



THE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

March 2013

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

2012 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD WINNER

THE MILL ART CENTER FORMERLY THE DENMARK FEED MILL 217 Broadway Street, Denmark

by Jerry Abitz

Most rural small towns were, at one time, graced by the presence of a mill. Many started as flour mills but, as the farm economy shifted to dairy farming, supplying dairymen with feed supplements and other supplies became the heart of their business. During the era of small, family-sized farms, these structures were essential to that industry and, because of the need for dry storage of grains, these buildings punctuated the sky.

Growing up on a dairy farm in the 1930s and '40s, my brothers and I would spend a large portion of Saturday mornings, at least once or twice a month, bagging oats for the frequent trip to the feed mill. Why the frequent trips? The predominant grain crop in the five-year rotation was oats, a crop high in fiber but low in

protein. Supplements had to be added to boost the protein level when fed to dairy cows that needed it for milk production. Every mill had access to these supplements, such as those produced by the Purina Company that serviced the Denmark mill. The mill would grind the farmer's oats and mix in a supplement. On busy days, farmers would line up to have their grain ground and then wait for the enriched product to be returned to them. Waiting in line was a great way to learn what was happening in the



Top: The now-restored front of the Denmark Flour Mills & Elevator, currently housing The Mill Art Center which includes the Academy of Fine Art and the Molly Johnson studio. **Bottom:** Denmark Flour Mills & Elevator, circa 1909. Photos supplied by Molly Johnson.

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THE MILL ART CENTER

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local community as one socialized with the neighbors.

But what happens when rotations of crops change, competition with more efficient mills takes place, specialized equipment is developed for use on the farm, and/or sizes of dairy herds expand exponentially? What does one do with a building that has lost its usefulness? A mill not being maintained quickly becomes an eyesore that neighbors want demolished.

Some people can look at such a structure and visualize what it can become; others can only see a relic of the past that needs to be razed. Molly Johnson belongs to the first category. An artist and visionary, Molly and her husband, Brian Johnson, an engineer, had the ability to see her vision realized.

A native of Green Bay, although raised in the Chicago area, Molly returned to the area with Brian and eventually settled in Denmark in what once had been the mill owner's residence. In her backyard was this century-old mill, built by Albert Skornichka in 1909 as a flour mill, renowned in the area for its Bohemian flour. Eventually, however, it was unable to compete with the flour mills in the Minneapolis area, so a switch was made to extend service to the local farmers by providing feed for dairy cattle.

In 1965 the mill was sold to Donald Krubsack. A fire in 1979 resulted in some damage and, in 1996, Krubsack sold the mill.

It changed hands two more times but, with fewer family-sized farms, the mill closed at year's end in 2007.

Molly was a graduate of the American Art Academy of Art (Chicago) and obtained extensive experience in freelanced art. In 2005 she enrolled in the Kewaunee Academy of Fine Art under the tutelage of Norma and Dick Bell at the Barnsite Studio. She was their first graduate and went on to teach privately and for the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. In

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Top: Seen in the process of renovation, the interior of the Denmark Feed Mill **Middle:** Molly Johnson, up on the ladder, repainting the original sign. **Bottom:** An art class in progress in the finished Mill Art Center. Photos supplied by Molly Johnson.

2008, the Johnsons purchased the Denmark feed mill in their backyard. Molly's desire was to reuse this building as an art studio and display area.

It was a huge, time-consuming undertaking to convert the old feed mill, which involved the removal of machinery, huge bins constructed of 2x4s spiked together, and the elevators and chutes for



NATIONAL HISTORY DAY Turning Points in History — People, Ideas, Events

by Deb Anderson

National History Day is a nationwide academic opportunity for 6th-12th graders, often lasting the bulk of the academic year. Students research a historical topic of their choice and, in the process, learn critical thinking skills, historical analysis, and gain experience using historical records. The end product is a project relating to the year's annual theme. Projects are presented by students, alone or as a group, and can be in the form of a paper, website, documentary, performance, or exhibit. The theme for 2013 is *Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events*.

THE MILL ART CENTER

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moving grain within the building. Getting rid of a century's accumulation of grain dust without harming the environment was a notable issue, and the colony of rats in the catacombs had to be exterminated before one could even think of how the building could be reconfigured to suit new purposes.

The Johnsons persevered with help from the "Monster Mill Men," a group of ten or so friends who were willing to help make the dream a reality. With their support, the interior was subdivided into work areas, teaching stations, individual work areas for art students, display areas for art, and an area in which to relax for coffee or a snack. Access to the upper levels was created, a heating system installed and the building rewired to accommodate the needs of this new business.

The exterior also needed a lot of attention. A rotting roof, overhanging the loading area, was demolished; likewise, a bump-out on the south wall which housed a grain conveyor was removed. A piece of galvanized metal found on the premises was used to recover the opening in the upper level. Windows and doors were replaced. The building was repainted, the original signage restored, the exterior

Green Bay has hosted the Northeastern Wisconsin Regional competition at the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay since 2002. Finalists here move on the State contest in Madison, whose finalists then qualify to attend the National contest in Washington D.C.

The Green Bay Regional event is always looking for volunteers to serve as judges and room monitors for its contest. No previous experience is necessary — all you need is a love of kids plus a love of history! This year's contest will be held on Sat., April 6, on the UWGB campus. If you are able to commit a morning and part of an afternoon to be a part of this amazing experience, please visit the website at www.uwgb.edu/nationalhistoryday or contact nationalhistoryday@uwgb.edu.

The Brown County Historical Society is proud to assist in sponsoring the event, providing judges and presenting a local history award to a Junior and Senior project connecting the annual theme to the history of Northeast Wisconsin.

spruced up, and the accumulations of trash and obsolete machinery removed.

In 2011, when the Bells relocated out-of-state, the Kewaunee Academy of Fine Art was put on the market for sale. The Johnsons made the decision to purchase it and move the institution to Denmark. With the hiring of eight teachers, the Academy of Fine Art was established as the only Art Renewal Center Approved Academy in Wisconsin. With a restored mill as a drawing card, potential students are recruited by its website — <http://www.theacademyoffineart.com> with links for more information, word-of-mouth, and flyers advertising the academy. There is a prescribed curriculum that students follow to graduate. One can enroll either as a full-time or part-time student, but emphasis is placed on individual progress.

No longer an eyesore, the final product is a century-old rustic building whose façade has changed little, reflecting the building's agricultural history. Inside one finds a unique, inviting atmosphere. With the support of their community, this building was saved from the landfill. The owners have reunited two buildings built by Albert Skornichka that have an intertwined history. For their efforts, the Brown County Historical Society awarded Brian and Molly Johnson its 2012 Historic Preservation Award for Building Adaptive Reuse.

2013 ANNUAL MEETING

by Christine Dunbar

The Brown County Historical Society celebrated its 114th Annual Membership Meeting on Sunday, Feb, 17, at the Woods Golf Club. Board President Mark Steuer thanked departing board members Randy Connour and Loretta Metoxen for their years of service and dedication to the Society, and Wendy Barszcz was recognized for 13 years of commitment in the roles of Bookkeeper, Executive Director, Board President and Board member.

Board member Myrna Dickinson welcomed the newly-elected board class for 2013-2014-2015 and acknowledged the returning board members. Treasurer Dennis Wojahn led the members through the Society's financial report and noted improved investments in 2012. Additional committee reports were distributed to attendees in the Annual Report Booklet.

Following the business portion of the program, Mary Jane Herber, William Hinkfuss, and Dr. Ken Mickle presented the 2012 **Local History Award of Merit** to three recipients – Dorothy Straubel Wittig received a posthumous award for 40 years of perseverance working with the state, city and community to develop Heritage Hill State Park; Joe Kraft received an

award in recognition of service to Heritage Hill and the Brown County Historical Society; and Dr. Les Rentmeester was recognized for writing eleven local history books in collaboration with his late wife, Jean.

The Preservation Committee chose three outstanding examples of Historic Preservation, and Chair Don Kraft illustrated the extensive preservation process of each with a powerpoint presentation. **2012 Historic Preservation Awards** were presented to:

- **Bridge-Between Retreat Center**
4471 Flaherty Lane, Town of Morrison
- **Fort Howard School Log Cabin**
520 Dousman Street, Green Bay
- **The Mill Art Center**
217 Broadway Street, Denmark

Guest speaker John Maino commenced his program about Wisconsin's WWII veterans by introducing the various members in the audience who served in that war and thanking them for their service. Maino shared veterans' stories and stressed the importance of gathering this history before it is lost. His books collect, preserve and make accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.



First row, left: William Hinkfuss (L) presents Charles Pelky (Executive Director, Heritage Hill) and Barb Miller (Executive Director, Heritage Hill Foundation) with the Local History Award of Merit honoring Dorothy Straubel Wittig. **First row, middle:** Mary Jane Herber and William Hinkfuss present Joe Kraft (R) with Local History Award. **First row, right:** Les Rentmeester (R) accepting the Local History Award of Merit from William Hinkfuss. **Second row, left:** Don Kraft, Preservation Committee Chair, presents Molly Meyers (center) and Caroline Sullivan with the Historic Preservation Award for Bridge-Between Retreat Center. **Second row, middle:** Fort Howard School Log Cabin Preservation Award. Pictured (L to R) are: Don Kraft, Chuck Hatfield (original cabin builder), James Hayward (project contractor) and award recipients Alice Andraski (Fort Howard School Principal) and Allen Behnke (facilities director). **Second row, right:** Molly and Brian Johnson accepting an award for The Mill Art Center. *Photos by Chuck Golueke.*

BCHS BOARD UPDATES —

CLASS OF 2013-2014-2015



TONY BELLOVARY **Green Bay**

A resident of the City of Green Bay, Tony has a Natural Resource Management degree from UW—Stevens Point. He enjoys reading about Wisconsin history, exploring land records, and learning about his grandfather's World War II battle history. They recently traveled together on the Honor Flight from Milwaukee to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials.

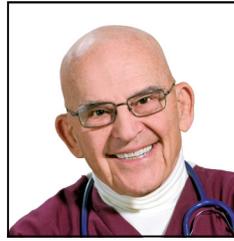
He is employed in the energy industry at GAI Consultants and performs Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and analysis; he also works for the Green Bay Packers during the season. Tony is married to Hollie and has two children — Amanda, 6, and Sawyer who is 5.



JUDY L'EMPEREUR **Green Bay**

Judy was born in Green Bay, is a lifelong resident of this area and married to Denis L'Empereur; they have five grown children and 11 grandchildren. She enjoys learning and teaching history, is currently a member of UWGB's Learning in Retirement program and has been enrolled in history classes ranging from Early American History to the Civil War. She spent 15 years at Heritage Hill State Park teaching elementary children to know and appreciate their past.

Judy is a past member of the BCHS Board of Directors, a current member of the Society's Program Committee and a docent at Hazelwood; she also serves as a judge for the Wisconsin regional History Day event which takes place at UWGB each spring. In addition to her history-related activities, she is a member of her church's grade school Board of Education and has taught religious education classes.



JOHN SHIER **Green Bay**

John Shier, former Navy intelligence officer, college professor and business executive, made a drastic career change at age 60. He graduated from University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee's School of Nursing and became a hospice care and hospice cardiac nurse. He is now the director of the Corporate Wellness and Prevention at Green Bay's Bellin Memorial Hospital, and continues to work as a hospice nurse. Prior to his nursing career and work as "that Guy Nurse," John was an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at UWGB for 14 years.

John also served 18 years as the Executive Director of the Lake Michigan Area Agency on Aging as well as providing leadership as the Executive Director of the United Way of Brown County. John has been long affiliated with local history and serves on the Board of Directors of Heritage Hill State Historical Park as well as The Fox Wisconsin Heritage Parkway.



CHRISTINE WHITTON **Green Bay**

Christine is a retired English teacher who taught students in grades 6 through college freshmen. Her husband, Roger, is the vice president/general manager of Checker Logistics/RGL Holdings. They have a daughter, Holly, and two dogs, Lucy and Barny. Her hobbies include reading, antiquing and volunteering, and she loves spending time at their log cabin in Lakewood (Oconto County).

She belongs to the Jean Nicolet Chapter of the DAR and is active in P.E.O. Sisterhood—Chapter EN Green Bay. Christine is active in her church choir and serves on various church committees. She served on the BCHS board for one term, chaired the Hazelwood Committee and served on the BCHS nominating committee, co-chaired the very successful BCHS antique sale and assists with cemetery walks and Hazelwood teas. Her special interest is historic preservation.

CALENDAR*



MARCH

Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16 –
7th Annual Dreamers and Doers Historical Tour and
Award Luncheon. *Reservations required.*

APRIL

Thursday, April 4, 6:00p –
Volunteer Potluck at Hazelwood. *RSVP by March 28.*

MAY

Saturday, May 18, 10:00a and 2:00p –
Astor Neighborhood Walking Tour. *Reservations re-
quired. \$5/person.*

JUNE

Friday through Sunday, June 7-9, 12:00p-4:00p –
Petals and Porcelain. *\$7/person.*
Wednesday, June 19, 6:30p –
"If Tombstones Could Talk" cemetery walk at Fort
Howard Cemetery. *\$6/person; \$14/family.*

JULY

Sunday, July 14,* 6:00-8:00p –
"Building a River Highway – Reliving the *Aquila* on
the *Foxy Lady*." *Reservations required. \$35/person.*

AUGUST

Tuesday and Wednesday, Aug. 6-7, 6:30p –
"If Tombstones Could Talk" cemetery walk at Allouez
Cemetery. *\$6/person; \$14/family.*
Sat., Aug. 24, 1:00-3:00p –
Flower Fairy Tea Party. *Reservations required. \$15/
adults; \$5/children (5-12).*

SEPTEMBER

Wednesday, Sept. 11, 6:30p –
"If Tombstones Could Talk" cemetery walk at Wood-
lawn Cemetery. *\$6/person; \$14/family.*
Sunday, Sept. 15, 4:00p –
"If Tombstones Could Talk" cemetery walk at Wood-
lawn Cemetery. *\$6/person; \$14/family.*

NOVEMBER

Friday and Saturday, Nov. 29 and 30, 2:00-4:00p –
Holiday Victorian Tea. *Reservations required. \$15/person.*

DECEMBER

Dec. 1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 12:00-4:00p –
A Hazelwood House Holiday.
Saturday, Dec. 14, 6:00-8:00p –
An evening of candlelight and music at Hazelwood.

**Events can be added, changed or cancelled without notice.
To make sure you stay informed, make our website
one of your Favorites – www.browncohistoricalsoc.org!*

EVENTS

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~ RIVERBOAT FUNDRAISER ~ BUILDING A RIVER HIGHWAY: A fundraiser celebrating the historic voyage of the Steamship *Aquila* on board the *Foxy Lady* By Courtney Martin

On June 16, 1856, celebrations were held all along the Fox River to celebrate the steamer *Aquila's* arrival in Green Bay. Its historic landing marked the end of the ten-year project of the Fox-Wisconsin River improvement project. After 157 years, the Brown County Historical Society wants to celebrate that voyage again, and you're invited!

The *Aquila* was a steamboat built specifically with travel on the Fox River in mind. It was built, however, before such travel on the river was even possible. The ambitious Fox-Wisconsin River project was spearheaded by Morgan L. Martin with travel, like that provided by the *Aquila*, and the economic development of the Fox River valley its overall goal. The arrival of this steamboat meant that Martin's venture was finally complete. For its triumphant arrival, Hazelwood, bedecked with banners and flags, welcomed the vessel to Green Bay.

In the city of Green Bay, the canons of the unused Fort Howard were fired and impromptu parades held. Thousands turned out to watch the boats landing at the docks of Goodell and Whitney at the foot of Jefferson Street and on crowded side streets just to be near the action. Speeches were given by the mayors of Green Bay and Menasha, judges and other leaders of the Fox River Valley, who were picked up along the voyage on the way to the bay. The celebrations marked the beginning of a Fox River Valley that was modernizing and coming into its own.

This coming July 14, we celebrate the *Aquila's* voyage on a modern riverboat, the *Foxy Lady*. The two-hour trip will take passengers from the mouth of the river at Green Bay to De Pere and back (trip through the locks not included). Visit with historic actors and discover the importance of this grand project of the Fox-Wisconsin Waterway. There even will be the chance to once again see flags and banners flying from the shores at Hazelwood, welcoming river travel.

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS TODAY!
*Reservations required. \$35/person includes refresh-
ments, music and a cash bar.*

EVENTS

Join us for one or all!!



How We MOVE

Throughout history, we have been continually moving. It doesn't matter how we go; it's that we are always going somewhere. But, over time, the trips have changed. Come on a journey with the Brown County Federation of History Museums as, throughout 2013, we explore "How We Move," whether it be across the street or across the continents.

(See websites for additional events, dates, and times.)

- **Brown County Historical Society – Hazelwood Historic House**
920-437-1840 / www.browncohistoricalsoc.org
July 14 – Building a River Highway – A Foxy Lady Cruise
– Celebrating the Steamboat Aquila's 1856 Trip on the Fox River. *Reservations required.*
- **De Pere Historical Society – White Pillars Museum**
920-336-3877 / www.deperehistoricalsociety.org
- **UW-Green Bay Archives & Area Research Center**
920-465-2539 / www.uwgb.edu/library/spc
- **Green Bay & De Pere Antiquarian Society**
www.antiquariansocietygbdp.org
Celebrating 90 years of service – 1923-2013
- **Heritage Hill State Historical Park**
920-448-5150 / www.heritagehillgb.org
Memorial Day-Labor Day – Daily touring
Aug. 17 – Fur Trade Experience
Sept. 7 – History of Transportation
- **National Railroad Museum**
920-437-7623 / www.nationalrrmuseum.org
Apr. 28 – Moving the War: An in-depth exploration of the Big Boy locomotive and its role in moving freight in the 1940s.
- **Neville Public Museum of Brown County**
920-448-4640 / www.nevillepublicmuseum.org
Aug. 16 – Bay Lake Bank Tall Ship Festival
Feb.-Dec. – Transportation photos from permanent collection.
All Year – Edge of the Inland Sea. See how transportation has changed from canoes to airplanes.
All Year – Museum Place includes information on the Fox-Wisconsin Parkway, USS Green Bay and the Port of Green Bay.
- **Oneida Nation Museum**
920-869-2768 / www.oneidanation.org/museum

For additional events, please visit the Brown County Federation of History Museums website – www.bcghm.org



7th Annual Dreamers and Doers Historical Tour and Award Luncheon

Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16

This annual event commemorating Women's History Month and celebrating the contributions of women in Brown County will take place at Heritage Hill on Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16. Sponsored by the AAUW Green Bay Area Branch. For reservations, call Wendy (920-497-2363) or send your email request to dreamersanddoers@hotmail.com.



Volunteer Potluck

Thursday, April 4, 6:00p at Hazelwood

It is time to once again look at the coming year to see HOW YOU CAN HELP! Meet other volunteers, give your input, get engaged and have fun!! Hot beef sandwiches provided; you bring a side or dessert... AND YOUR CALENDARS!



RSVP by March 28th –
Email bchsvolunteer@netnet.net or call 920-437-1840

Petals and Porcelain – An Exhibit of Fresh Florals and Hand-painted Haviland China

Friday-Sunday, June 7-9, 12:00-4:00p

Hazelwood Historic House will be bursting with floral arrangements during this spectacular third annual event. Program Chair Loretta Delvaux developed the idea based on an article found in Hazelwood's archives describing a garden party hosted at Hazelwood by the Misses Martins. Frederika Crane poured coffee in the dining room and lemonade was served in the hall. Tea was served in a large tent in the back yard. The house was filled with flowers – the dining room in yellow and other rooms



Hand-painted china by Frederika Crane paired with floral arrangements by Petal Pushers. Photo by Chuck Golueke.

in different tints. About 225 guests were present.

Our modern version of this event highlights creative arrangements by talented floral designers partnered with Hazelwood's collection of Haviland china, hand-painted by Frederika Crane. The backyard again will be the venue for tea, refreshments, and music. Join Lee Somerville for a historic garden program.

Admission \$7. Plans for workshops are underway. For more info, call 920-437-1840 or check our website www.browncohistorical.soc.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR NEIGHBORS —



THE GREEN BAY & DE PERE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Contributed by Debbie Ashmann

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the Green Bay & De Pere Antiquarian Society. The Society was founded by Jessie Buchanan and her "band of sisters" with the purpose of saving community assets and passing on the rich history of the area to future generations.

Today this preservation work continues through the work of more than 200 members. The Antiquarians own almost 300 artifacts, many of which are displayed at Hazelwood, Heritage Hill State Historical Park, White Pillars Museum, Neville Public Museum, Associated Bank and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral.

The Antiquarians raise money through their annual Antique Show and Sale held in November. The proceeds are disbursed in grants to area historical institutions for preservation work. In excess of \$600,000 has been awarded locally.

In 2007, the Antiquarians, through the Save Our Cultural Heritage Campaign, purchased an entire art collection from the Brown County Library for \$1.2 million. Many

priceless objects have been restored from this collection, including "The Hospitality of St. Julian," "The Rufus Kellogg Painting" and 22 paintings by Howard Pyle. The Pyle paintings will be the focus of an exhibit at St. Norbert College in January 2014.

The Antiquarians are always looking for new members to continue the work of our founders. Check out our website — www.antiquarian societygbdp.org — for more information or just to see what we are about. LIKE US! on facebook — www.facebook.com/GreenBayDePereAntiquarianSociety.

Also, join us for a birthday celebration in September at Riverside Ballroom. More details to be announced.

*Our logo, "Under Three Flags," symbolizes the territorial governance of this area — 1701 French Flag, 1761 British Flag, and 1816 American Flag.



Rufus B. Kellogg oil painting by George P. A. Healy — This historic piece of local significance underwent restoration in 2010. Kellogg, a well-known Green Bay area businessman, formed the Kellogg National Bank (now Associated Bank) and the Kellogg Library (now the Brown County Public Library). This artwork was purchased by the Antiquarian Society from the Brown County Library collection and is currently displayed at Associated Bank on Adams Street.

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK! BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE

1008 South Monroe Street, Green Bay WI 54301 Phone: (920) 437-1840 / www.BrownCoHistoricalSoc.org

ADMISSION Adult \$4.00 • Seniors (60+) \$3.50 • Children (5-17) \$2.50 Children under 5 are FREE. AAA discounts.

Tours, programs and teas, scheduled at your convenience by appointment throughout the year.

HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BCHS offices — 8:30a-4:00p, weekdays

HOURS for MARCH — JUNE 2013

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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