



Confluence

Where Past Meets Present

Volume 31 Issue 6

BELOIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Nov/Dec, 2022

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Beloit Historical Society presents our.....

2nd Annual QUILT SHOW

Saturday, November 5 9:00 - 5:00

Sunday. November 6 10:00 - 4:00

\$5 admission - Free for BHS members

The show celebrates the talents of local quilt makers of historic and modern quilts. A “Bed Turning” program shares additional quilts and their stories. Special quilts from the BHS collection will be highlighted.



Local entrants have a choice of having their quilt judged by National Association of Certified Quilt Judges (NACQG) certified quilt judge Maribeth Schmit, or just on display. Judged quilts will receive constructive comments from Maribeth to help quilters improve their skills.



Have you wondered what the value is on a treasured heirloom quilt or for a quilt you just made? Do you need an appraisal for insurance purposes? Certified quilt appraiser Suzanne Swenson is appraising quilts during both days of the quilt show.

Appraisals cost \$50 and a written appraisal will be provided.

Appointments to have a quilt appraised can be made by contacting the BHS office by phone (608) 365-7835 or email (info@beloithistoricalsociety.com). Walk-ins bringing a quilt to the show are also welcome.

Maple Leaf Signature Quilt from BHS Collection

The quilt was donated by **Roy Bosselman** in 1991. It was made in 1947 by the Women's Society of World Service Church of the United Brethren in Christ - Beloit.

Looking Back

Big Hill Ski Jump

Started in 1911 by Beloit Ski Club, this location attracted thousands of watchers and served as a substitute for the Winter Olympics during WW II. It featured jumpers from all over the world and drew crowds of 10,000 each year.



Above: View from above the Big Hill ski jump in its heyday.



Same view today from the observation deck



(more on page 7)

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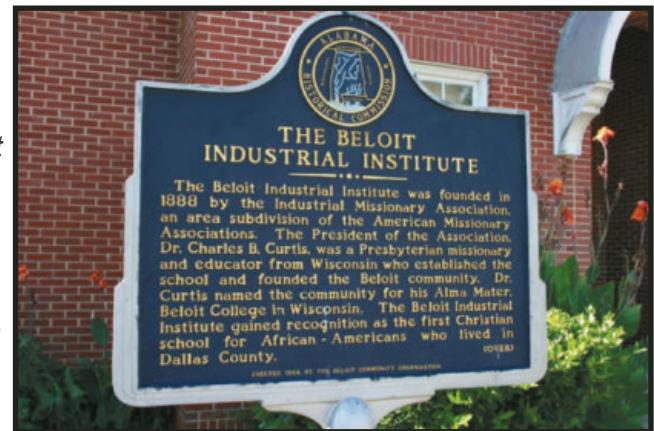


This is the second of what I originally thought would be four articles. However, since the last issue of *Confluence*, I have discovered more places named Beloit. Many of these seem to be what you might call "Ghost Beloits" – settlements that were platted but never developed or thrived for only a short time.

Beloit, Alabama is an unincorporated community in Dallas County, Alabama. Selma is the county seat and is located 12 miles northeast of Beloit. The community of Beloit grew up around the **Beloit Industrial Institute** which

was established in 1888 by **Dr. Charles B. Curtis**. He was an 1870 graduate of Beloit College and the institute was named for his alma mater. I have been unable to find other information about Curtis or the school itself and I have not received responses to research requests I have made. Therefore, the remainder of this article will consist of the informative text of the historic marker commemorating the Beloit Industrial Institute, placed at this site in 1994 by the Alabama Historical Commission and Beloit Community Association. When and if I can find further information, I will write an addendum to this article.

"The Beloit Industrial Institute was founded in 1888 by Industrial Missionary Association, an area subdivision of the American Missionary Associations. The President of the Association, Dr. Charles B. Curtis, was a Presbyterian missionary and educator from Wisconsin who established the school and founded the Beloit community. Dr. Curtis named the community for his Alma Mater, Beloit College in Wisconsin. The Beloit Industrial Institute gained recognition as the first Christian school for African - Americans who lived in Dallas County. (reverse side of sign) From 1888 to 1923, the Beloit school functioned as the intellectual, social and religious hub for the thriving Beloit community. The school was the first in Dallas County to combine agribusiness training with strong Christian teachings. In 1923, the Dallas County School Board gained legal possession of the school which they retained until 1963 when desegregation and zoning forced the closing of the school's doors. For a period of ten years, the school building was owned by a private business. In 1974 the building was purchased by the Beloit Community Organization. It now functions as a multi - purpose, community center and exists as a shining example of progress, self-reliance and community service for generations of past, present and future Alabamians."



A Founder's Day Memorial Service was held February 9, 1947, at the Dallas County Training School as it was then called. A letter was received and read by Principal C.J. Thurston from Mrs. Harriett Curtis, widow of the founder, that regretted she could not be at the service. "To show our appreciation for the many sacrifices made to help the people of our race and now the children at this present day are enjoying the fruits of their labor", the student body gave a 'Loving Cup' which will be delivered to Mrs. Curtis.

Rev. E.W. Shepherd, a personal friend of Dr. Curtis, delivered the sermon stating that "A founder never dies". He shared that Dr. Curtis did not believe in slavery and came south "to devote his life to help Negroes. He had many opposes, and a few white friends because of what he did for the colored people. One month and twenty days, Mr. Curtis would have been ninety-nine years old. If you want to live a long time, be a good man".

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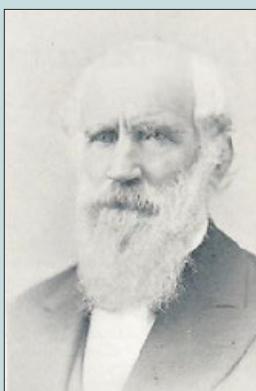
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"Street of History"

Many Beloiters are likely unaware of the massive amount of history packed into one small block on the west side of our city. Very few would be able to name or locate the street if asked. However, **Parker Avenue** probably tops the list of important city builders who called this street "home".



Charles H. Parker

Charles H. Parker (for whom Parker School was named), was born in Newton, Mass., on Nov. 16, 1814. He learned the cutlery trade in Concord, N.H., and moved to Belvidere, Illinois, in 1848. He worked for several years as a machinist in Beloit starting in 1849. He would walk to Beloit on Monday mornings and return on foot to Belvidere each weekend. In 1850, he moved the family (his wife was Eleanor Stone Parker) to Beloit. In 1853, in a partnership with his brother-in-law Gustavus Stone, he engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements specializing in grain binders under the firm name of Parker & Stone. The plant was close to home on Third St. just off St. Lawrence Ave.

The company prospered and developed into the firm of Beloit Reaper Works which was at the time, the most important manufacturing industry in the village. It was at their factory that **John Francis Appleby** perfected the twine binder which was to revolutionize grain harvesting. When early tests showed one bundle perfectly tied and three imperfectly, Parker said to Appleby and Charles Franz, who drove the binder for the tests, "We'll make it work. If it will tie one bundle it will tie all four." It did.



Drawing of the mansion of Charles H. Parker, early Beloit industrialist, banker and Civil War Mayor from the county atlas of 1873

They moved the business to Milwaukee (then called Parker and Dennett), sold it later and moved back to Beloit where he then built the Parker Block (located on the south side of Grand Ave. across from the current 1st National Bank). In 1882, along with his son L. Holden and F.H. Starkweather, he established the **Second National Bank of Beloit** in the building and Parker became president. For many years he was a member of the school board. Parker School which sat at the north end of his property was named in his honor. He was a member of the City Council for 25 years and a member of the Assembly from our district in 1868, 69 and 78. He served as Mayor of Beloit in 1861 and 1884-86. At noon on May 2, 1861, he gave a rousing speech to the Beloit City Guards before they took off to Camp Randall at Madison to fight in the Civil War.

"Charlie" Parker was the soul of integrity, conducting his banking business (as he had done his manufacturing) on a personal basis. He devoted over 40 years of his life to the betterment of Beloit. He was generous, almost to a fault, and always had an open hand for those in distress. He exerted a huge influence for good in our community. Remember this as you drive down Parker Avenue and view his beautiful home.



Current day Parker mansion—still with elegant beauty

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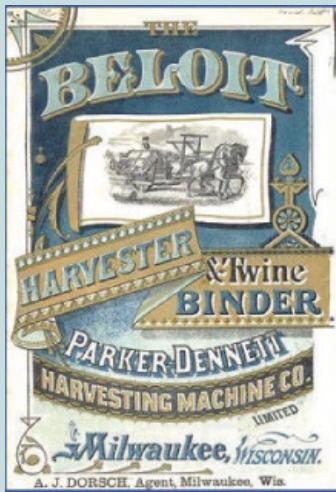
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"Street of History"

5



In the early years the mansion was only one of two homes located on "Parker's Hill". The actual address was West D St. (our current-day Roosevelt Ave.) Parker Ave. is only one block long from St. Lawrence on the south to Roosevelt on the north where it stops at the front yard of the home. The second home with lovely gardens, was that of Gustavus Stone known for being tailor clad with a stove pipe hat and a swallow tailed black coat while carrying a gold headed ebony walking stick.

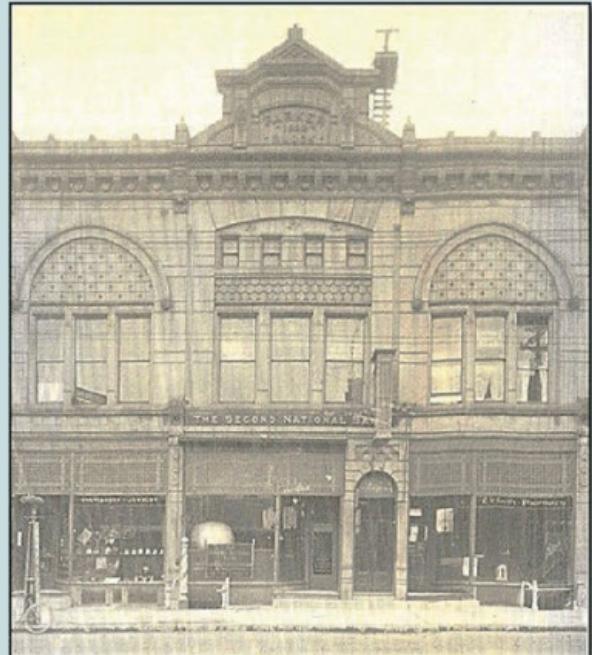
The east and west sides of Parker Ave. were lined with the homes of leaders of the community such as the large cobblestone house belonging to Irving **Gaston** of Gaston Scale Works, R.J. **Dowd** of R.J. Dowd Knife Works and later president of Beloit Savings Bank, Alfred **Goddard** of Goddard-Allen Co. makers of nationally known Al-Ard bicycles, Julia **McAlpine** developer of a large section of Beloit, Louis **Phelan** of Taylor Freezer Corp, George **Moran** a businessman and banker who was an active community member, Carlos **Whitford** a leading Wisconsin insurance man who was a friend of Abraham Lincoln, Holden **Parker** (son of Charles) Second National Bank president and Charles **Still**, owner of a combination cigar/jewelry store in the Parker Block. The store doubled as a sport's hangout for the likes of Oscar Thompson from Thompson Plow Works and well-known Beloiter and story-teller Henry (Hank) Tallmadge.



John Hackett, Beloit's first postmaster, began a movement in 1855 for a public school on the west side of the river. Called "Old Stone Pile", "Old No. 2" or "Old Parker School", it served until 1901.



Parker School was erected in 1901 and named to honor the "Dean" of Parker Ave. As you travel west up the Portland Ave. hill, the school would have been in an area now occupied by public housing.



The Parker Block as it was in the early days. The Second National Bank entry is in the center. Charles Still's jewelry/cigar store is on left. Still was always known for saying and writing it as "seegar". This became a community joke.

It is hard to imagine a group of men hanging out in a jewelry store to discuss their hunting and outdoor interests while surrounded by cigar smoke. However, Still kept things around the place which gave an atmosphere the men could enjoy. He suspended a real full-sized birch bark canoe from a balcony and had plenty of hunting, fishing and boating gear on prominent display.

It is quite likely that the owners of homes on "the street of history" spent many hours gathered in the store listening to the tales of Hank Tallmadge and discussing the issues and current events of Beloit. We are the beneficiaries of these "networking sessions" of early Beloit. After all, gatherings of people who care about their community are how things get done.

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Estate sales are full of treasures. Sometimes you will find jewelry and coins worth massive amounts of money, and sometimes you will only find inexpensive knick-knacks that bring a smile to your face. If you are really lucky though, you will find something that has been lost to time, simply because it was fragile or insignificant when it was created. Recently, we received a donation from one of our volunteers **Doug Lundwall**. He was fortunate enough to stumble upon a ticket for the Beloit Traction Company's streetcar from the early 1900's at a west side estate sale.



While the ticket survived over 100 years, the story behind it is most likely gone for good. Why did the original owner save a ticket for something so routine like public transportation? Maybe this was a significant ride on the street car, like to a job interview, or the owner met their would-be spouse that day and decided to save the ticket. Maybe the original owner left it in a jacket pocket that was too small



and it was forgotten for decades until it became clear it is of historical significance. It could be that this person did not take the streetcar much because they could not afford it so they kept a souvenir of their special experience. Whatever the reason, we now have another important piece of Beloit's history in our collection. You never know what may one day become a treasure.



To learn more about the history of Beloit's streetcar and other transportation, visit www.beloittransit.com/history.

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Northland Skis

What better way is there to get excited for winter than to talk about fun in the snow? The collection at BHS holds all sorts of memories of winter from ice skates, to hockey equipment, Christmas tree ornaments and warm quilts. While each and every one of these things has a complex story to tell, one in particular is uniquely Beloit: a pair of wooden Northland skis with the word "Beloit" inked onto the tail end. At around 8 feet long, it is clear that these are no ordinary skis. We do not have a lot of the backstory of the skis, but we do know that they were donated by **Johnson Cycle Shop** and used by a Beloit named **Don Pittenger** to go down the ski jump at Big Hill Park.

Imagine yourself at the top, looking down at Beloit's old ski jump as the adrenaline courses through your veins, and the cold air hits your cheeks. At 133 feet tall, the view from the top was spectacular and terrifying. Athletes and thrill-seekers traveled from across the world for a taste of this monster-sized jump. Spectators would come by the thousands to watch brave skiers fly through the air at breakneck speeds, some traveling over 200 feet before landing at the bottom of the hill. This monumental structure required nerves of steel to ride.

Learning more about Don made it clear that he was indeed a courageous individual. He was a Beloit firefighter for 32 years, a father of 3 and grandfather of 7. Don was Beloit's Arson Investigator, then Deputy Chief of the Beloit Fire Department until his retirement in 1972. He was responsible for the creation of the City of Beloit Arson and Bomb Unit, "the first combined Fire/Police Arson Unit in the state of Wisconsin." Don was also president of the local chapter of the International Association of Firefighters and sat on the Board of Directors for the Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin.



Sources:

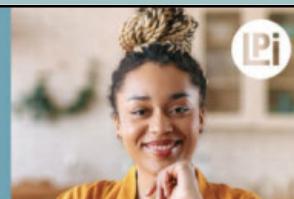
Beloit Daily News, August 12, 1995, "Ex fire official Pittenger..."
 John Patrick, *As I Recall... Stateline Memories*,
 Branson Graphics, 2012
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Happenings at BHS - Inductees into the Beloit City Hall of Fame - 2022



Message from Executive Director, Donna Langford

As the end of year approaches, it is a time of reflection of the past year and preparation for the upcoming year. The Beloit Historical Society is grateful for the support of our membership, Beloit residents who have volunteered, donated objects to our collections and attended our events. In 2022 we welcomed nine new volunteers and every one of them gave the staff a pleasant surprise by contributing time every week. The volunteers and three interns worked together this summer significantly moving collections projects a bit closer to being able to share our collections on-line. Hundreds of textiles, military items and sports photographs were photographed and scanned, rehoused for increased preservation and research conducted to create new exhibits. Intern Katie Kraemer and volunteer Rachel Wilson made significant progress in creating our first traveling program for local classrooms.

2023 is promising to be an exciting year with a variety of events and activities being planned. Please consider supporting our efforts with a donation on Giving Tuesday and to our end of year appeal. Your support helps to make educational programs and events possible!



From left: Linda Ward, Joanne Klett, who was inducted along with her late husband Fred Klett, Kay Nightingale, who accepted on behalf of her late husband Tom Nightingale, Dr. Kenneth Gold and Richard Gerhard. Also inducted was Tony Scodwell who will be in Beloit October 26 to accept the honor at a 1 pm ceremony at BHS. (thanks to Clint Wolf, Beloit Daily News for some of this information)

Linda Ward has been a community leader for over 40 years - active in Stateline Literacy Council, NAACP and many others.

Fred Klett was active in Stateline United Way, YMCA and delivered Meals on Wheels with **Joanne** who was active in Miss Beloit Pageant and her church where she taught for 28 years. They each contributed to Beloit in many additional ways.

Tom Nightingale served on the boards for Stateline United Givers, Beloit Memorial Hospital Foundation and Beloit Public Library Foundation along with other community contributions.

Dick Gerhard, as a CPA, offered tax preparation to non-profits without charge, served on boards for YMCA, Beloit Library Foundation, Angel Museum, BHS and Caravilla.

Dr. Kenneth Gold served as director of Beloit College Community Health and both the Beloit and Clinton Fire Dept. He was adjunct professor of medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine.

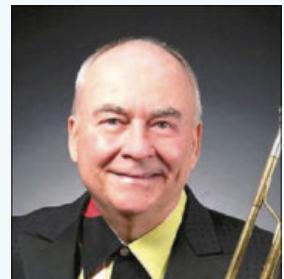
Tony Scodwell was born in Beloit in 1942 and is a world-class musician. He has played for the bands of: Stan Kenton, Harry James, Tommy Dorsey, Frank Sinatra Jr., Buddy Rich, Doc Severinsen Tonight Show and more.



Tom Nightingale



Fred and Joanne Klett



Tony Scodwell

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Sources: *Book of Beloit II - "In Pursuit of Freedom"* p145-156 - Beloit Daily News

The Impact of the Black Migration to Fairbanks, Morse and co. by Tom Polaski - BHS Reference Collection *Families and Faces of the Edgewater-Fairbanks Flats* - Exhibit by Cheryl Caldwell



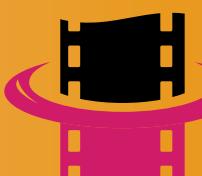
As sad as the past sometimes is, we are fortunate to have such a diverse community of blended cultures. Beloit is a better place today as a result. To learn more about the Flats and the people who lived and worked there, come see ***Families and Faces of the Edgewater-Fairbanks Flats***, a photographic exhibit guest curated by **Cheryl Caldwell**. The exhibit is ongoing at Lincoln Center and is free of charge to visit.

Heritage Days—A Celebration of Beloit's History (Sept. 9-11)



Friday BHS debuted new exhibits at the Lincoln Center. Guest Curator **Cheryl Caldwell** provided family pictures of the Edgewater Flats for a photographic exhibit. The topics of toys and women's fashion were also explored.

Saturday the Hanchett-Bartlett homestead was opened for tours for the first time in over 4 years. Over 100 visitors enjoyed tours of the house and barn and played historic cricket with instructor **Tom Melville**. Representatives from the **BlackHawk Chapter of the Quester Club** were at the Daisy Chapin one-room school house to talk about preservation of historic buildings. This chapter had awarded a \$5,000 grant to BHS for repairs to the door and siding on the west side of the schoolhouse.



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Congratulations to Jesse Herscher!

Jesse has recently been promoted to Assistant Director of the Beloit Historical Society and is a wonderful addition to our staff. You may have noticed the interesting articles Jesse has been writing for the *Confluence*. He is a pleasure to work with and willing to undertake all assignments. Stop in and meet him when you have a chance. You will be very happy you did!



THANKSGIVING DINNER

This is a recipe idea from the Young Ladies' Sewing Society of the First Congregational Church in Beloit from their 1896 cookbook:

Mrs. Hull's Roast Turkey

"Tie two pieces of cloth to the legs of your turkey to keep them from getting too brown. Put in a scorching hot oven until well browned on all sides, pour boiling hot water over it, then cover closely, shut off the oven and go to church.

The turkey will be nice and tender when you come home."

Welcome New Members

Ken Fairbert

Randal Hendee

David and Mardell Jacobsen

Jeffrey Larson

Jim Long

Christine Nehrer

TRIVIA TEASER

Question: Beloit College had two students (one in the class of '46 and one in '71) who went on to become well-known actors in very popular television shows. What were their names?

Tin Roof and again for Prince of Darkness.
College to perform in summer productions of Cat on a Hot Service Citation for his work. Parker returned to Beloit McRaney. Beloit College awarded him the Distinguished the program Simon & Simon from '81-'89 along with Gerald Jameson Parker ('71) became well-known by co-starring in CBS. John Wayne recommended him for the role in which one of the top programs that has ever been produced by Gunsmoke beginning in 1955 and ending in 1976. It was portrayal of Marshall Matt Dillon in the 21-year run of Ames had to dye his blonde hair brown.

Answer: James Ames ('46) became very famous for his Ameson Parker ('71) became well-known by co-starring in CBS. John Wayne recommended him for the role in which one of the top programs that has ever been produced by CBS. John Wayne recommended him for the role in which Ames had to dye his blonde hair brown.

United Way Day of Caring

September 14, the BHS was honored to once again be a host site during the United Way Day of Caring. Volunteers from **Beloit Health System** worked with BHS staff to remove loose asphalt chunks from the parking lot and to clear vegetation overgrowth. The group worked very hard making our parking lot safer and clearing the north fence line all the way to Hackett Street.

BHS extends appreciation and thanks to the Beloit Health System for enabling their employees to participate and to the **United Way** for making this volunteer day possible.



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