

Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 32 Issue 2

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March/April 2023

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Women's clubs and organizations contributed significantly to the growth of Beloit through various civic and welfare projects. Can you imagine a city without a public library or city garbage collection?



The new YWCA building was dedicated in 1959 with the mortgage burning ceremony taking place June 2, 1965.

The establishment of these services was through the efforts of the **Beloit Federation of Women** during the early

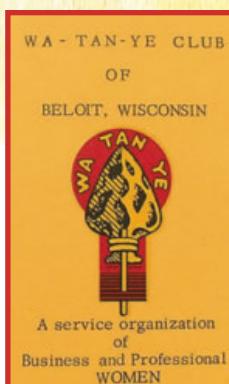
1900s. The federation began in 1894 to bring Beloit's women's clubs together. Social clubs such as the **East End Club** (1893), **Current Literature Club** (1897) and the **Art League** (1927) pursued increased knowledge of literature, arts and history. These clubs have been instrumental in providing support to the growth of the arts in Beloit.

Women's military organizations such as the **Women's Relief Corps** (1887) and service clubs such as **Wa-Tan-Ye Club** (Beloit chapter founded in 1953) supported a large number of welfare projects for veterans, seniors and school children.

The **Women's Culture Club**, an affiliate of the Wisconsin State Association of Colored Women, is the oldest black women's club in Beloit. Founded in 1923 to build a better social life for Beloit's young women and to undertake philanthropy as well as arts and crafts.

History Matters
Four Seasonal Programs on Beloit History Topics
Spring Program: Wed, March 22 1:00 pm, 845 Hackett
Speaker: Donna Langford, BHS Executive Director
Topic: **The Growth of a City: Beloit's Women's Clubs**

Admission: \$8 non-members / \$5 members
Summer, fall & winter programs announced at later date



Looking Back

Grand Avenue Bridge, Beloit, Wis.



Above & below: The same building viewed from different angles, pre-automobile and later with a ramp leading towards the river.

A look at the many changes occurring at 108 W. Grand over more than a century of Beloit's history. Blue Collar Coffee recently relocated to this location which is Beloit's newest downtown remodel project.



Above: A plain exterior covered the lovely old details from the historic building. Below: We can now enjoy those old details and a river view while drinking our coffee.



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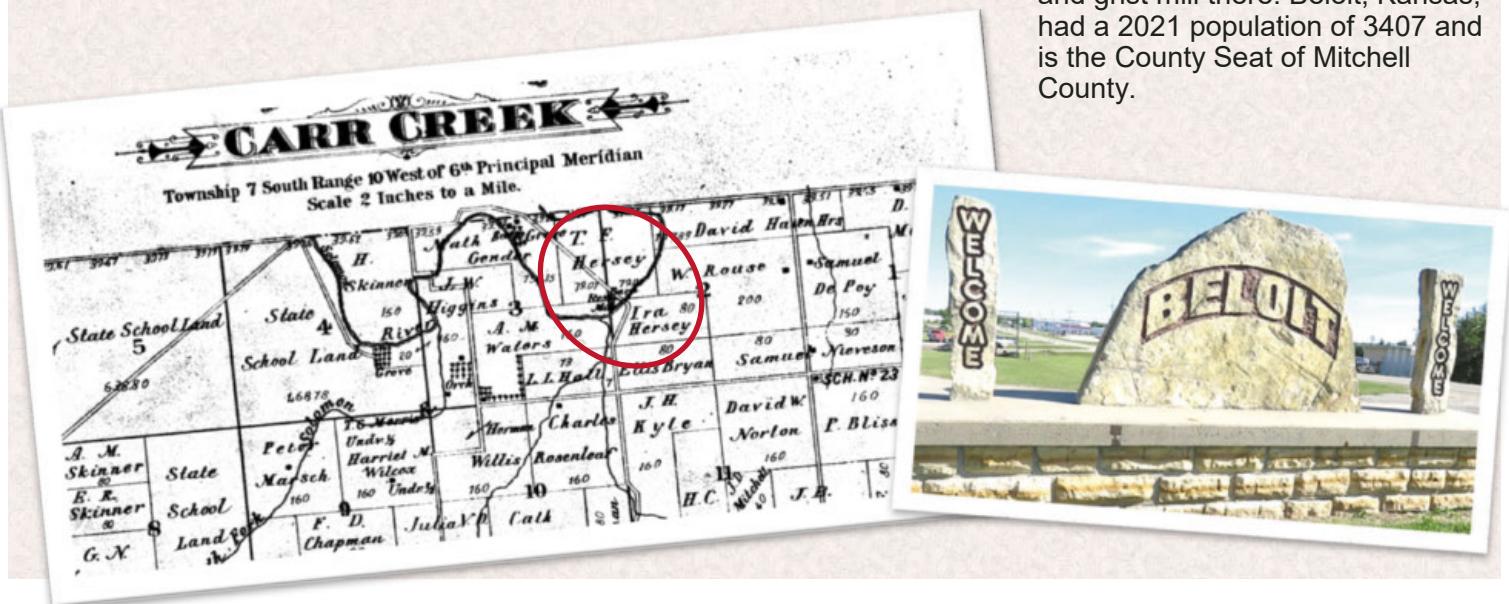
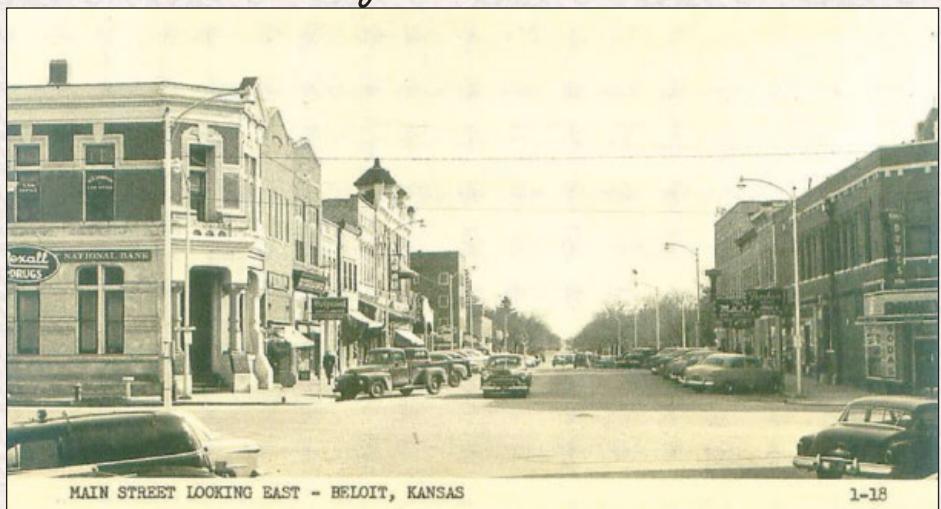
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BELOIT, KANSAS

Born in Maine in 1827 and dying in Washington state in 1906, **Timothy Fletcher Hersey**'s lifetime spanned most of the 19th Century as well as the continental United States. His father, **Ira Hersey**, a miller, brought his wife and children to Beloit in 1837. The 1840 US Census has them living in Winnebago County, Illinois, but it must have been very close to the state line as the family were **founding members of Beloit's First Congregational Church** in 1838. In the Spring of 1844, **Ira** was involved in building a dam across the Rock River with David Merrill and John Atchley that was sold to Hanchett and Lawrence. The 1850 Census shows the family living in the Town of Afton.

Hersey must have learned the milling trade from his father. In 1857, he is the first settler in newly created Dickinson County, Kansas Territory, at a stagecoach stop named **Mud Creek**. Timothy is credited with building the first house in this community and his wife is credited with renaming it **Abilene**. He had a seemingly successful life in Abilene.

By 1869 he relocated about 90 miles northwest (at the junction of the Union Pacific and Missouri Pacific railroads) to the banks of the Solomon River in newly formed Mitchell County where he became the first settler. **The name of Beloit was given in honor of his hometown in Wisconsin**. He established both a sawmill and grist mill there. Beloit, Kansas, had a 2021 population of 3407 and is the County Seat of Mitchell County.



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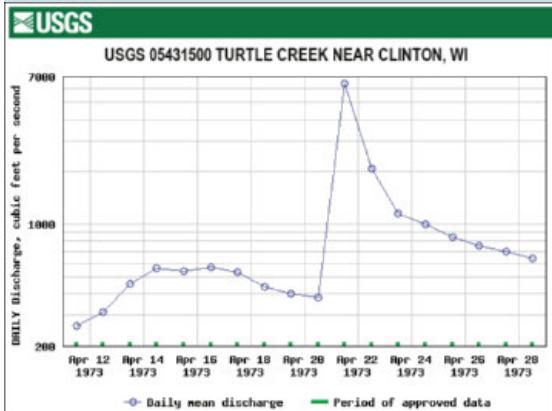
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Turtle Creek Flood of 1973 by Carol Mankiewicz

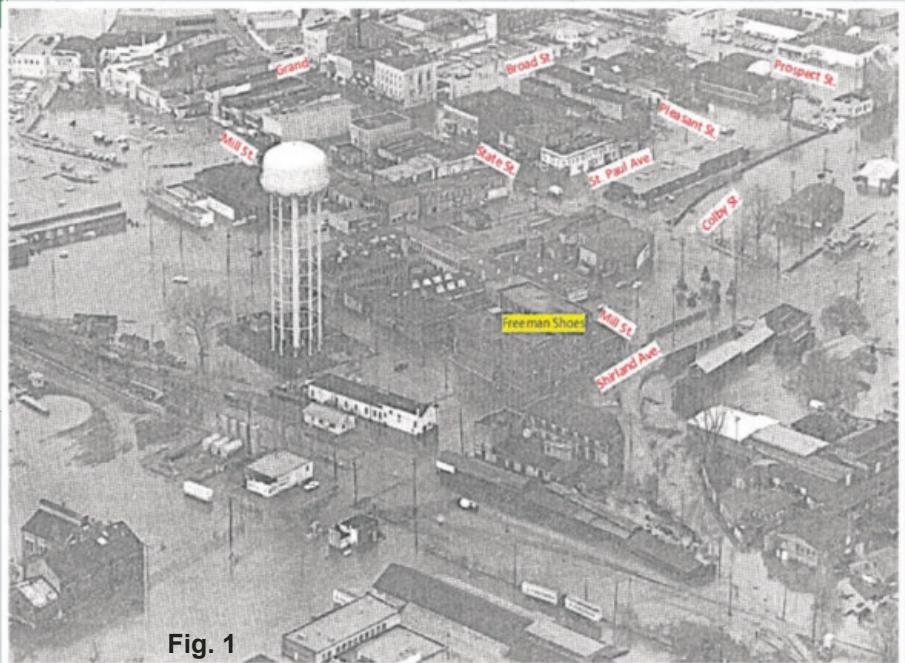
Fifty years ago on Friday, April 20 (Good Friday), news of Watergate occupied the front page of the Beloit Daily News. By Saturday, the focus changed to area floods brought on by days of rain followed by a torrential downpour Friday night- 6" in Walworth County and "only" 4" in the Beloit area. Clinton was particularly hard hit. Saturday afternoon, it was Beloit's turn, with waters cresting at about 4 p.m. This was not the Easter weekend anyone had planned!



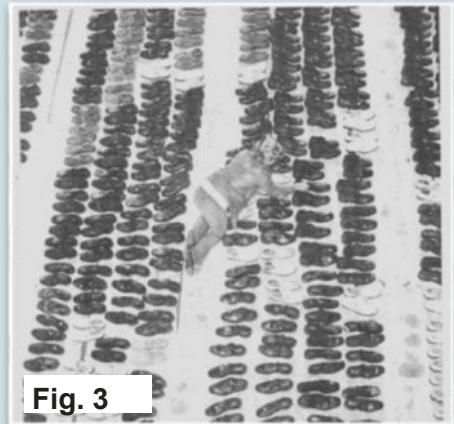
A plot of data from the U.S. Geological Survey shows the discharge (volume of water flowing each second) past a gauging station on Turtle Creek near Clinton. The week before April 20th, the mean flow was already more than twice the typical flow in Turtle Creek. The ground was so saturated that additional rain simply ran into the creek. The downpour Friday night led to more than a 16-fold increase in discharge and failure of dams, resulting in a rise of nine feet on Turtle Creek in the Beloit area in addition to a one-foot rise on the Rock River. The downtown area streets and beyond were flooded from about Broad Street south to the creek. South Beloit experienced inundation covering twice that area.

In Beloit, Freeman Shoes (Figures 1-3) suffered the greatest damage with more than a \$2 million loss (\$13.4 million today). By 3 p.m., water was flowing into the warehouse.

Fig. 1



The following account and photographs come from Beloit Daily News reports.



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Turtle Creek Flood of 1973 by Carol Mankiewicz 5

The fire department, public-works employees, Freeman employees, and volunteers worked feverishly to sandbag, pump, and transfer shoes and equipment to dry areas. Nonetheless, 150,000 pairs of shoes were ruined and others were damaged. Those pairs that could be salvaged (Fig. 3) were sold at reduced prices.



← **Left:**
East side of State St.
north of Broad St.



→ **Right:** →
Looking north on Mill at
St. Paul. Post office (on
left) had 3" of mud and
water. Postal employees
drove trucks home to
protect them and the
mail.



← **Left:**
Broad St. east of State.
Majestic Theater on left.
Ace Hardware and
Blackhawk Bank
occupy the area today.



→ **Right:** →
Water extended along E.
Grand Ave. surrounding
Emmanuel Baptist
Church.



Some residential areas were hard hit, particularly the White Oaks neighborhood along the creek. Firefighters helped with sand-bagging.

← **Lower right:**
Lathers Road Bridge over
Turtle Creek suffered
damage. →

Greater than twenty-five million dollars (about \$170 million today) in damages in the Stateline area should not be taken lightly. Many lessons were learned from the flood concerning storm-water management, like the need for culverts and avoidance of building in low areas. Time will tell if enough changes were made.



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Message from Executive Director, Donna Langford

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month. During 2022 the Beloit Historical Society was blessed with twenty-one volunteers who gave a total of 2363 reported hours. Many of these volunteers were active every week serving with enthusiasm. Projects included mailings and other office work, researching and installing gallery exhibits, building maintenance and grounds clean up. Collections projects involved photographing, scanning and rehousing artifacts.

Project Highlights

Alan has been scanning and researching historic sports photographs in the BHS collections for the past few years. Many of these photos are unidentified, therefore Alan compares them to photos in yearbooks, sporting event programs and other documents to determine the names of the athletes. Knowing the names allows us to recognize the achievements of particular athletes. Their names are also useful for genealogical research and to increase our understanding of general Beloit history.

Billy focuses on the military objects, photographs and archives in our collections. He researches these objects in order to learn about the soldiers connected to them. History is about people with material culture providing information on how people lived. Billy's examination of historical material culture brings the veterans and their experiences to the forefront.

Chris and Linda do transcription projects. They are master typists converting original hand written letters, newspaper columns and typed indices into digital files. These files are searchable, making research of various history topics easier and quicker.

Mary and Nancy do an amazing job creating this newsletter. Mary determines the article topics and layout while Nancy does the graphic design and readies it for printing.

The efforts of all of the volunteers contribute to increasing and improving the ways that the Society serves the Beloit community. **Thank you for everything that you do!**

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: In 1919 a very popular Beloit College professor wrote an unflattering book about a fictional city and college which was very similar to Beloit and caused quite a stir in the community. He was fired from the college as a result of the book. What was the name of the book? (Extra bonus points if you can also name the professor).



Why not check out a copy of *Iron City* from the Beloit Public Library or one of the free publication sites online. It is enjoyable to try to imagine where Hedging was walking, hiking or dining. Try to take a guess what city he was visiting when he goes out of town. What business was he writing about as he describes labor unrest? You will get a different eye-opening insight into Beloit as it was a century ago.

Answer: The name of the book is *Iron City* by Marion H. Hedges, who began teaching at age 25 and was voted the most popular professor at the college. He also assisted in writing the play for Beloit's very successful Pageant of 1916 which attracted over 30,000 people. He taught English and journalism and was particularly interested in the tensions between working class laborers and factory and business owners. The book was also critical of the fictional leadership parallels between Beloit and the fictional city and college. Objectives from business leaders such as Alonso Aldrich, president of Beloit Iron Works, added to the pressure on college leadership. This eventually resulted in Hedges' dismissal from the college. The rest of his career was predominantly involved in labor reform. Unfortunately, he never taught again.



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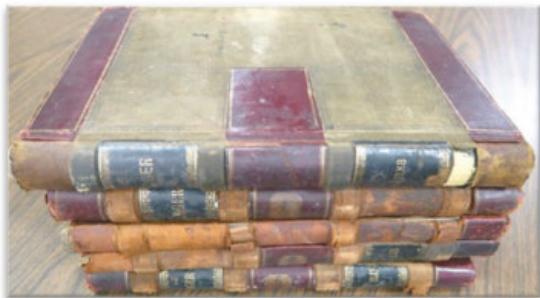
The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

Beloit Elks Club located behind the Hotel Hilton

*“Nothing hurts like being forgotten and surely
nothing helps like being remembered”.*



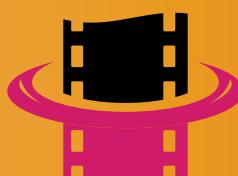
Elks Club ballot box



Early ledgers used by the club

The Order of Elks was founded in 1868 as a social club for traveling minstrel performers in New York City. The Beloit chapter organized in 1903 on the site of what is now First National Bank and Trust. The first Exalted Ruler was J.S. Allen. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks made it their mission to make their country and Beloit a better place. Their charity programs included: support for Boy and Girl Scouts, youth sports and summer camps, scholarships, aid for people with disabilities, raising money for cancer research, aid for hospitalized veterans, the construction of a veteran's memorials and more. They decreed, *“So long as there are veterans in our hospitals the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks will never forget them”*.

The Beloit Chapter of the Elks disbanded in 2022 bringing an end to 119 years of history. Recently, a group of former Elks made the decision to donate what remained with them to the Beloit Historical Society. This giant donation consists of photographs, paintings, plaques, posters, financial documents, membership books, minute books, bylaws and constitutions, scrapbooks, and a quilt embroidered with all of the Wisconsin Elk Lodges and their numbers. This donation ensures that the Beloit Elks will have their history preserved for generations to come. Thank you for your donation and for all that you have done for our community. You will not be forgotten.



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PLEASE WELCOME
Flora Milford

Flora Milford is a junior at Beloit College. She is spending this semester interning with the Beloit Historical Society through the **Duffy Program**. At BHS, she is working on a project to learn about different neighborhoods within Beloit and their history. This project will culminate in something she can distribute throughout the Beloit community.

As a creative writing major, Flora has always sought to learn from people different from herself and work to share their stories. By interacting directly with the Beloit community at BHS, she is able to do this. At Beloit College, Flora writes for the **Round Table Newspaper**, works with the Sexual Health and Reproductive Choice Coalition, and has a radio show through WBCR.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT
Dane Lundwall

Dane has volunteered with BHS since early 2022. Dane has used his incredible passion and skill for photography to assist in every area of our mission. He has photographed numerous artifacts and events, organized digital and original photographs for collections and marketing, and participated in numerous other projects and activities.



Dane is a Beloit native. He attended Rock county Christian School and Blackhawk Tech where he studied marketing. He spent many years living in Madison, but is now back in his hometown and employed at Beloit College. He loves to spend his free time writing, drawing, reading, taking photographs, gardening, hiking, digitally painting and restoring historic photographs. He is an active member of his church.

We are very grateful for Dane's help!

Welcome New Members

Rick Drost
Albert Engleson
Clarence Furset
Jim Hosey
Kathy James
Louanne James
Colette Meister
Robert Pakes
Debra Ramsey
Peg Theder
Sandra Trabert

20th Roy Chapman Andrews Explorer Award

Dr. Sarah Stewart Johnson, American planetary scientist, astronomer, biologist, geochemist and Principal Investigator at Johnson Biosignatures Lab, Georgetown University is this year's award recipient.



**Dr. Johnson's acceptance lecture is titled
"Contending With the Truly Alien"**

April 14 at 4:30 pm, Beloit Public Library
(open to the public - no charge to attend)

This also marks the 100th anniversary since Beloit native **Roy Chapman Andrews** was featured on the cover of **TIME** Magazine (age 39) for his 5 Gobi Desert expeditions.

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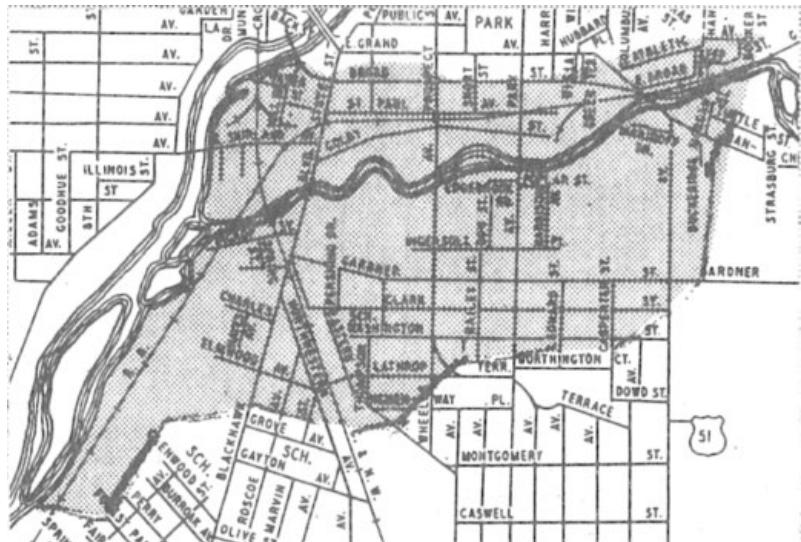
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The shaded part of this map shows the vast areas of Beloit and South Beloit that were affected by the flood of 1973. Flooding in business basements went as far north as Public Ave. including the fire station at Public and Pleasant. The water in the station didn't affect the ability to aid in the flood clean-up around town.

More pictures and story on pages 4-5



Our First Legacy Members
William Priewe and Elizabeth Meeks

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**Designates new sustaining member*