

Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 31 Issue 3

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May/June, 2022

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A PHOTOGRAPH FROM OUR COLLECTION BECOMES PART OF A NEW VIRGINIA MONUMENT

The Beloit Historical Society collections are used by many people for a variety of purposes. Recently, BHS was able to provide a picture for a battlefield monument in Culpeper County, Virginia. Barbara Rossell called the society on behalf of the **Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield**. They were in search of a picture of **Lieutenant Colonel Louis Crane**.



A photograph of Crane in his Civil War uniform was donated to the Beloit Historical Society in 1949 by **Blaine Hansen** on behalf of the Beloit Daily News.

This year is the **160th Anniversary of the Battle of Cedar Mountain** which took place in Culpeper County, Virginia, on August 9, 1862. The American Battlefield Trust owns the battlefield and is planning to update seven interpretive markers which line the hiking trail. One of two new markers will commemorate the heroism of the 3rd Wisconsin Infantry and will be placed on the location where Lt. Col. Louis Crane fell. The photograph of Crane will be on the marker with a quote about his bravery. The new markers are scheduled to be installed in July, 2022.

Louis H. D. Crane was born in New York, July 7, 1826. Shortly after marrying Lucy Burrall in 1852, the couple moved to Beloit where Louis taught at the Union school. After a year, they moved to Dodgeville where Louis became very involved with community affairs and served as **chief clerk of the Wisconsin legislature**. On May 20, 1861, he answered the call for volunteers and enlisted in Company A, 3rd Wisconsin Infantry as they marched into the Civil War. By June 1, 1862, he had been promoted to lieutenant-colonel. Crane was killed during the Battle of Cedar Mountain August 9, 1862, while rallying his men. The battle ended in a Confederate victory with 25 of the 3rd Wisconsin Infantry killed, 65 wounded and 18 taken prisoner. Lt. Col. Louis Crane was returned to Beloit and **now lies in Oakwood Cemetery**.

Barbara Rossell stated *"Beloit Historical Society is not just valuable to Beloit, but is able to assist historians hundreds of miles away in different states and is able to provide visitors to Cedar Mountain Battlefield in Virginia a deeper understanding of this important battle."*

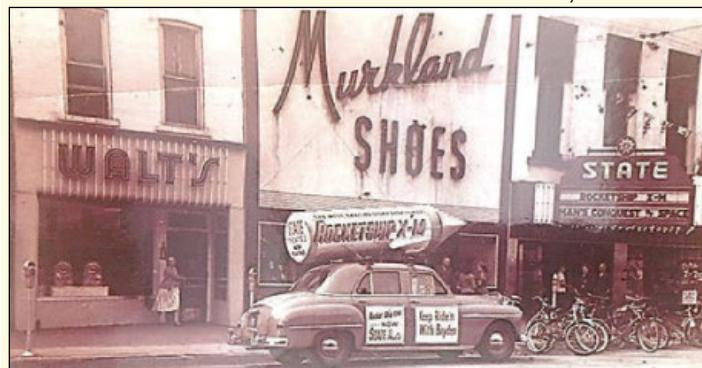


Courtesy of the Friends of the Cedar Mountain Battlefield (current Crane monument)

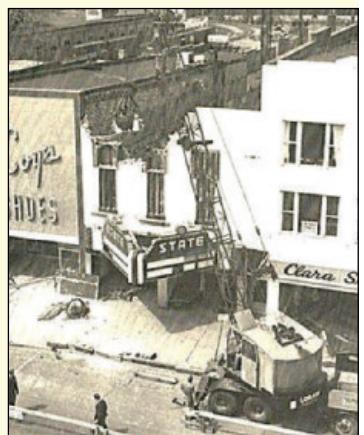


We are concentrating on four buildings in the pictures on page 2-3. The small building on the left with 2 windows is Walt's (now Austin's Barber Shop.) Three buildings to the right (north) with white arrow is Clara Stone (now Bagels & More.) Dallman Hardware and Goldberg's became part of Woolworths. The location of the State Theatre has undergone many changes through the years. The plan at the top of page 3 shows the design for the theatre which was replacing Schneider Hardware store C1936. It was one of the first buildings to be air conditioned in the city. During the early years, Beloit had many theatres according to the city directories: Wilson Opera House, Loucks & Bielharz, Roberts & Archer, White, Dixie, State, Bijou, Orpheum, Star, Colonial, Grand, Vaudeville, Strand, Lyric, Majestic and Rex.

The State Theatre was demolished in 1960 to make room for the First National Bank Motor Bank. After the drive-thru bank was demolished, the location became part of an enlarged



Clara Stone store. JGM Cosmetology School, First Class Cosmetology School and Attic Quilts also called the location home. It sat vacant periodically as merchants moved in and out. Today it is occupied by Jewelry by Christopher. The building to the south of the State Theatre was Beloit Furniture Co., Murkland Shoes and McCoys Shoes. Today it is home to Chic and Unique.



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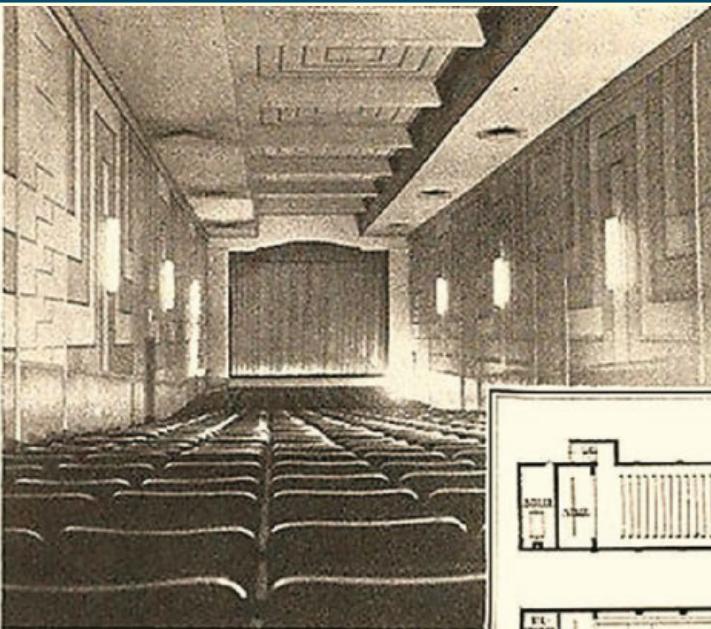
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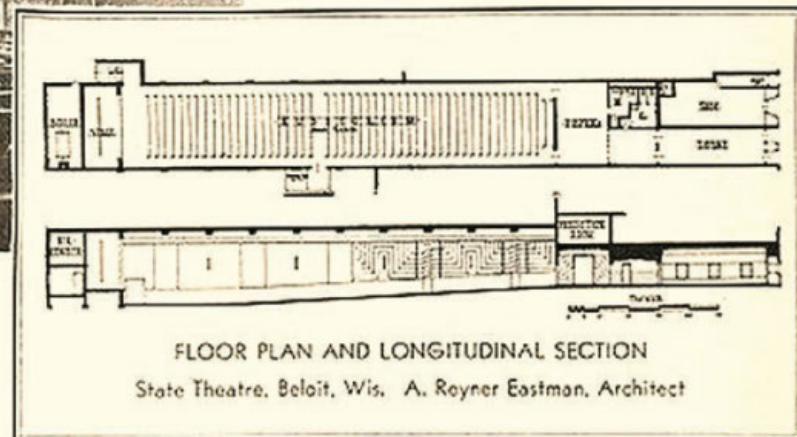
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The auditorium, finished in Celotex.

THE STATE is a new small theatre with "deluxe" appointments and equipment, erected by the Wisconsin Theatres Enterprise at Beloit, Wis. This firm also operates two other theatres in Beloit—the Rex and the Majestic.

A 600-Seat Plan for a Narrow Site



Today (L-R) the small two-window building is Austin's Barber Shop, Chic & Unique, Jewelry by Christopher, Bagels & More and Bushel and Peck's



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MORGAN FARM HISTORY

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The 'Morgan Farm' or 'Morgan Manor', as it went by at that time, was originally built in 1900 on 1000 acres of land. An enormous estate, it was built and occupied by **Fred Morgan**, his wife Mary, and their four children. Fred was a magnate of a well-known tire and rubber manufacturing company **Morgan & Wagner**. This brought him financial success. **The family was considered to be among one of Beloit's, if not Wisconsin's, most elite.**

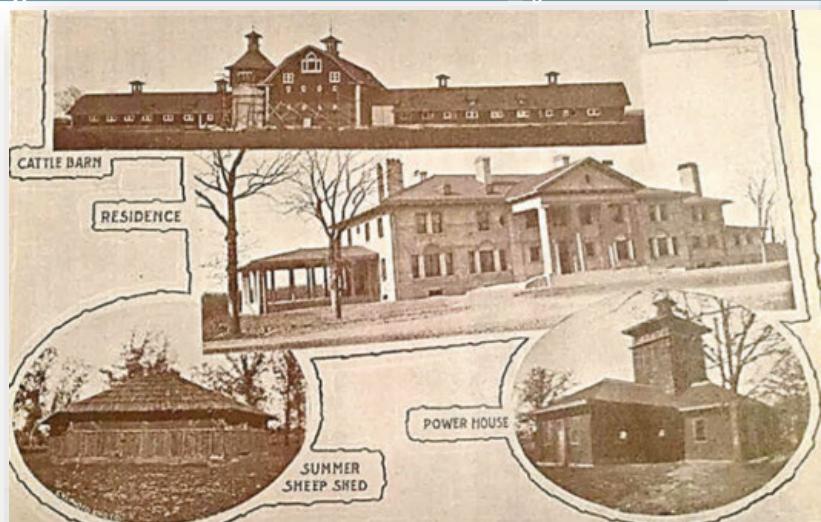
The country estate was solidly constructed with walls from 30 inches to a foot thick throughout. The walls were constructed of a mixture of sand and concrete with no aggregate included.

Morgan constructed the house large enough to include his whole family, including his married children and their families. It had 13 bedrooms, a one-lane bowling alley and pool.

Morgan was fascinated with concrete. The Morgans spent several weeks on the estate during the spring and fall. In the summer they stayed on a lake in Michigan and the winters went to Clearwater, Florida, where he kept his yacht. Wisconsin's first-ever recorded powered aircraft flight took place on the family's farm by aviator, **A.P. Warner**.

Hiram Morgan (Fred Morgan's son), as well as Fred Morgan himself, were aviation enthusiasts. The Morgan family remained in the estate, even after Fred Morgan's death in 1920. Freeman Shoe Company owner, Richard Freeman, then bought the home in 1932. The Freeman family stayed there until 1958 when the property and hundreds of acres of farmland were sold off, reducing the land to just 200 acres. The barns and other outbuildings were also destroyed.

In 1960, the Freeman family sold the land and property to Four Season Inc. It was turned into a supper club by Mike Bonafede and **"The Manor" restaurant was born in 1963**. They were unable to sell cocktails on Sunday because of the "dry on Sunday" law then in effect in the Town of Turtle. Over the years, The Manor changed owners numerous times: Nino & Geneva Germano and his son-in-law, John Fiorello as Manager purchased the building in 1965 and opened the upstairs for dining. The Manor was severely damaged by fire on Aug. 31, 1970, causing \$300,000 in damage. It was restored and reopened with seating for 500. Darrell "Curly" Kramer bought the restaurant in 1994 and renovation began on the building. The business tanked in 1996 and it was left abandoned until 1998 when Midwest Hospitality based in Williams Bay took over management of the restaurant. Midwest Hospitality filed for bankruptcy and Kramer took over once again. It was vacant once more until 2001, when well-known Beloit businessman James Patch purchased the building and intended to develop the property on which the Manor stood.



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By 2002 The Manor had, once again, fallen into abandonment. During this time it had on occasion served as a local haunted house Halloween attraction for the city of Beloit. Props from those times remained in the building for years to come. By 2011, the historic landmark was severely weathered and had fallen into disrepair. Demolition of The Manor began on July 19th, 2011, about the time it was acquired by a Hendricks Commercial Properties subsidy.

On February 10, 2022, the property was transferred from Turtle Creek Development, LLC (Hendricks Commercial Properties) to Beloit ASC Real Estate Exchange LLC (Dr. Anthony Brown, agent) of Rockford for \$1,645,000. Site preparations have begun on a \$19 million development, known as

OrthoWisconsin. It is planned to open in May of 2023 and include a 26,571-square-foot medical facility including an ambulatory surgery center building and various site amenities.



The Manor in the 1970s - its most glamorous era



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The later 1800s and early 1900s had its own version of Amazon. Citizens who lived in the city were catered to by the downtown merchants with personal delivery. These items were delivered door-to-door by the Beloit merchants: meat, pastry, kerosene, waffles, farm produce, ice cream gasoline, ice, groceries and milk. Rural residents had the **huckster**. Starting around the time of the Civil War until around 1930, the village store was taken to people in rural areas. This would happen about once a week during the summer in a huckster wagon which the store provided. People would usually "lay in" supplies for the winter too.

"The day the huckster wagon arrived was a big event for the children. After the purchases were made, there was always a free stick of candy for them. The wagon was made of wood and was rectangular in shape. It had cabinets along the sides on hinges that would open outwards to display the wares. The huckster carried canned foods, cheese, dried beef in the bulk, soaps, string, kerosene - any non-perishable product used in the home. There were shelves across the back filled with bolts of calico, gingham, outing, needles, pins - most anything used for sewing. The materials would be measured and cut on top of the back door which could be lowered over a chicken coop attached underneath to the frame of the wagon.

The huckster would take eggs, chickens and freshly churned butter in exchange for supplies bought. He would fasten the legs of the chicken with twine and weigh them upside-down with a scale which hung from the side of the wagon. One time a customer sold some home churned butter. She had kept it cold in a pan of running water, patted it into a mold with designs which were imprinted on the butter. She proudly took it to the huckster. He opened the butter can and slid the nicely molded butter in with all the other butter he had collected, well-melted by then. Needless to say, she was quite dismayed.

These were days of few telephones. Often the driver would carry written or verbal messages to someone on the route. Sometimes he would be invited to eat a hot noon meal with a family. The horses also had a meal on the route which was carried in the wagon. As I remember, the driver made \$15 to \$18 a week.

At days end, he would return to the store, restock the wagon and leave it at the store. He'd return home with his horses where they were rewarded with a feast of corn and hay, a cool drink and a warm bed of straw. The driver of the huckster wagon had a different route each day. He would arise early, harness his horses and start out, rain or shine."

Unfortunately, the slang term "huckster" has grown to have negative connotations. Some of the hucksters or peddlers tried to make quick or "shady" deals with their customers. We prefer to think of the huckster as Miriam did, a man who performed a needed service, helped deliver messages and best of all, gave candy to the children.

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The city of Beloit has welcomed migrants since its founding. Industries and the services that support workers drew Swedes, Germans, Irish, Italians, Greeks, African Americans, and Mexicans, among many others. A recent book published by University of Wisconsin Press, *The Wongs of Beloit, Wisconsin* tells the story of the migration to Beloit of one immigrant couple from China in the 1920s, **Wong Theong "Charles" Wong** and his wife, **Yee Shee**. Charles met a tragic and untimely death in his Grand Avenue restaurant, the **Chop House**, shot by a cousin. Charles' widow, Yee Shee, with little education or English but an iron will and generous temperament, stayed in Beloit. She raised their seven young children to adulthood. Yee Shee did not do that alone: her three eldest children worked and helped raise the younger ones, and the whole family benefitted from the community spirit of their neighbors - many first and second generation migrants themselves - as well as teachers, classmates, employers, colleagues, and friends. Stories illustrate the Wong descendants' gratitude to the community; Principal James McNeel, for example, gave the gift of professional drawing instruments to aspiring engineer George Wong as he graduated from high school. This history of the Wong family and Beloit also tells us a lot about our nation's immigration laws. Yee Shee came in 1923, decades into what is known as the Chinese Exclusion era, when immigration of Chinese laborers - U.S. citizens like Charles were exempt - was illegal. Charles purchased first class tickets aboard the SS President McKinley to save his wife from humiliating questioning at the border by U.S. immigration officials. From their home on Beloit's west side, Yee Shee cultivated good relationships with neighbors, who then helped the struggling family after Charles' death. Wong family members faced additional hardship. Every one of the children experienced racism, from schoolyard racial taunts to dating in the era before a Supreme Court case struck down laws that made interracial marriage illegal in many states. Eldest son Gim, by then a World War II veteran, desegregated the sport of bowling in 1950, which had been limited to "white males only".

struck down laws that made interracial marriage illegal in many states. Eldest son Gim, by then a World War II veteran, desegregated the sport of bowling in 1950, which had been limited to "white males only".

The Wongs have contributed much to the City of Beloit, the State

of Wisconsin, and our nation. **Gim Wong, Fung Wong Scholz**, and **George Wong** served the United States during the World War II, and all three had careers in Beloit flagship institutions, including Fairbanks Morse, Beloit Corp., and the Beloit Hospital. **Helen Wong Way** was an occupational therapist and taught Chinese cooking for years in the academic settings she lived in with her family. **Harry Wong** left the Midwest to join a medical practice in anesthesiology in Salt Lake City; he later started the first outpatient surgical center in the state, and then taught anesthesiology at University of Utah Medical School. **Frank Wong**, who had been valedictorian of his class at Beloit Memorial High School and attended Harvard University on a full scholarship, served as Provost and Dean of Beloit College between 1981 and 1987. **Mary Wong Palmer** was a teacher in the Madison and Wauwatosa schools. The family has generously supported the Stateline Foundation, BHS, and Beloit College.

The Wong Children - 1937
(L-R) Gim, Fung, George, Helen, Harry, Frank and Mary



Beatrice McKenzie retired from Beloit College in 2021 as Professor of History and lives in Springfield, Oregon.
See page 10 to purchase a signed copy of her book.

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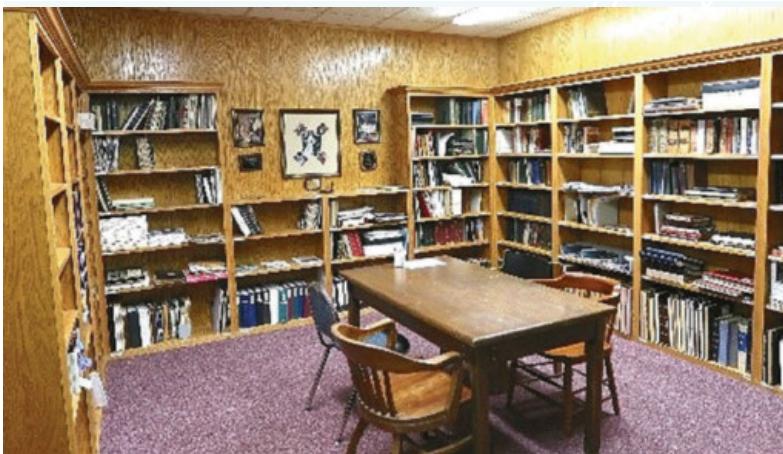
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**The Luebke Family Memorial Library
located in the Lincoln Center**

We are most appreciative of Sproehnle's donation.

THANK YOU!

REIMAGINING HANCHETT- BARTLETT HOMESTEAD FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Beloit Historical Society is very happy to report that we received a matching grant award of **\$15,650** from the **Henry Fuldner Architectural and Historical Heritage Fund** to conduct a feasibility study to find the best possible uses of the homestead going forward.

House museums are experiencing increased financial pressure (in our case the need for sewer hook-up at a minimum of \$50,000 and a new roof for \$49,000) in addition to decreases in attendance and decreases in the volunteer pool. This study will help the board of directors determine the best course of action for the long-term preservation of the property and the value of the homestead to the community while addressing the financial health of the Beloit Historical Society.

The feasibility study consultant, Charles Quagliana and his team, will conduct the four-month study starting in late spring 2022.

We are grateful to contributors for the matching grant:
**Angus-Young Ass., RH Batterman & Co., Richard Dexter,
 Dick Gerhard, Ellen Joyce, Donna Langford, Sarah/Stephen
 Sproehnle, William Priewe/Elizabeth Meeks, Jackie Jackson,
 Tom/Anna Larsen, Nicolette Meister/Keven Larson.**

DONATION TO EXTEND ACCESS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS

The Beloit Historical Society received an extremely generous unrestricted donation from Sarah (Luebke) and Stephen Sproehnle during the end of year appeal - 2021. The board of directors have designated the donation to support the following:

- Hire a part-time librarian to focus on an organizational project to increase access and use of the Luebke Family Memorial Library
- Support the **Reimagining Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead Feasibility Study**.
- Update and replace the exterior sign using the new logo adopted in 2018.
- Support general operating expenses to help staff increase efficiency for all projects.



SAVE THE DATE

**2022 ANNUAL MEETING
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Message from Executive Director, Donna Langford



Spring is finally in the air and showers will be brightening up our lawns and flower beds. Thanks to efforts last year by **Joel Steinke** and this year by new volunteer **Hal Joyce**, the grounds at the Beloit Historical Society are being cleaned up and refreshed. The building interior is also getting a spring cleaning as we prepare the Community Room for rentals and expand exhibits. **Plans are underway for the Annual Membership Meeting scheduled for May 20th with details being mailed to the membership in late April.** We are excited to be able to provide an in-person meeting this year and we hope you will be able to join us.

This spring we welcome new volunteers **Bill Priebe** and **Norma Saxson** as they inventory the military and textile collections respectively. Their contributions will aide the digitization of the collection as we move from paper records to a computer database, increasing searchability and access.

This is a year of meeting new people as we are able to do more in-person meetings, programs and celebrations. I recently had the pleasure to work a historian in Virginia and am beginning a project with a historian in Hawaii. Each day brings a promise of new opportunities!

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Donna Langford

GREAT NEWS! BHS RECEIVES GRANT

BHS is pleased to announce that the **Stateline Community Foundation's Women's Fund** has awarded a **\$2000 grant for the Women's History Resources Project**. This multi-phased project is the cataloging of primary source documents and publications of 60 different Beloit women's organizations contained within BHS' collection holdings. Cataloging has proceeded incrementally with 23 organizations completed to date, totaling 50 square feet of historic documents, publications and scrapbooks. The Beloit chapter of the League of Women Voters is the next group of materials to be processed by professional archivist Leith Rohr.



Professional archivist, Leith Rohr

The BHS Women's History Resources project addresses the need for increased access to primary source documents on women's contributions in Beloit. Recognizing the contributions and achievements of women throughout history acts to inspire the development of self-respect and possibilities for girls and women today. Cataloging the historic material in the BHS collection increases institutional knowledge of the content of these primary resources, fulfilling a strategic goal of increasing access and preservation of the BHS collections and enabling staff to share this content with researchers and the Beloit community through exhibits and programs.

The Beloit League of Women Voters is excited to learn that thanks to the grant, the Beloit League's history will be catalogued. This project will give scholars access to the materials and facilitate future programming around the League's role in promoting voting and democracy in the communities it serves. The League looks forward to working with the Historical Society as the project moves forward.

Welcome

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Beloit's post office moved eleven times from the first location in **1839**) at the S.E. corner of State & Grand, **1841**) the S.W. corner of State & St. Paul (Murray's store), **1841**) Field & Lusk store, **1847**) W. side State, **1849**) S. side of E. Grand, **1853**) N. side Broad, **1858**) Bushnell House, N.E. corner Grand & State, **1871**) N. side E. Grand, **1881**) S. side E. Grand, **1912**) N.E. corner Pleasant & Grand, **1969 until present**) Mill & Broad.
- The East-side of Beloit was referred to as **"Piety Hill"** because so many of the residents were ministers and the college faculty was all ministers.
- The original name of Harrison Ave. was named Mechanic Street by the New England Emigrating Company. During President Harrison's term, Mrs. Ella Hackett Adams requested the city alderman change the name to honor him. She was trying to sell home lots but could not because the purchasers thought only mechanics could live on that street.
- Beloit was one of the few cities in the United States that had two Carnegie libraries.
- During the 1940s, several farmers close to Beloit raised pop-corn which was packaged and distributed to retail stores. Beloit had **four pop-corn stands** in town: T.S. Collins had a stand on Eighth St., E.J. Nyberg had one on Fourth St., E.A. Smith and R. H. Smith each had their own outlets on East Grand. The four proprietors purchased popcorn in bulk, popped, buttered and salted it to sell at their small areas which were open to the public.

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: How did Public Avenue get its name?

With construction of dams and highway and railroad bridges, Rock River lost any possibility it may have had as a means of transportation. Kinsley Cartage Company (late 1800s) was located near the landing. The business made good use of their location by packing newly assembled carriages into the shallows of the river so the "swelling" from the immersion in the water "set" the tires around the wheel rims.

Answer: The name was given because it used to terminate at the "public landing", now the parking lot of the First National Bank. Steamboats anchored there when they came up the Rock River and got ready to maneuver around the dam on their journey north (as far as Fort Atkinson). The early settlers had grand expectations of how the river would play and important role in the transportation of goods to the city. This was to have been a busy centre of shipping activities where commodities would have been shipped to other Rock County towns or to Mississippi ports and then on ocean going vessels.

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Hiram Morgan and his chauffeur in front of the Morgan house in the early 1900s.
Hiram was the son of Fred Morgan, the builder of Morgan Farm.

(story on page 4)

Beloit Historical Society Sustaining Memberships

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Joe and Ingrid Chamberlain
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*** Denotes new members**