloit. Currently, I am a fifth-year senior at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and am studying History and Women's and Gender studies.

My main goal is to go to graduate school for my Masters in Archival Science or Library Science. BHS has given me an opportunity to get my toes wet in this discipline. Because it is a smaller organization, I am able to get a lot of hands-on experience in the Archives and Collections. There is a vastly diverse collection of documents, artifacts, photos, textiles, and books that give me the ability to piece together Beloit's rich history. I'm excited to learn from many knowledgeable workers with a lot of experience in the field while also being able to assist them in any way I can.

Welcome!

New Members

Jackie Jackson

Robert Oberbruner

Beth Pohl

McDonalds of Beloit
(business)

WELCOME TO OUR NEW VOLUNTEER

Kris Sanderson has been a member of BHS since 2010. She is currently helping to update our furniture and equipment list in preparation for our annual audit.

Thank you, Kris



If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Donna at 365-7835. We'd love to have you join us!



BHS Ex. Dir. Donna Langford accepts the PPE donation delivered by Tom Ramsden for the United Way Day of Giving

BHS was the recipient of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies from the United Way as part of their **Day of Giving**. We extend appreciation to the United Way and all of their sponsors for making the Day of Giving possible during the COVID pandemic. These supplies will be used to clean work stations after each use, making it possible for work to continue in the museum building.

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Message from Donna



Within a few weeks, I will reach my one-year anniversary as the Executive Director for the Beloit Historical Society. It has been an exciting year of transition as we respond to the limitations imposed by COVID to share Beloit's history in new ways. As the pandemic continues, the BHS buildings will be open by appointment only. We have a capacity of 5 people in the building at the same time. Staff, two fall interns and two volunteers are working staggered work schedules at assigned work stations following our new safety protocols. We are continuing to answer research requests.

We are also expanding our use of the internet with virtual activities posted on our new YouTube channel, Facebook and our website. Our next program is a virtual Quilt Show, the details are provided on page 1. I am looking forward to sharing my love of textiles through this program.

2020 has also been a time of strategic planning. **The new three-year strategic plan has a community focus.**

(1) the sustainability of the Lincoln Center and the Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, (2) community engagement and visibility, (3) expanding preservation and access to the collection, (4) maintaining financial sustainability and leadership through expansion of the board of directors and (5) creation of an interpretation plan which will identify and describe significant visitor experiences.

We are looking forward to an exciting future and hope you will join us.

Eastlawn Cemetery Walk

A cemetery walk took place Oct 17 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

A 48-page booklet containing the names of World War II veterans interred at Eastlawn Cemetery, pictures and biographies is available for you to do a self-guided tour on a day of your choice.

You can order a copy through the BHS website at <http://www.beloithistoricalsociety.com> and though the BHS office by phone (608-365-7835) or email info@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Curbside pickup is available at 845 Hackett Street, Mondays – Fridays. The booklet is available for a donation amount of your choice.



Beloit Winter Traditions Holiday Extravaganza

Beloit Historical Society is celebrating the variety of local holiday traditions on December 19. A virtual presentation celebrates the winter traditions of the groups that make up our Beloit Community. Take this opportunity to learn about what other people in Beloit celebrate. The presentation will be posted to the BHS Facebook page and website.



Horace White Park Christmas display – always anticipated by excited Beloit children 1940s



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Judy Adams

We were very sad to learn of the passing on October 5 of Judy Adams, one of our longtime members and community supporters. She and her husband Jeff have greatly contributed to the betterment of the Beloit community. She will be

missed by many people whose lives she touched.

TAKE A GUESS

On a list of 85 notable people from Beloit, match the number of noteworthy people belonging to each profession.

A - Arts	35
B - Athletics	23
C - Business	11
D - Education	5
E - Military	3
F - Politics	3
G - Religion	3
H - Science	2

Answer: A - 11, B - 23, C - 3, D - 3, E - 3, F - 3, G - 35, H - 5

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: Did Beloit have cattle drives?

Answer: Cattle drives were not uncommon in Beloit as late as 1905. Cattle would be corralled on the Appleby farm west of town and driven down Grand Ave. herded by mounted farm hands to prevent the cattle from running the sidewalks. They would be driven down Hwy 51 to Roscoe where some were loaded into cattle cars destined for Chicago. Others were slaughtered in a Roscoe slaughter house. As many as 300 cattle would be assembled for the drive at a time.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Ellen Joyce



We were very fortunate to have the chair of the history department at Beloit College join our board last year. Ellen is a native of New Jersey and did her undergrad work at Yale and graduate work for her MA and PHD at the University of Toronto. Her classes at the college cover a wide range of topics about the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods in Europe.

Since coming to Beloit in 2001, Ellen has been very interested in learning about the history of the college and the city. She worked with Fred Burwell, the recently retired College Archivist, to teach courses that would introduce students to the rich materials we have about that history. *"We found that students were always interested in 'doing history' with original sources, including handwritten obituaries of local Civil War soldiers as well as other letters and diaries. In recent years, I've learned about designing online exhibits and our students have been able to present their work digitally."*

Ellen is most proud of the **"Coming Up North" History Harvest** project about the Great Migration and African Americans in Beloit—a partnership with her colleague Beatrice McKenzie, a U.S. Historian. The link to that project is: <http://beloitdigitalarchives.com/HistoryHarvest/>

She is frustrated at not being able to explore our collections in person because of COVID-19. She is especially anxious to explore and help in the Luebke Library and our rare books room. About 10 years ago, she brought a class of her students to visit Lincoln Center, and from what she has observed so far, she is impressed with the progress we have made in the organization and care of our items.

Ellen's outside interests include helping immigrants in our community in any way possible and keeping active in her church. She enjoys her time at home cooking and knitting with the company of her cat.

Ellen, thank you so much for joining us in our mission

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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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			Card # _____	Exp _____	CVV _____
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Confluence Newsletter

*Sharing Beloit's History to
Enhance Community Pride*



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Main Floor - E. L. Chester Company
"The Store of Quality"
Beloit, Wisconsin

(Story on page 4)

Beloit Historical Society Sustaining Memberships

Many Thanks to You!

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