



THE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

June 2010

Vol. XXVII, No. 2

A newsletter by the Brown County Historical Society dedicated to the preservation of Brown County history.

GLANCE BACK TO BOWLING ASTOR vs. NAVARINO

by Renee LeFevre

If you take a step into a modern bowling alley on a weekend night, a person wouldn't imagine the drastic changes Green Bay has seen in bowling. Just as early bowlers probably would not have expected bowling alleys to become an adolescent hot-spot filled with strobe lights and blaring music. However, modern bowling leagues fare quite similar to the late 1800s-early 1900s, complete with friendly competition and plenty of beer to boot!

Two of the first, and most dedicated, bowling leagues in Green Bay were teams from the neighborhoods of Astor and Navarino. The late 1800s saw the introduction to bowling in our area, and over the years the game grew and developed to the game we know today.



Astor and Navarino bowling teams (1901). Photo by Kurs Studio; courtesy of the BCHS photo collection.

Bowling began in Europe in the 12th century as an outdoor game. In 1840, the sport moved inside, and was played on alleys 30-feet wide, made of slate blocks. Alleys changed multiple times, each time getting narrower, and the material changed to wood. It might be hard to believe, but there were many kinds of bowling, including 2-pin, 3-pin, and "cocked hat" bowling. The 9-pin game was standard until the 1890s when it was changed once more into the modern 10-pin game. It was then that bowling's popularity soared.

The history of bowling changed in Green Bay on Feb. 4, 1895, when the Astor and Navarino teams joined for the first rousing competition at the old Hagemeister Park Clubhouse on Cherry Street. Each team had 10 members, some of which were H.B. Thiesen, Nicholas J. Bur, Jr., George Schober, and Frank Van Laanen. As other teams throughout the area formed, several gave themselves team names like The Invincibles, and The Poodles, all of whom then competed at the favored spot, The Elks Club.

Five years after the initial formation, membership settled, and new members generally could only join existing teams if specifically invited or they happened to be the son of a retiring member. Other names on the Astor team included Joseph Kaster, H. Klaus, H. Michael, Mat Bingen, and F. Kaster. The Navarinos saw names like F. Gehr, E. Bank, D. Nys, J.B. Theisen, H. Forst, and Frank H. Bender.

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GLANCE BACK TO BOWLING

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Thursday night was typically regarded as bowling night and, as the years went on and other teams failed to commit, the Astors and Navarinos were the only teams to stay dedicated enough to the game to play every week, even into the winter months when other teams tended to abandon it. The love of the game, the friendly competition, not to mention the availability of snacks and beer, were sure reasons to get the gentlemen out of the house one night a week.

Early leagues like the Astors and Navarinos focused on camaraderie. Although scores were kept, early get-togethers were more for the fun of the game. Championships at the end of the season were based on total pins knocked down by the teams rather than games won or lost. Annual banquets were held, mostly at Schwalbe's Restaurant on Washington Street and the Beaumont Hotel. The get-togethers started in 1898, and carried on for many years.

The game saw a revival in 1911 with eight teams at the Elks Club. In the years that followed, the game continued to grow and competition heated up. Popularity grew rapidly in 1915 when the Wisconsin Elks held the first state bowling tournament in Green Bay (Jan. 8–Feb. 8). Competitors from all over Wisconsin attempted to prove they were the best. The Elks' No. 1 team took first place with a score of 2679.

This was followed by another tournament in Green Bay held by the Wisconsin Bowling Association in 1919. By this time, popular bowling spots included the Knights of Columbus Hall, Moose Club, Elks Club, Conley's Hall, and Hagemeister Park.

From then on, more and more competitions were

held throughout the state where teams from Green Bay often competed.

These small neighborhood leagues eventually faded out, but bowling still holds a high priority entertainment for many local citizens, as evidenced by the many men and women, young and old, who show up for a game with family and/or friends at one of the many local bowling alleys available to Green Bay's residents. A game brought over from Europe more than a century ago has led to friendly competitions, a sense of camaraderie between teammates and, of course, a sense of community over the years. When it comes to the introduction and growth of bowling in our area, we in Green Bay have much for which to thank the men of the Navarino and Astor neighborhoods. It is a game that is sure not to fade out in our lifetime.

Sources:

Rudolph, Jack, and Elder, Harold. Foley, Betsy, editor. *The Green Bay Area in History and Legend*. Green Bay, WI: Brown County Historical Society, 2004. "The Astors Buck the Navarinos." March 2, 1968:242-243.

"Many Outstanding Bowlers Bring Honors Here Over 30-Year Period." Wisconsin Tercenary, *Green Bay Press Gazette*. July 1934.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED NICOLET LANDING SITE

In 2002, Marion Sickel donated property on Benderville Road in the Town of Scott to the Brown County Historical Society. The land, preserved as a historic scenic overlook, is referred to as the Nicolet Landing Site. Since this project's inception, Larry DeGroot has been instrumental in helping make it a reality as well as presently taking care of both the gazebo and its benches so future generations can enjoy it as well.



We are truly grateful for Larry's longtime dedication, but it's time for him to enjoy the beauty of the site without the worry of its maintenance. **So we are looking for a volunteer to assist in caring for the Nicolet Landing Site.** Marion Sickel generously funds the maintenance of the grounds so no yard work is involved.

If interested or for more information,
please call (920-437-1840)
or email (bchs@netnet.net).

RIVERSIDE BALLROOM

2009 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD WINNER*

**Presented at the BCHS annual meeting
on Sunday, Feb. 14, 2010*

by Jerry Abitz

The Riverside Ballroom is an icon from a former time. Growing up as I did in the late '40s and early '50s, ballrooms represented entertainment. You took your date out for an evening of dancing; if you had no date, it was a place to meet someone who was unattached. It also was the era of the Big Bands such as Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Sammy Kaye, Lawrence Welk, and others. However, we danced to anything—emphasis on polkas. Scheduled frequently back then, dances were well attended. But, just as people and their interests change, ballrooms have had to change with the times, and things have changed drastically!

Since the time of the Big Bands, nationally known bands have disappeared; local bands still entertain, but have neither the following nor the repertoire of days past. Disc jockeys with their electronic equipment and collections of tunes have replaced them. The music has changed; while polkas have always been crowd pleasers, there are now ever so many types of music—rock and roll, country and western, grunge, heavy metal, and even Mexican bands. People have countless other options for entertainment with which to fill their leisure time.

One of the standbys has always been wedding receptions. At one time, every crossroads community had a dance hall. Sometimes they were located above the bar and living quarters of the owner. I remember an older brother having a wedding dance where the public was admitted for a fee. The bride and



Restored banquet hall inside Riverside Ballroom.
Photo courtesy of Riverside Ballroom photo collection.

groom netted enough from admissions to pay for the rental of the hall and the band!

Many of these places have now disappeared. Although my hometown once had three huge ballrooms, none exist today; rural dance halls have experienced a similar fate. In many cases, country clubs have filled the void as the venue for wedding receptions.

In that respect, Riverside Ballroom is an anomaly that it even survived! But survive it did, and it continues to thrive.

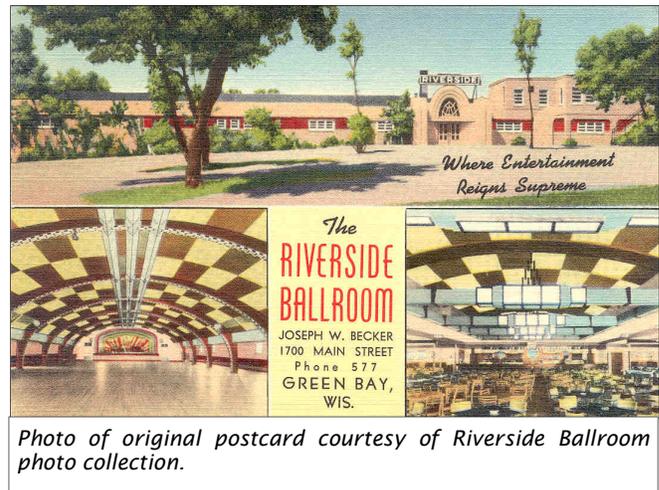


Photo of original postcard courtesy of Riverside Ballroom photo collection.

The original Riverside was built on the Main Street location on Green Bay's east side in 1929 by the late Joseph and Marie Becher. It was rebuilt in 1936 after a fire destroyed the ballroom on Dec. 29 [1935]; the resulting structure was described on a 1936 postcard as the "finest and best equipped ballroom in America." While this may have included some hyperbole, certainly, it was quite grand, particularly for Green Bay.

Starting in 1945 when the Bechers retired, the building was leased to a series of managers for 20 years which led to a decline in its appearance. In November 1965, it was sold to John and Ann Kafka. In their estimation, the building was a wreck and needed extensive repairs to bring it up to code. The building had to be rewired, air conditioning was installed, and everything inside and out cleaned and repainted. The huge beams were sanded with hand-held electric sanders to bring out their natural beauty. Huge gold-leaf mirrors were installed in the south end known as the Crystal Ballroom. Large Czechoslovakian crystal chandeliers were installed; smaller Austrian chandeliers were hung above the stage. New bathrooms upstairs replaced the derelict ones in the basement, and a new kitchen was installed. The grounds were landscaped, three old houses along the river were removed to make way for additional parking, and the parking lot was paved for the first time.

Sometime in the 1990s the Kafkas remodeled the Carriage Room that seats 340. They removed the

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RIVERSIDE BALLROOM

(Continued from page 3)

fake ceiling and restored the original light fixtures. The bar, obtained from a Chicago ballroom and installed in 1936, was refurbished.

The result was a venue for first-rate entertainment—dances were broadcast on TV, music could be heard on radio, and name bands were engaged as they traveled a circuit from Chicago to the Twin Cities. Wedding receptions, trade fairs, community events, auctions, flea markets, boxing matches, sports and testimonial banquets, community club dances, and antique shows — all have been held here.

Although many of its stories bear both repeating and remembering, for different reasons, these two stand out:

Seen on the grounds are a number of metal silhouettes that commemorate an event held there on Feb. 1, 1959. Called the *Winter Dance Party Tour*, it featured the following entertainers: Buddy Holly, Dion and the Belmonts, Richie Valens, Frankie Sardo, and the Big Bopper on the ill-fated tour of the upper Midwest. After their Green Bay gig, the group moved on to a performance in Clear Lake, Iowa. Tired of riding in a cold bus, Holly, Richardson, and Valens decided to fly ahead to Fargo, North Dakota, to the site of their next gig. The plane crashed with no survivors. This tragedy is observed every January at the Riverside Ballroom by aficionados of this group. One of the organizers, Mark Steuer, was the chairman of the BCHS' Historic Preservation Group back in the 1990s.

In 1978, 15-year old Ken Tedford began to work there as a dishwasher. He worked his way up through the ranks until, in 2004, he purchased it. He has witnessed and participated in the painting, the sanding, and the grueling work to produce a product that results in smiling, satisfied customers. His heart and soul have



Metal silhouettes depicting artists from the ill-fated *Winter Dance Party Tour*. Photo courtesy of <http://www.angelfire.com/music5/archives/tribute.html>.

been in this building ever since he first walked through the door 32 years ago, and he hopes to continue the traditions of this historic Green Bay landmark. Since becoming owner, he has invested \$500,000 in preserving this beautiful treasure. *"Buying Riverside Ballroom was always a dream of mine, and now I am living that dream,"* expresses how he feels. *"This place is truly a treasure to the city of Green Bay and the state of Wisconsin, and I'm very proud to be a part of its existence."*

The challenges facing him are great — new generations, new types of music, and changing tastes. However, Riverside has managed to change with the music scene for these past 80 years and, hopefully, will continue to do so in the future.

For the long-term efforts of the management of the Riverside Ballroom to remodel and update this historic building, it was awarded the 2009 *Preservation Award for Historic Preservation* by the Brown County Historical Society. Ken Tedford accepted the award.



Heirloom Recipes

"Gram's Molasses Drop Cookies"

I fondly remember these cookies being at every family gathering from holidays to family reunions. Gram always decorated according to the season—halved jelly beans for Easter, candy corn for Halloween, or colored sprinkles. —Kathy Kauth

Share the recipes that have been passed down to you from family members or friends; they could become someone else's new tradition! To submit your favorite "Heirloom Recipe," email it to Christine Dunbar (bchs@netnet.net).



Recipe: Gram's Molasses Drop Cookies

From the kitchen of: Kathy Kauth ***Yields:** Many!
in honor of her grandmother, Erna Griep [1880-1978]

1 c. brown sugar
1 c. lard (or shortening)
2 eggs, well beaten
1 cup dark molasses
(or ¾ c. molasses +
¼ c. corn syrup)
¾ cup hot water
1¾ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. cinnamon

½ tsp. ginger
4½ c. flour

Cream brown sugar and shortening (or lard) until fluffy. Add eggs and mix well.

Dissolve baking soda in hot water and mix into creamed mixture (it will look curdled).

Mix together remaining dry ingredients. Gradually add moist ingredients until well mixed. Refrigerate overnight.

Drop by teaspoons onto a greased baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10-15 min.

When cool, frost with powdered sugar icing.

*Recipe can be easily halved.

EVENTS

Join us for one or all!!

CIVIL WAR DAYS*

Sat., June 26 and Sun., June 27
10:00a - 4:30p

*In partnership with Heritage Hill State Historical Park
Visit both sites for one ticket price!

Heritage Hill State Historical Park
2640 South Webster Avenue
(920) 448-5150

www.heritagehillgb.org

- Union Confederate and civilian camp life
- Infantry and artillery firing demonstrations
- Daily battle re-enactment at 2:00 p.m.

Historic Hazelwood
1008 South Monroe Avenue
(920) 437-1840

www.browncohistoricalsoc.org

- Civil War music (performed by Mary Eisenreich at 11:00a daily and 2:00p Saturday afternoon)
- Visit with Mary Todd Lincoln (portrayed by Jessica Michna throughout both days)
- Don't miss special performances by Mary Todd Lincoln at 12:00n and 3:00p daily.
- Learn about the Morgan L. Martin family involvement in the War. Discover how citizens of Green Bay reacted to the war. Find out about the Oneida Nation's involvement.
- Participate in family activities, including games, school lessons, and scavenger hunt, setting up a camp, and creating a flag.

Admission	Joint ticket	Hazel-wood	Heritage Hill
Adults	\$10.00	\$4.00	\$8.00
Seniors	\$ 9.00	\$3.50	\$7.00
Children 5-17	\$ 6.50	\$2.50	\$6.00
Children 4 and under	Free	Free	Free
With membership	Free	Free	Free

CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE DAY AT HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

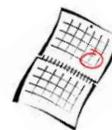
Sunday, July 4
10:00a - 4:00p



Join us for a great "family day" with music, old-fashioned games, and a cake walk. And you won't want to miss the 1:00p performance by

(Continued on page 7)

CALENDAR



JUNE

- Thurs., June 10, 6:30p – Fort Howard Memorial Park Cemetery Walk
 Sat., June 26, 10:00a-4:30p – Civil War Days at Heritage Hill State Historical Park and Historic Hazelwood House Museum
 Sun., June 27, 10:00a-4:30p – Civil War Days at Heritage Hill State Historical Park and Historic Hazelwood House Museum

JULY

- Sunday, July 4, 10:00a-4:00p – Independence Day at Hazelwood Historic House and Museum
 1:00p – Performance by the Heritage Players
"Those were the Days! – Stories and Songs of the Depression Years."

AUGUST

- Wed., Aug. 18, 6:30p – Allouez Catholic Cemetery Walk
 Thurs., Aug. 19, 6:30p – Allouez Catholic Cemetery Walk

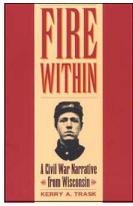
SEPTEMBER

- Wed., Sept. 15, 6:30p – Woodlawn Cemetery Walk
 Thurs., Sept. 16, 6:30p – Woodlawn Cemetery Walk
 Sun., Sept. 19, 4:00p – Woodlawn Cemetery Walk

BOOKS BY MAIL

Available on the website www.browncohistoricalsoc.org or by mail using the form below.

FIRE WITHIN by Kerry A. Trask. Kent State University Press. 1998.



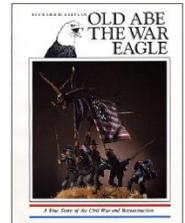
Professor Trask has written the story of Manitowoc in the Civil War. Relying on journals and letters of James S. Anderson, Dr. Alfred L. Castleman, and Rosa Kellner, along with the editorial writings of local newspapers, he has traced the changes in feelings and thinking in the people who took part in the events of the period. Starting with the excitement of the response to secession by the southern states and early rush to enlistment by the young men of the community, continuing as the fighting continued long beyond the early expectations and disappointment in the failure of leadership during the middle years, to the final relief when the fighting ended, the thoughts and feelings of the participants are documented. Although the book is confined entirely to the happenings in the lives of residents of Manitowoc, it is likely that they reflect the lives and feelings of almost any citizen in the small cities of the upper Midwest.

Soft cover, 279 pages. **COST: \$14.00**

OLD ABE THE WAR EAGLE by Richard Zeitlin. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin. 1986.

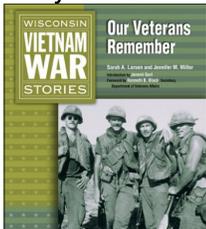
This book chronicles the life of Old Abe, the bald eagle, that became the mascot of the Eighth Regiment of Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Old Abe participated in 37 battles and skirmishes during the Civil War. After the war Abe became a living symbol of the victorious Union. It is also the story of the men, citizens-turned-soldiers of the Eighth Wisconsin, among whom Old Abe lived.

Soft cover, 113 pages, photos and maps. **COST: \$9.95**



WISCONSIN VIETNAM WAR STORIES: Our Veterans Remember

by Sarah A. Larsen and Jennifer M. Miller. Wisconsin Historical Society Press. 2010.



This book is a companion to the Wisconsin Public Television documentary by the same name. More than 125 veterans were interviewed for Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories, 40 of which appear in this volume, while others were chosen for the documentary. The men and women interviewed in these pages make up a diverse collection of voices. Accounts range from that of an army chaplain, to two prisoners of war, to a Hmong refugee who fought the Secret War in Laos and repatriated to the United States. Stories include the experiences of veterans as they returned home at the height of antiwar protesting. The book is an unforgettable collection, and a tribute to our veterans. Includes many photographs.

Soft cover, 354 pages. **COST: \$24.95**

**To Order: Please fill out below and return with payment or credit card info to:
Brown County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1411, Green Bay, WI 54305-1411**

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>QTY</u>	<u>COST EA</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
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 \$51 & up: \$7.50

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EVENTS

(Continued from page 5)

The Heritage Players of "Those Were the Days! Stories and Songs of the Depression Years."

The fear and uncertainty of the 1930s left its mark on everyone. You can feel it in their stories; you can hear it in their songs. The Heritage Players will tell the real story of the Depression years — how ordinary people endured and survived, how radio, music and movies helped them escape the daily chore of staying alive. This performance will feature such songs as "Hey, Brother Can You Spare a Dime," "Those Were the Days," and "I Ain't Got No Home," along with original compositions by Mary Eisenreich, music director for the

Cemetery Walks

See calendar on page 5 for dates

"IF TOMBSTONES COULD TALK"

Years ago cemeteries were thought of as a nice place to take a walk, a great place for a picnic, and a serene place to ponder life's questions, as well as the expected place to visit departed loved ones.

People continue to appreciate the park-like setting and beautiful monuments that can be found in cemeteries. In addition, the Historical Society's Cemetery Walks provide a glimpse of our rich heritage through the lives of past citizens. Visitors will be guided to gravesites of former residents portrayed by actors who will share stories of their lives and times. Among them, you may meet a founding pioneer, a teacher, banker, brewmaster, or war hero. *Join us! Meet the past!*



Photo courtesy of BCHS photo collection.

Admission: \$5/person, \$12/family (children 16 and younger). **Reservations are required** in order to have enough guides. If interested, please call 920-437-1840 or register online at www.browncohistoricalsoc.org.

NOTE: Cemetery Walks involve quite a bit of standing. You are encouraged to bring a lawn chair.



TREASURES FROM THE BCHS COLLECTION

by Christine Dunbar

Englishmen Samuel M. Brookes and Thomas H. Stevenson were among the few successful artists in Wisconsin in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1855 they opened a joint studio in Milwaukee, and, in 1865, were commissioned by the State Historical Society to paint three battlegrounds of the Black Hawk War. Later that year, they arrived in Green Bay, set up a temporary studio, and painted the portraits of 25 influential residents.

John Penn Arndt, a Pennsylvania-born entrepreneur who settled here in 1824, was first in line to sit for his portrait. Arndt was occupied in the fur trade, building durham boats, establishing a sawmill, and innkeeping.

The Arndt painting, recently cleaned and restored by Hang Up Restoration, is back in the collection. The Green Bay-De Pere Antiquarians generously funded the project.



John Penn Arndt (1865). Original oil painting done by Brookes and Stevenson. Photo of painting by Kathy Kauth.

**Visit Hazelwood
Historic House Museum
and view the Martin family
and other paintings**

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY BCHS CONFERS LOCAL HISTORY AWARDS

by Christine Dunbar

The Northeastern Wisconsin Regional Competition for National History Day took place Sat., April 10, on the UW-Green Bay campus. This year's theme, "Innovation in History: Impact and Change," produced an amazing variety of projects with subjects from hieroglyphics to the iPhone®.

More than 350 students in middle and high school entered the competition. Project categories included exhibits, websites, papers, performances, and documentaries. The BCHS awarded a senior (high school) and junior (middle school) project that pertain to northeastern Wisconsin history.

"The Bold Looks of Kohler," an exhibit by Evan Koross from Kohler Middle School won the BCHS award in the junior category. The project was well-researched and creative.

"Harry Houdini, the Man Behind the Magic," a senior group exhibit by Kayla Sippl, Molly Upp and

Elizabeth Herman, received the BCHS senior award, as well as a place in the state competition. Houdini would have been delighted with the variety of secret compartments in this imaginative exhibit.

Thanks to BCHS staff, board members, and volunteers who assisted in judging or other capacities to make this a successful event.

Note: Judges are always needed, and training is provided. If interested, call Deb Anderson (920-465-2539).



"The Bold Looks of Kohler" (L) and the "Harry Houdini—The Man Behind the Magic" (R) exhibits. Photos by Wendy Barszcz.

HOURS for JUNE - AUGUST 2010
BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BCHS offices — 8:30a-4:00p, weekdays
HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM
Thursday - Sunday — 12:00n-4:00p
Group tours by appointment
Phone: (920) 437-1840

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