



Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 32 Issue 1

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jan/Feb 2023

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Honoring Eddie May Beloit War Hero

Eddie May was born on July 17, 1918 in Macon, MS. His family moved to Beloit shortly after his birth and he continued to live in Beloit until his induction into the US Army.

Eddie graduated from Beloit High School in 1938 and from Beloit College in 1942. Eddie grew up in Beloit at a time when segregation was the norm in the United States. Blacks couldn't get served in Beloit restaurants and since most doctors and dentists wouldn't treat blacks, it was necessary for them to travel to Rockford for medical and dental services. The schools were virtually the only unsegregated part of the city.

Eddie was an outstanding athlete and student leader at Beloit High School. He was inducted into the Beloit Sports Hall of Fame at Lincoln Center as an initial inductee. The inscription on his plaque reads in part: "A multi-talented athlete, Eddie distinguished himself as a break-away halfback on the undefeated 1936 Beloit Memorial football team as a forward on the 1937 state champion high school team and starred in the state high school track meet. Eddie competed in the 100 and 200 team relay in track. He held the Beloit High School record of 10 seconds flat for 100 yard dash with Eddie Polglaze. This record stood for over 30 years. Eddie attended Beloit College lettering in three sports each of the years he was in competition. He scored the only touchdown in 1939 when Beloit College defeated the University of Chicago. He was co-captain for the 1941-42 basketball team.

Eddie learned to fly at Rock County Airport and was a licensed pilot. His potential for leadership was exhibited when he was selected for Officers Training School and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the US Army Engineer Corps, a distinction that very few blacks attained in the 1940s. He was inducted into the City Hall of Fame in 1988.

On May 26, 1945 Eddie May was killed in action in France. It was a great tragedy for Beloit and the United States; Eddie was one of the many fine young men with the potential to make great contributions to our city and country and was called upon to make the final supreme sacrifice.

(See page 7 for additional information about our servicemen)



Lt. Eddie May

**Lt. Eddie May
Gives Life
On War Front**

One of Greatest Beloit
Athletes Dies in France

Beloit's Main Intersection as We Remember it Through the Years



1912 View of the corner of State & Grand looking west



1945 VJ Day



1969 (Mark Prueshel photo)



2022 Gantry (formerly McNeany's on left)

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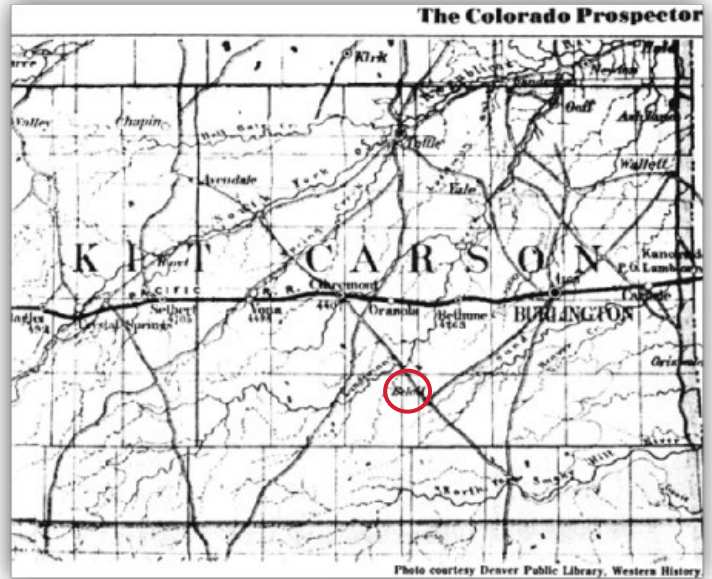
Sean Murphy
Apprentice
Funeral Director

Beloit, Kit Carson County, Colorado 1888-1894

The short-lived settlement of Beloit, Colorado, was established in 1888 on the plains of Eastern Colorado by Nebraskans. The eastern edge of Kit Carson County forms part of the Colorado-Nebraska state line. These Nebraska "land developers" were anticipating that a rail line would be constructed through their newly planned town. Some of the founders of this Beloit had been involved in the development of Seward, Nebraska and the town plan of Beloit was laid out like Seward. There was no information on why they selected the name Beloit for this new town.

The townsite encompassed 44 acres located at the intersection of four sections taking up 11 acres from each. By May of 1888 mail delivery began, a newspaper "Beloit Weekly Bugle" was established, a general store, blacksmith shop and school followed shortly thereafter. Except for a couple of buildings like the blacksmith shop and the general store most of the buildings in Beloit were made of sod. In contemporary accounts the 1890 Census showed Beloit with 97 inhabitants. The construction of the rail line 8 miles to the north sealed the fate of Beloit and by 1894 it ceased to exist.

(Information from Salmons and Smith, eds "Kit Carson County", Kit Carson County Archives)



Nell's 1889 Map of Colorado

Historical Distractions

When you start searching in old newspaper archives you run into some of the most unusual historical tidbits that easily derail you from your intended work. Doing research on Beloit, Colorado led me to learn about a Beloit Colony (from Beloit, Kansas) that had settled in some as yet unknown locale in Colorado; as well as a surprising number of notes about people from Beloit visiting various places in Colorado or vice versa, weddings involving Beloiters from Wisconsin etc. Also, newspapers of the time often picked up articles from other papers hence - the following article quoted verbatim from the May 12, 1889 "The Rocky Mountain News":

Mistaken Identity

Special to the News.

Tuscola, ILL., May 11. The foreman in the cigar factory of Messrs. Robinson & Watson of this city, David Robinson, was placed in a very embarrassing position today when Mrs. James Duke of Beloit, Wis., accompanied by her children, confronted him and claimed him as her husband, who had disappeared a year ago. The case proved to be one of mistaken identity, as the woman admitted after failing to find a scar on his wrist. The resemblance was so strange that the children insisted that he was their father, notwithstanding his emphatic denials.

This could be the starting point for some other amateur historical sleuth.... it has distracted me for too much time already from my task at hand. (Whatever happened to Mr. Duke? Mrs. Duke?, the children?)

Submissions are welcomed.

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THRIVE
LOCALLY

On July 14, 1878, Joseph Watsic, a farmhand in the employ of George Mack, a farmer in comfortable circumstances, residing near Beloit in Rock County, was aroused from his slumbers by "Frank" Dickerson, his roommate, and directed to go out to the barn and feed the stock. He returned from the barn to the house with the announcement that "Mr. Mack was dead and laid in the barn."

George Mack was respected by his neighbors, esteemed by the public, and without an enemy in the world. His family consisted of—his wife, three children, and two men, "Frank" Dickerson and Joseph Watsic, who were assisting on the farm.

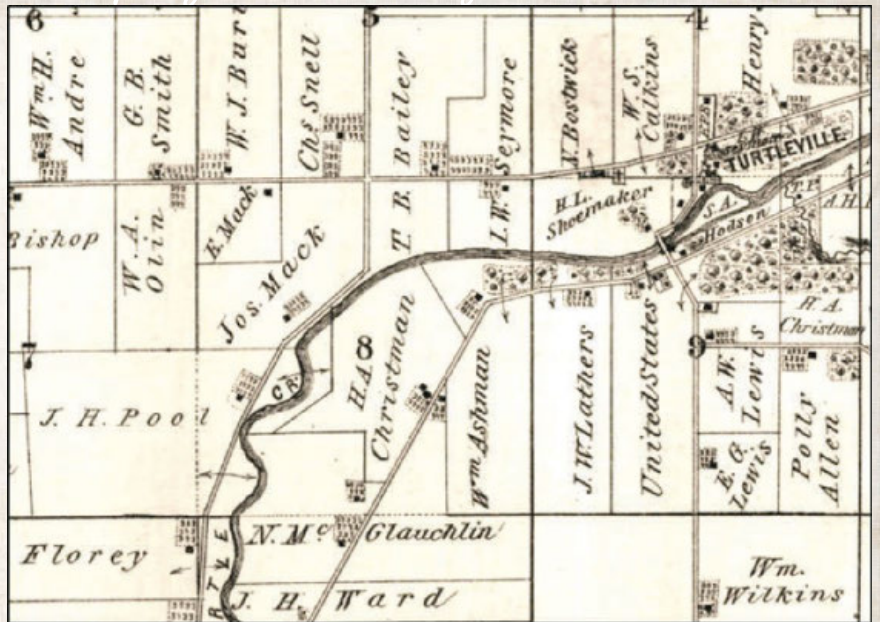
His wife, Belinda Whitney Mack, was born in Honeoye Falls, N.Y., thirty five years ago. She accompanied Ambrose Gates (her father) West and settled at Beloit. She remained here with her family, attending and teaching school until she was twenty-two years of age. She married George Mack October 22, 1863, at the Hyatt House in Janesville.

Orrin, alias "Frank" Dickerson, was born in McHenry County, Ill., was twenty-three years old and had a reputation for "crookedness". In appearance and intelligence he could not have been recognized by Belinda Mack in any other light other than a repulsive dependent.

When Joe Watsic returned and notified the occupants of the homestead of the husband and father's death, Dickerson made his way to the barn to "ascertain the truth of the report". He told everyone that George Mack had been killed by "old Jen", one of the animals used on the farm. A careful examination of the remains disclosed wounds which experts asserted could not have been received from the kicks or trampling of "old Jen". His chest was badly stove-in; his face scratched and pounded to a jelly; there was an ugly gash upon the top of his head, as though made with a sharp instrument, and one shoulder and three ribs were badly fractured. There was a "hog wallow" opposite the barn which gave evidence of a struggle having taken place in it, and Mack's hands, together with his clothing, were smeared with mud, corresponding in appearance to that in the hog wallow. It was common rumor that the life of deceased had been embittered by jealousy of Mrs. Mack's familiarity with Dickerson. This jealousy provoked trouble between Dickerson and Mack, which resulted in Dickerson's discharge from service sometime during the May previous. Soon after, Mack fell sick, and Mrs. Mack recalled Dickerson and put him to work.

The inquest was held that day as soon as arrangements could be completed. The evidence adduced afforded a reasonable presumption to the minds of the jury that while decedent had come to this death from blows inflicted by some persons or persons unknown, the arrest of Dickerson would be fully justified. He was accordingly apprehended and taken to Beloit for safekeeping.

After the funeral the widow returned to a relative's house in Beloit where she was arrested and taken to the Goodwin House to be held until a judicial examination could be held.



The Mack Homestead in Turtle Township in the 8000 block of Creek Road, North of the Inman Pkwy (CTH BT) intersection on land owned by Joshua Mack. (Small black boxes are the homesteads and marks next to them are the orchards.)

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Every means was used to extort a confession from Dickerson, and he made a clean breast of the "bloody business", charging the commission of the deed upon Mrs. Mack. He was held without bail and watched to prevent escape and also to protect him from the "assault of the mob."

Mrs. Mack appeared in court on Dec. 10, accompanied by her niece Miss Chapin. Jurors were gathered from Spring Valley, Center, Avon, Johnstown, Milton, Lima, Harmony and Porter. The crime was without precedent in the State, almost without a parallel in the country. The audience lined the avenues of approach to the court-room, the auditorium of which, its aisles and galleries, were crowded to suffocation.

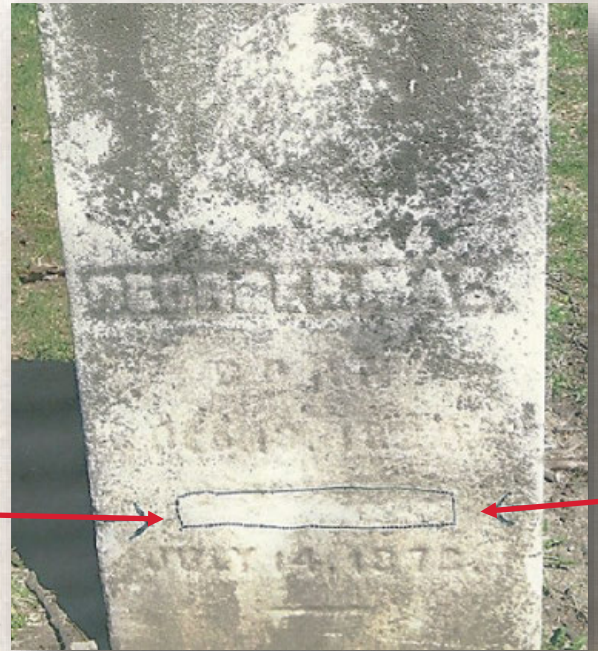
Dickerson testified that Watsic and the children went to bed. Mrs. Mack called him downstairs where he saw her seize a club from the wood-box and strike George on the head. She was by the door and George was on the ground with his head on the sidewalk. She said "If you tell, I will lay it all to you; we will carry him to the barn, and tell that 'old Jen' killed him." She wrapped some clothes around his head and we carried him to the barn stopping a few times to drive the hogs back that had gotten into the yard. We laid the body behind the horse. She took the horse by the halter and backed it over the body. We used a barrel stave to raise the privy and put the clothes from his head under the privy.

Etta, the oldest Mack child, testified followed by Mrs. Mack who denied the facts alleged by Dickerson. At the conclusion, the jury retired for forty-three hours, returned with a verdict of murder in the first degree, the penalty for which was imprisonment for life. Thus ended one of the most memorable trials ever had in the country, almost with parallel in the history of crime. Dickerson was placed on trial on May 15, 1879. The jury decreed that he should accompany Mrs. Mack to the State Prison at Waupun and remain there during the term of his natural life.

Belinda Mack appealed her conviction to the Wisconsin Supreme Court on the grounds she had not been able to testify about her relationship with her husband. She was granted a new trial in Jefferson County which ended with six jury votes to acquittal, two for murder, and the remaining four votes for manslaughter. She walked out of jail. Dickerson was granted a pardon on Jan. 1, 1891. The pardon cited the following: "then a mere boy and was unwittingly enticed into the affair and had been sufficiently punished." Dickerson moved to northern Wisconsin to live with his sister and engaged in logging.

By the time Dickerson was freed in 1890, the widow was living in Kansas and married to the teenage farmhand Joseph Wasic, the boy who had discovered the body in the barn. News reports claimed that Belinda (14 years older than her husband), married the boy to prevent him from testifying against her in the second trial. The reports gleefully included that Belinda had lost her good looks and that the strangely matched couple lived in poverty. To this day, the truth about what happened on the Mack farm that humid summer night in 1878 remains unknown. Lardinois, A. (2020). *Storied & Scandalous Wisconsin: A History of Mischief & Menace, Heroes & Heartbreak*. (Story heavily edited due to space)

George Mack was buried in Beloit's Oakwood Cemetery at Location SW-140, 10. At one of the cemetery walks, it was mentioned that years later, as the story goes, a woman was seen by a cemetery neighbor, at George's stone scrapping at the stone with a rock or piece of glass, erasing the word "murdered" from the stone. If you look at the stone, there is a smooth place above the death date where the word "murdered" would have been. And, as a creepy co-incidence, when I've looked at that stone over the years, there is sometimes a rock or a piece of glass at the base of the stone.



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The Privately Minted Penny



One hundred and sixty years ago a small copper coin was made. It resembled a penny in shape, size, and color, but this was no ordinary penny. Its story was unknown, but its uniqueness was noted by a cashier named Phil Brooks at a drugstore in Pennsylvania in the 1970s. Phil held onto this coin for nearly 50 years until he reached out to BHS in early 2022. On one side of the coin is an eagle with a crest shield, the word "Union" above and the year "1863" below. On the other side, are the words "Peck & Pratt Dealers in Wines Liquors & Segars Beloit, WIS."



This unusual coin's existence was the result of federal government and bank decisions made to finance the Civil War. Banks stopped converting paper notes into gold due to its low value. The federal government began recognizing paper notes as legal tender and started removing metal coins from circulation. Many individuals and businesses then began collecting and hoarding precious metals in large quantities, hoping the value would increase. Eventually, there were so few coins in circulation that businesses began minting their own coins to make up for the shortage. It is estimated that there were around **25,000,000 Civil War Tokens** in circulation and that there were over **7000 varieties** produced.

Peck and Pratt Dealers in Wine, Liquor, and Segars operating in Beloit in the 1860s produced one of these varieties. Not much is known about this store. Sadly, most of the relevant primary sources from the 1860s have proven challenging to locate. We do know that William Pratt owned a liquor and wine business with Thomas Golding in 1857 and James Pratt owned a saloon on the Northwest corner of State and Race (now St Paul Ave) in 1862. Hopefully, we can learn the full story of the token. Lucky for us though, after all of the coin's travels, it has made its way back home.

Citations:

1857-1870 Beloit-Janesville City Directories

Civil War Token Society. 2002-2016. *History of Civil War Tokens*

Ewell, Craig. 2011. *Brief History of the Gold Standard in the United States*.

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Pfc. Donald R. Evenson



Pfc. Rudolph P. Ennocenti

Newly added to our collection at BHS is the military service record of **Lloyd Arthur Wincapaw**, assembled by his mother **Amy**, and donated to us by his family. Lloyd went to school in this very building, Lincoln Jr High School. He also worked in the factory for the Freeman Shoe Company at the time he enlisted into the service. Like many Beloiters, Lloyd fought in WWII.

It is not possible to accurately describe the feelings provoked by turning the pages of this book. **"2 Beloit men are missing on the west front"**, **"Beloit Soldier Dies in Action..."**, and the headline, **"130 from Beloit Community Give Lives to Bring Victory"** are just a small portion of the heart-wrenching stories glued onto the pages. This book is titled **His Service Record**, however most of the pages about Mr. Wincapaw's service were never filled in. So it really isn't a service record at all. This is an expression of a mother who was afraid, proud and understood the importance of recording history. One can only imagine the anxiety that she must have felt as she clipped and kept these stories of her son's fallen brothers.

Scrapbooks like these serve an important role at BHS. Rarely is such a complete collection of information put together like this. The creator of this scrapbook could have chosen to focus solely on her son, but she didn't. Instead, she carefully curated an amalgamation of the stories of many of the Beloiters who served in World War II. There is no road map for learning about WWII's impact on Beloit. This scrapbook brings us one giant step closer to a deeper understanding of how the war affected our community

2 Beloit Men Freed From Nazi Prison

TWO Beloit men, one a member of the Seventh army and the other a member of the First army, have been liberated at a German prisoner of war camp, according to information here today.

The men are Pfc. Donald R. Evenson, son of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Evenson, 743 Moore st., and Pfc. Rudolph P. Ennocenti, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Ennocenti, 1452 Wisconsin ave.

The information reveals that both soldiers were freed at one of the largest prison camps in western Germany on April 19, and were two of approximately 2,400 American prisoners of war.

Parents of Evenson and Ennocenti have received no official word that their sons have gained their freedom from the Germans. Mr. and Mrs. Evenson have received no word from the war department since their son was reported missing in action in France on Jan. 18. He was heard on a broadcast by many listeners in various sections of the country on March 23 when he said he was a prisoner of war and was well.

Mr. and Mrs. Ennocenti received a message from their son on April 9 that he was a prisoner of war, and that he was in good health.

The information reaching here today that both had been released by the British 7th armored divi-

sion near Fallingbomel, Germany, listed the names of other Wisconsin men who had been held at the camp comprising both Stalag 11-B and Stalag 357, and in addition to the Americans, 25,000 British, Russian, Polish, Belgian and Yugoslav captives.

Pfc. Evenson enlisted in October, 1942, and was called to service June 25, 1943. He served in the 42nd "Rainbow" division, 7th army, and went overseas in November, 1944.

Pfc. Ennocenti was a member of the First army. He entered service June 29, 1943, and went overseas shortly before Christmas.

The story concerning the liberation disclosed many allied prisoners had been at Fallingbomel, located southeast of Bremen, the last five years, and had lived in dilapidated shacks. They slept four together, relied on straw to keep warm, and few had blankets.

They took baths without soap, and many died each day. They were buried in a large cemetery inside the camp. Within 24 hours of the liberation, it was reported, American officials started evacuation of prisoners by trucks, and as news spread, many soldiers who had escaped to nearby forests rushed back to the enclosure to get aboard the trucks.

Beloiters Are Buried in Far Parts of World

Beloit and South Beloit, like other communities in the United States and throughout the world, have paid a price in human life for the victories which have been won and which have brought about the capitulation of Italy, Germany and now Japan.

Records as complete as are possible show that 130 men from this community have given their lives to make possible the termination of the phase of the war in which we participated since Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese elected to make the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.



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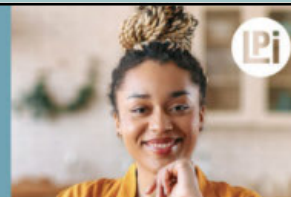
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Message from Executive Director, Donna Langford

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Annual Appeal. Your donations support general operating that enable the society to serve the community.

Exciting things continue to happen at the Beloit Historical Society. The 2023 event calendar has been planned and we will be introducing a new speaker program which will explore a variety of topics throughout the year. The **Car & Mechanic Show** is returning in June, a **Multicultural Food Festival** will be taking place August 20th on the Lincoln Center grounds followed by **Heritage Days** September 9th & 10th and a **Quilt Show** November 4th & 5th. Details will be continually added to the website <http://beloithistoricalsociety.com>.

There is excitement happening behind the scenes also. The volunteers are continuing to research artifacts that have been in our collection as well as new donations. As a result, we are making new connections with the artifacts and learning more about Beloit's history. This information will be integrated into new programs being developed for the public and classrooms. Staff is excited about changes to the facilities. Our textile storage space will be getting a new furnace to replace the old one in need of repairs. The new furnace will increase energy efficiency and help us maintain a better environment for the preservation of the textiles. Outdoors, the landscaping at the Lincoln Center will be getting a new look.

I invite you to visit and be a part of the excitement!

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: When was the first ski jump tournament held at Big Hill Park?

Answer: An amateur ski jumper from St. Paul won the top prize in January, 1912 with jumps of 126 and 133 feet. Fourteen skiers made jumps. Several jumpers from out of town stated they were very impressed with the jump tower including Anders and Lars Haugen, known to be the best jumpers in the world. Storekeepers closed their doors on Wednesday afternoon so all could see the meet. Spectators could leave the Interurban at Yost's Park and walk across the river ice to see the ski meet. Earlier that same week, a bunch of local boys took to sliding down the ski jump scaffold in a bobsled; the sled carrying six boys flew through the air for a long distance. *No lives were lost; the performance is not to be repeated.* according to a write-up in the Beloit newspaper.



THE
COLONEL ROBERT H. MORSE
FOUNDATION

The Colonel Robert H. Morse Foundation is a philanthropic organization headquartered in Beloit, Wisconsin. The organization is dedicated to funding programs with social significance to the Greater Beloit area.

We are very pleased to share that the society has been awarded \$7050.00 from the **Colonel Robert Morse Foundation** to purchase 10 new tables and 100 chairs for the Community Room at the Lincoln Center. The society's Community Room is a 2000 square foot space that is used for community celebrations, private rentals, as a polling place and for society programs and events. The new tables and chairs significantly increase the quantity available for use and will provide a higher level of comfort for our visitors. We are very grateful to the Colonel Robert Morse Foundation for this wonderful grant they have awarded to us.

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Where would we be without Hal? From brickwork to painting, yard work, tree removal, parking lot repairs, changing light bulbs and fixing anything and everything in this building, he truly does it all and more.

Hal Joyce spends most of his volunteer days outside, rain or shine, always finding clever new ways to improve the building and its grounds.

Hal has lived in Beloit for seven years. He is a native of Madison, WI and spent his career in the medical field as a recreational therapist. Hal retired in 1997.

He now spends his free time playing pool, scrabble, Sudoku, reviewing books and leading sing-alongs for adults with disabilities.

Hal is a deeply valued member of our team. For information on how you can get involved, call (608) 365-7835, email info@beloithistory.org, or visit us at 845 Hackett St.

WE COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS!

SOCIETY FOR LEARNING UNLIMITED

The Society for Learning Unlimited (SLU) will begin its 33rd year of classes on February 8, 2023, offering over 30 classes for the semester.

In February alone, there are four classes of direct interest to *Confluence* readers. Topics are the USS Beloit and Fairbanks-Morse Co. history (Pat Bussie), working with men from the perspective of an African American woman in a leadership role (Barbara Hickman), The Stateline Community Foundation (Tara Tinder) and a 25-year photographic history of Beloit (Rod Gottfredsen).

Dues are \$7/semester plus \$7/class. Catalogs will be available mid-to-late January at local public libraries or contact the SLU office at slu@beloit.edu or 608-207-3400.

Introducing TWO New Membership Levels

The membership levels of Conservator (\$1000 renewed annually) and Legacy (\$2500 renewed annually) have been added to the society's membership program. Both levels receive all of the benefits of membership:

- Receive the bimonthly newsletter *Confluence*
- Free access to the Luebke Family Memorial Library for research
- Discounts on research photocopies and image reproductions
- Special invitations to Member Only events such as the Annual Meeting
- Names listed on the BHS website membership page and in every issue of *Confluence*

The two new levels receive the added benefits:

Conservator Level:

- Free Behind the Scenes tour of the collections
- 1 free gift membership
- Free admission to BHS ticketed events

Legacy Level receives all of the above plus:

- 1 free table at dinner events for 6 guests
- 2 additional gift memberships (3 total)
- An Evening with the Curator to view a special historic artifact in detail. All memberships provide general operating support to aide the Beloit Historical Society in the preservation and interpretation of Beloit's rich heritage. (call office for details)



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Many famous people have spoken or appeared at least once on the Beloit College campus. Below are some of them....

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Dave Brubeck

Charles Laughton

Hume Cronyn

Jessica Tandy

George Bush

Charles Boyer

Margaret Mead

Duke Ellington

Pincus Zuckerman

(violinist)

Clifford Garvin

*(President of Exxon, appointed to committees
by President Reagan)*

Robert Coles

(author, psychiatrist, Harvard professor)

Eleanor Roosevelt

Michael Jordan

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL HISTORY

By Jesse Herscher

Is it possible to know where we are going without knowing where we have been? Can we celebrate our achievements without understanding them, or remedy the wrongs of the past without knowing what they were? How do we know we aren't retracing our steps? Beloit was, and still is, home to artists, inventors, athletes, politicians, teachers, doctors, and everyday people whose contributions to the city made it the place that it is today. Here at BHS, you can read the stories of these extraordinary people who have laid the foundation for Beloit's success.

It is easy to look at national history and understand how major events like war, migrations, or economic depression helped or harmed us as a country. However, there is an emotional component to studying history that can be lost by analyzing statistics of far away people and places. The stories of individuals who lived and died for our community and our country matter just as much as the outcomes we learned about in history class. We all know the cost of war, but do we all know who paid the price? We know people traveled thousands of miles to end up here in Beloit, but have you seen their faces? Do you know their names? Local history gives us the opportunity to feel what they felt, to understand their experiences and to draw comparison to today's cultural and societal beliefs that exist right here in our home. Without local history and local historical institutions, these stories would be lost to the ages.

Today, we still see issues in every city like homelessness, educational disadvantage, community division, and systemic racism. Even though the nature of these problems has changed, many of them are still a result of past practices. If we ever intend to make any significant community progress, we must first understand how and why Beloit looks the way it does. Our mission at BHS is to **share Beloit's history to enhance community pride**. This means that we share both the good and the bad. We commemorate the accomplishments of our past, and we acknowledge the wrongs that lead us astray from unity so that we may come together again.

Welcome New Members

Albert Engleson

Louanne James

Jon Klett

Allison McCawley

Debra Ramsey

Judith Robson

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Confluence highlights Beloit history and keeps you up-to-date on Society happenings. There are six issues each year.

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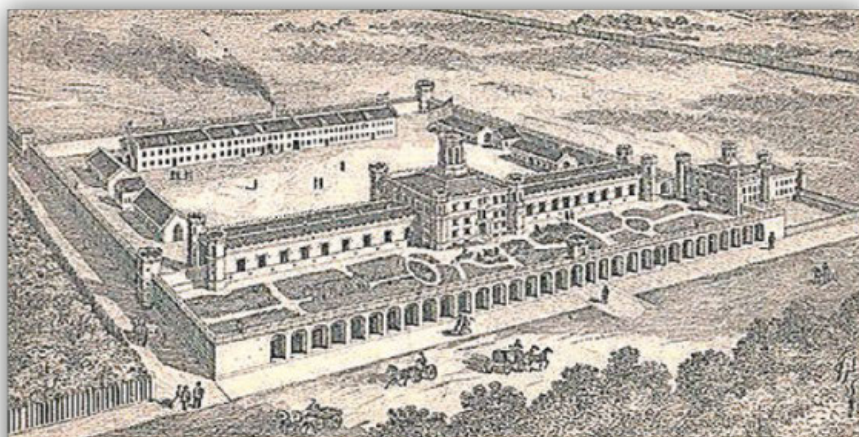
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See story on page 4 & 5

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