



# THE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

September 2010

Vol. XXVIII, No. 3

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

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY FIREFIGHTING IN GREEN BAY

by Daniel Liedtke and Tony LaLuzerne

One of the earliest records of examining methods for fire prevention in Green Bay is found in the *Wisconsin Democrat* on June 25, 1839. A committee was created by the Board of Trustees of the Borough of Green Bay to “adopt and enforce all necessary means for the prevention of fires.”<sup>1</sup> In 1839, Green Bay passed an ordinance that “every householder within the limits of said town (Green Bay) shall provide the building occupied by him, with at least two fire buckets.”<sup>2</sup> The same ordinance also states that if the home has more than two fireplaces or stoves, one extra bucket for every additional fireplace or stove needs to be obtained.<sup>3</sup> These buckets were hung in a hallway or the main entrance of buildings.



Franklin Hose Company, originally formed as an engine company. [Picture date unknown]. Photo courtesy of Heritage Hill State Historical Park.

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Green Bay citizens

took fire prevention further when they gathered for a meeting on Dec. 24, 1841, and voted to form a company of firemen for the safety of the town. They formed a commission to contact Captain Ephraim Shaler, stationed at Fort Howard, in order to purchase or lease the fire engine and apparatus stored there.<sup>4</sup> Three wardens were also elected; they were to oversee the formation of lines and the passing of water by means of ‘bucket brigades.’ They were to wear distinctive insignia, a hat made of oilcloth or leather, and carry a white staff, four feet in length, to direct people.<sup>5</sup>

The Town of Green Bay formed the Fire Company No. 1 in February, 1948. They began enlisting recruits between the ages of 18 and 50 for voluntary service. Green Bay later formed hose and hook and ladder companies as the city grew. The *Green Bay Advocate* gives us an idea of how water was provided in some areas that were not near water sources. This was done by having “large wooden cisterns sunk into the street and filled by hauling water to them necessary to prevent a major loss in the areas away from the rivers.”<sup>6</sup>

The fire companies that existed in Green Bay were the Germania Fire Co., formed in 1874 by German immigrants, Guardian Engine Fire Co., formed by those of Yankee or French descent, the No. 1 Steamer Hose Co., Franklin Engine Co. No. 3, and the Washington Hook and Ladder Co. These companies each felt loyalty to their group, which sometimes led to intense rivalries.

(Continued on page 2)

## EARLY FIREFIGHTING IN GREEN BAY

(Continued from page 1)

The minutes from the Guardian Engine Fire Company document a challenge that was given by the No. 1 Steamer Company for \$30. It was declined "as the amount of money was not large enough and they had as yet not accepted our challenge for \$100 for a race of hose carts."<sup>7</sup>

In 1891, the City of Green Bay created its first full-time professional fire department, which ended the need for smaller volunteer companies. In 1897, the Green Bay Fire Department consisted of "16 men and the chief, two steamers, three hose carts, one hook and ladder truck, and eight horses."<sup>8</sup> Each hose cart carried about 1,500 feet of hose and was equipped with four nozzles.<sup>9</sup> Green Bay also was installing alarm boxes throughout the city. In 1897, there were a total of 40 boxes. The operation of these alarm boxes was simple — one merely had to get a key that was kept in the four nearest houses to any box, open the little door, pull the hook once and let go.<sup>10</sup>

Thankfully, for all of us, times have changed. Today we can just pull out our cell

phones and dial 9-1-1 whenever we see flames. Despite the many new technologies, firefighters still have to deal with great dangers and may lose their lives for our protection. In 2009, there were four fatalities in the state of Wisconsin due to fire.<sup>11</sup> A great many thanks go out to those who have and who continue to serve and protect.

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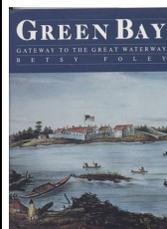
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### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup>*Wisconsin Democrat*. Brown County Library. Newspaper Series 119, Reel 1. Green Bay, Wisconsin. Sept. 1, 1836 – Mar. 24, 1840. June 25, 1839. Vol. 5, No. 19, pg. 3, col. 2.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* Vol. 5, No. 19, pg. 3, col. 2.
- <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Vol. 5, No. 19, pg. 3, col. 2.
- <sup>4</sup>*Green Bay Republican*. January 1, 1842. Vol. 1, No. 14, pg. 2, col. 4. <http://www.ancestry.com>.
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* Vol. 1, No. 16, pg. 3, col. 4.
- <sup>6</sup>*Green Bay Advocate*. October 15, 1866. Vol. 21, No. 12, pg. 3, col. 2. Heritage Hill State Historic Park Interpretive Files.
- <sup>7</sup>Guardian Engine Fire Co. Minutes (1874-1888). Neville Public Museum. GAC Box #4. Loc: MS04-C001. Vol. 762/4482, pg. 1.
- <sup>8</sup>*Green Bay Advocate*. Brown County Library. Newspaper Series 89, Reel 2. Green Bay, Wisconsin. April 2 – October 12, 1897. April 13, 1897. Pg. 1, col. 1.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* Pg. 1, col. 1.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* Pg. 1, col. 1.
- <sup>11</sup>[http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/09\\_fatality\\_summary.pdf](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/09_fatality_summary.pdf).

## BCHS PURCHASES COPYRIGHT TO LOCAL HISTORY BOOK



*Green Bay: Gateway to the Great Waterway* by Betsy Foley was written as a lasting gift to the community. Published in 1983 by Windsor Publications in cooperation with the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, the book invites the residents of Green Bay to take a look at the City's history. Beginning with Native American inhabitants and the arrival of Jean Nicolet, the book explores British, French and, finally, Yankee settlements. Chapters on immigration and early industry are followed by the Industrial Boom and ensuing progress. A special chapter by business historian, Harry Maier, profiles many of the areas leading businesses. Hundreds of photographs and historical illustrations set off the stimulating text.

Originally sold to American Historical Press, the copyright was offered to the BCHS in May since the business is closing. Although currently out of print, we have a few pre-read copies in good condition for sale (\$29) in the Hazelnut Gallery.

## JOANNES HOUSE

2009 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD WINNER\*

*\*Presented at the BCHS Annual Meeting  
on Sunday, Feb. 14, 2010*

by Jerry Abitz

Born in Belgium in 1848, Mitchell Joannes arrived in Wisconsin with his family in 1856. His working career started at age 14. He enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War. In 1875, he married Fannie Goodhue, a distant relative of the wife of President Coolidge. Prior to his marriage, however, in 1872, Mitchell and his brothers Charles, William and Thomas, formed the Joannes Brothers Company. Started as a retail grocery business, the brothers entered the wholesale business after the Panic of 1873, with their salesmen covering the Midwest. Home base for their business, built in 1891, was a massive, four-story, granite building on South Washington Street. Joannes Brothers Company ceased operation in 1957, and the business was acquired by Super Valu of Minneapolis. Sold to Northland Realty Company, the building on South Washington was razed to make room for condo development.

Mitchell Joannes was the president of the family business from its establishment until 1923. He served on many community boards, including director of Citizen's National Bank, Green Bay Water Works, and the Green Bay Pickle Factory; he was also an alderman for the City of Green Bay. Being a successful businessman involved with community groups and serving on various boards, how does one show off one's wealth? One way is to build a house that stands out from the crowd. No ordinary frame house erected by a carpenter would do; it must be of masonry to exude a sense of permanence but, more important, the house must be unique. Given that criteria, it would be natural to engage a well-known, leading architect in the area.

The success of the Joannes Brothers Company is evident in the

homes owned by the brothers. While all four brothers built imposing homes on Green Bay's east side, Mitchell's home was spectacular and, yes, quite unique. The house was built at 902 South Madison Street on "The Hill," a prestigious location for those who had made their fortunes. Having purchased five lots overlooking the Fox River, construction began on Joannes' home in late summer of 1899 and continued for several years before it was ready for occupancy. Designed by distinguished local architect, Henry A. Foeller, the red brick mansion remains a landmark still today.

The house erected on these five lots almost defies description. One can find elements of several different styles, one of which is typically considered Queen Anne; the Green Bay Historic Preservation Commission uses this description for this house. In the survey for establishment of the Astor Neighborhood Historic District, the style is described as "chateausque," meaning in the style of the French chateaus (those huge stone country manor houses in the Loire Valley south of Paris). One of the four owners, Jim Neceda, describes the workmanship inside as "incredible."

The Joannes raised five children in this house. In 1917, Foeller was again engaged to design an apartment with a separate entrance on the north side of the house for Joannes' daughter, Arleen, and her husband, Dr. Arthur McCarey. Arleen's

*(Continued on page 4)*



The Joannes house, located at 902 South Madison Street, was awarded the 2009 Preservation Award. Exterior photo courtesy of Mark Olejniczak Realty Inc.

## JOANNES HOUSE

(Continued from page 3)

wedding reception was held in this house as well as that of her daughter, Patricia, when she wed John Faas. Upon the death of Mitchell and Fannie Joannes, the McCareys moved out of the apartment and into the main house. Thus, family members continued to live in the house until it was sold in 1956.

Since that time, a succession of families have owned the house. It was purchased in 1976 by Mark and Barbara Leistikow where they resided until 1990. Mark, once a member of the BCHS Historic Preservation Committee, had given me a tour of their home. I do remember the jaw-dropping beauty, the huge expanses, the imposing staircase with the finely-carved newel post, the intricate parquet floors, the leaded glass windows, and the third-floor ballroom. According to a 1952 newspaper article, that ballroom was the first of its kind in Green Bay and the center of many social activities.

In an interview with Barbara Leistikow, she mentioned that the owners who purchased from them converted that third floor into an apartment with a separate entrance; they also removed the beautiful cast iron radiators, installed a forced air furnace and central air conditioning, and stripped the original woven or composite wall coverings from the walls.

The present owners — Joe Aprile, Paul Ebel, Rick Koenig, and Jim Neceda — purchased the home and started restoration efforts to return it to a single residence. They replaced the roof, and any rotted trim. New copper gutters and downspouts were installed. They updated the wiring



The Joannes house, located at 902 South Madison Street, was awarded the 2009 Preservation Award. Interior photos by Don Kraft — top left - stairway and chandelier; top right - stairway newel post; bottom left - parquet floor; bottom right - leaded glass windows.

and the HVAC. In the main living quarters, they moved a wall separating the owner's space from the tenant's entrance. Work proceeded on a new kitchen and dining area. In the second floor apartment, they replaced the bathroom. The upstairs apartment in the ballroom was converted back into a family space, accessible from the main stairs. Although repainted, no other changes were made to the third floor apartment.

For their efforts, the present owners received the 2009 Historic Preservation Award for Historic Restoration/Rehabilitation at the BCHS Annual Meeting in February.

### Heirloom Recipes

#### "Grandma Peeters' Donuts"

"Grandma Peeters was born in 1874 in the Netherlands. She passed this recipe to her daughter, Mary (Peeters) Van Den Heuvel, born in 1908; my mom passed the recipe on to me. I remember Mom making these delicious donuts on the farm, and eating them while still warm. They disappeared fast with seven children in the house." —Rita Devroy

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](mailto:bchs@netnet.net)), or mail a copy to the BCHS office.



#### Recipe: Grandma Gertrude (Smits) Peeters' Donuts

From the kitchen of: Rita Devroy **\*Yields: 40**  
in honor of her grandmother [1874-1928]

1½ c. sugar  
3 Tbsp. melted lard  
3 eggs  
1 c. sour milk  
4½ c. flour  
1 tsp. soda  
1 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. nutmeg

Beat sugar and melted lard; add eggs and beat. Add flour and milk alternately. Roll out with plenty of flour, and cut with donut cutter. Fry in melted lard at 375° Roll in sugar. Serve warm.

#### \*A testimony...

"They are delicious! Rita sent her husband to the BCHS office with a plate of donuts still warm for taste-testing. They did not last long!"

— CD

# EVENTS

Join us for one or all!!



## “A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS AT HAZELWOOD”

Create a unique holiday memory with a Group Tour or Tea Party\* in December

### Group Tours (10 persons min.)

- Large groups will be divided for a more personalized tour.
- Adult chaperones admitted at no charge. (One chaperone is requested for each group of 10 students).
- Schedule your tour during either day or evening hours.
- Join us for hot cider and cookies following the tour, and visit the Hazelnut Gallery Gift Shop.

### Tea Parties (10 persons min. to 24 max.)

- Relax and visit over a cup of steaming tea, and enjoy two courses of delicious treats.
- Enjoy a tour of Hazelwood decorated for Christmas as part of the tea party.
- Request a program to accompany your tea party.

To schedule a tour or a tea, simply call our offices (920-437-1840) weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., or leave a message anytime and we will return your call.

Admission	Group Tour	Tea Party
Adults	\$3.00	\$15.00
Students	\$2.00	\$15.00

\*Group tours and tea parties can be tailored to meet the needs of your group. Payment can be made at the time of your tour.

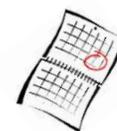
## JOIN US FOR COFFEE AND DESSERT... to develop ideas and strategies for new events and fundraisers



**When:** Wednesday, Oct. 13, 7:00 p.m.  
**Who:** The BCHS program committee, Exec. Dir. Christine Dunbar, and Curator Sally Enloe  
**What:** A brainstorming event ~ bring your ideas and help develop new ones.  
**Where:** Hazelwood Historic House (lower level mtg room) 2010 South Monroe Avenue, Green Bay  
**RSVP:** Wednesday, Oct. 6

(Continued on page 7)

## CALENDAR



### 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

### OCTOBER

Wed., Oct. 13, 7:00p – BCHS brainstorming event at the Hazelwood Historic House, 2010 South Monroe Avenue.

### NOVEMBER

Fri., Nov. 19, 9:00a-8:00p – 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Green Bay and De Pere Antiquarian Society’s Holiday Antique Show and Sale will take place at the Rock Garden Banquet and Conference Center, 1951 Bond Street, Green Bay.  
 Sat, Nov. 19-20, 9:00a-4:00p – 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Green Bay and De Pere Antiquarian Society’s Holiday Antique Show and Sale (last day).

### DECEMBER

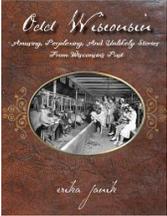
Your choice of date and time – A Victorian Christmas at Hazelwood group tours and tea parties at the Hazelwood Historic House, 2010 South Monroe Avenue.

# BOOKS BY MAIL

Available on the website [www.browncohistoricalsoc.org](http://www.browncohistoricalsoc.org) or by mail using the form below.

### ODD WISCONSIN

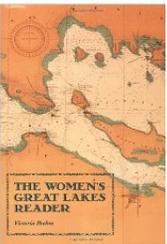
by Erika Janik. Wisconsin Historical Society Press. 2007.



This collection of short but intriguing stories of Wisconsinites and their state presents a picture of a state history unlike any taught in school. Stories range from one about a giant couple who once traveled with the circus, to dozens of ghosts who looked after the bones of Reverend James Lloyd Breck. Each story highlights a different aspect of Wisconsin's unique history and gives the reader even more reason to declare with pride their cheesehead lineage or, at least, muse about where the original state constitution actually is.

Soft cover, 200 pages. **Cost: \$16.95.**

### THE WOMEN'S GREAT LAKES READER



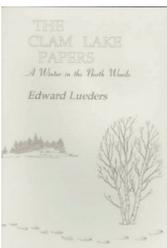
by Victoria Brehm. Ladyslipper Press. 2001.

Brehm has collected various stories from Native American women to Elizabeth Baird about their time living on the Great Lakes before and during the early years of Euro-American settlement. Each story is left in its original writing, save for editing which is marked in italics to preserve the voice of the original writers. Each story is chosen to highlight a different aspect of the Great Lakes history, from Native poetry to an early female lightkeeper who was able to keep her light despite entreaties from many local men and governments.

Soft cover, 385 pages. **Cost: \$19.95.**

### THE CLAM LAKE PAPERS: A WINTER IN THE NORTH WOODS

by Edward Lueders. William Caxton Limited. 1996.



After a long winter teaching, all Edward Lueders wanted to do was relax at his cabin in Clam Lake, Wisconsin. When he arrives, he notices a pile of papers on his kitchen table and chides himself for not cleaning properly at the end of last season. As he opens his cabin for the summer, he realizes that someone has been in his cabin and used his supplies, but has not damaged his property. The papers on his table belong to the gentleman who spent time in his cabin. Lueders reads through these papers, and begins to understand the man who used his property, and decides to publish the musings of his uninvited guest's winter in Clam Lake. (Originally published in 1977, and again in 1996.)

Soft cover, 148 pages. **Cost: \$14.00.**

**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**

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# EVENTS

(Continued from page 5)

## Woodlawn Cemetery Walk

See calendar on page 5 for dates

### “IF TOMBSTONES COULD TALK”

Join us! Meet the past! If you're interested in history, combined with enjoying a lovely walk on a crisp fall afternoon or evening, why not join us and discover some of the fascinating people who founded our community. *This program is in collaboration with the Heritage Players.*

**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](http://www.browncohistoricalsoc.org).

**NOTE:** Cemetery Walks involve quite a bit of standing. You are encouraged to bring a blanket or lawn chair. During the evening programs, it will be dark so bring a flashlight.

Thank you!

## Cemetery Walk Volunteers

Cemetery tours are both profitable and sustainable programs for the BCHS. Our volunteers provide the backbone of these programs, and we could not do it without them.

### Actors portraying Fort Howard residents

- Charlie Hagen as Dr. Julius Bellin (1879-1928)
- Jim O' Rourke as Arnie Herber (1910-1969)
- Kathy Hardke as Lucille Meusel (1901-1985)
- Myra Dickinson as Anna Steeno (1830-1917)
- Joe and Lisa Mastalir as Charles and Beverly Wery (1962-1999)
- Andrea Rabinovitz as her mother, Jo Ann Lustig-Glickman (1929-1999)
- Bill Fischer as Harold Loch (1919-2004)
- Dave Sielski as Thomas Healy (1844-1869)
- Michael Murphy as Rev. Michael John O'Brien (1860-1918)

## “THOSE WERE THE DAYS”

The July 4<sup>th</sup> performance of the Heritage Players, “Those Were the Days,” brought the depression era to life. Stories, songs, and advertisements demonstrated the pain of losing a job or a family member, and the strength of a family that comes together in tough economic times. The stories entertained the audience and reminded them that, even though the current economic times are also tough, Americans have endured far worse and thrived.



Actors from the July 4th presentation of “Those were the Days” by the Heritage Players. Photos by Wendy Barzcz.

**Floral Arrangements** – Schroeder's Flowers

### School-day Volunteers

Linda Ferguson, Mary Ann Jacobs, Judy L' Empereur, and Jeanne Maricque.

### Evening Walk Volunteers

**Guides** – Bryce French, Abby Baldwin, Joan Baldwin, Barb Beaver and Lynn Leuer.

**Registration** – Gail Devroy and Judy Wilson.

**Refreshments** – BCHS volunteers

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*And a special thanks to Renee Greig and the staff at Fort Howard Memorial Park.*

## MY SUMMER AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by Gabrielle Lee-Wasson

A senior at the University of South Dakota as a history and political science double major, I grew up here in Green Bay, and graduated from Bay Port High School (2008). This past summer, I had the opportunity to be an intern with the Brown County Historical Society. I started working on the many projects in early May, including organizing the desk in the Kellogg library as well as helping set up for the Civil War Days event. I also



Gabrielle Lee-Wasson.  
Photo by Kathy Kauth.

assisted with office work, which included opening mail and making copies (which sounds more tedious than it actually was). In the process of helping to organize the library, I found several old photos and newspapers which were in need of some addi-

tional preservation work and belonged in the collections. I wrote several book reviews for the *Historical Bulletin*, and thoroughly enjoyed reading each one.

Overall, it has been a wonderful summer and a great learning experience for me. I want to thank the Historical Society for granting me the opportunity for this internship; I hope to take this experience back to school with me and apply it to a future, history-related career.

## Congratulations, Jacqueline Frank!

On June 17, Jacqueline Frank was promoted to Executive Director of the National Railroad Museum. Regrettably, Jacqueline's new responsibilities necessitate her resignation from the Brown County Historical Society Board of Directors. Her dedication and commitment to preserving local history are the assets that make excellent directors. *Jacqueline, we wish you the very best!*

HOURS for  
SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2010  
BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BCHS offices – 8:30a-4:00p, weekdays  
HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM  
Group tours by appointment  
Phone: (920) 437-1840

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