



# THE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

September 2019

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3

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

## EARLY PUBLIC PARKS IN GREEN BAY

by Christine Dunbar

Small neighborhood parks remain as a significant part of neighborhoods today, as they did in the past. Playgrounds, pools, splashpads, hiking trails, concerts and sports events bring neighbors together in these public spaces. Today the Green Bay Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry manages over 2,500 acres of parkland, including 66 parks and 16 greenways, Bay Beach Amusement Park, Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary and a 4-year-old, nature-based kindergarten.

Green Bay's history of parks dates back to its earliest development. In 1829, Yankee entrepreneur, Daniel Whitney, purchased the entire swampy area on the northeast mouth of the Fox River and platted the town of Navarino. Whitney left a block in the center of



Postcard of Bay View Park (date unknown). Photo courtesy of BCHS archives.

town open for use as a public square. He named this open space "Washington Square" and noted, "the square is never to be built upon . . . As soon as buildings are put on it, it is to revert to my heirs." Following Whitney's death in 1862, the square was renamed Whitney Park.<sup>1</sup> Whitney is the oldest of the Green Bay parks with a long history of community gatherings. Located in the heart of downtown, the park celebrated the first summer market in 1917.

James Doty, along with Robert Stuart and Ramsey Crooks, all local agents of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, encouraged Astor to develop a rival town just south of Navarino. Local fur traders owned tracts of land in the area. The decline of the fur trade placed many traders in debt to the American Fur Co. Astor foreclosed on the traders and seized the land in payment of the debt.

Doty platted the Town of Astor in 1835, setting aside three public squares within a ten-block radius. Doty's objective was to make Astor the county seat and left the public spaces undeveloped to attract government offices. But De Pere won the title of county seat and Astor's three public squares remained open. Today, all three areas are active parks.<sup>2</sup>

The squares were named for Andrew Jackson, John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster. Jackson Square retains its original name. The other two squares names were changed to reflect nearby churches. Calhoun Square was changed to

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## EARLY PUBLIC PARKS

(continued from page 1)

St. John's Park, and Webster Square called St. James Park. Each square survives as originally planned.<sup>3</sup>

Astor's descendents donated the three public squares to the City of Green Bay in 1869 in a quitclaim deed for one dollar. A manual labor school was planned for one square but was never built, and the land became Astor Park. Another small square eventually became the site for Fire Station Number One. The third space became a public burial ground until Woodlawn Cemetery opened in 1867. No longer needed as a burial ground, it was renamed Baird Place and remains a park to this day.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Otto Tank donated the first public park in the Village of Howard in 1880. Tank Park was renamed Union Park in 1895, commemorating the consolidation of Fort Howard and Green Bay. In 1932, it was reverted Tank Park.

In 1919 or 1920 (depending upon sources), the Joannes family donated 43 acres bordering the

East River for a park. Sources cite Mitchell and his wife, Fannie, donating the property in April 1920. A stone monument on the corner of Walnut and Baird streets states, "Donated Nov. 1919 by Charles, Mitchell and Thomas Joannes." One stipulation of the Joannes gift was the establishment of a board to manage all of the parks. This led to the creation of the Board of Park Commissioners in 1920.<sup>5</sup>

Fisk Park on Green Bay's west side was the

first park created by the new department. Wilbur Fisk donated the land to city in memory of his son who died of influenza in WW1.<sup>6</sup>

Bay Beach Park got its start in 1892 when developers purchased land along the on the bay with the intent to build a resort. Businesspersons Fred Rahr and Frank Murphy purchased the park around 1905 and continued development, building a huge pavilion that survives today and adding rides. In 1920, they donated the eleven-and-one-half acre park to the City of Green Bay. The City bought surrounding land and turned it over to the newly formed Parks Department.<sup>7</sup>

In 1923, the Parks Department offered a trial summer recreation program which was so successful it continues to this day. In 2018, the Playground program served 66,000 youth (over 1,300 youth per day at 36 playground park sites).<sup>8</sup>

Kaurie Mihm, park planner for the City of Green Bay, summed up the importance of the parks system.

"As we look forward to celebrating 100 years as a Parks Department next year, we would like to acknowledge our predecessors who helped build the parks system into what it is today. City parks provide a place for the community to engage in social, recreational, educational and leisure activities while our recreational trails provide safe pedestrian routes throughout the city. The city parks and greenways also help to preserve native ecological plant and animal communities and aid in storm water mediation. As we look to the future, our mission will continue to focus on sustainability and providing amenities and opportunities that meet the needs of the community."<sup>9</sup>

(See Footnotes on page 6)



Postcard of Union Park (date unknown. Photo courtesy of BCHS archives.)

### BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OUR MISSION — To preserve, present and share the heritage of Brown County history through preservation activities, exhibitions, educational programs and events.

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Green Bay WI 54301

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# EVENTS

Join us for one or all!

## "IF THESE HOMES COULD TALK" ASTOR WALKING TOUR SATURDAY, SEPT. 21, 9:30A BEGINS AT UNION CONG. CHURCH (716 S. MADISON)

If These Homes Could Talk" is an annual event in partnership with the Astor Neighborhood Association (ANA) and the Brown County Historical Society (BCHS) to document the social and architectural history of the Astor Historic District.

**This year we are offering two options —**

**Free Self-guided Walking Tour.** This free program allows you to travel at your own pace to view the descriptive "House History" signs created by Astor Neighborhood homeowners about their property. Learn about the architecture, social history and preservation issues of the historic neighborhood. Signs will remain up all weekend. Maps are available at Hazelwood or on both the BCHS and Astor Neighborhood websites.

**- OR -**

**A ticketed guided walking tour** with a visit inside six historic properties in the Astor Neighborhood, including an architectural tour of Historic Hazelwood.

**\$20/person. Reservations required.**

**Space limited to 100 participants.**

Call BCHS at [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/if-these-homes-could-talk-astor-neighborhood-walk-tickets-69893057015>.



## HAUNTED HAZELWOOD: CLUE! OCTOBER 5, 11 & 12, 5:00-8:00P

Join your host, Morgan L. Martin, as he celebrates the newly published Arthur Conan Doyle story. You and 11

other guests will travel to the past and assume the rolls of Morgan's wife, Elizabeth, or other close acquaintances in a night of mystery and intrigue. While the night may start out as innocent fun, tragedy strikes and now you must partake in a CLUE!-inspired quest to solve the unfolding mystery. Psychics, mediums and phrenology all will be part of the fun!

*Do you have what it takes to go back in time  
and solve the mystery??*

**\$20/person. Reservations required.**

Call BCHS at [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/haunted-hazelwood-clue-tickets-71373585315>

## EVENING WITH THE DEAD SATURDAY, OCT. 19, 7:00-10:00P HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE

Join the investigators from Paper Valley Paranormal for an Evening with the Dead! They will be investigating Historic Hazelwood House with a limited number of guests. Paper Valley Paranormal was co-founded in 2012 by Eddie Holland and Heather Clark. The team has traveled throughout the country to investigate haunted locations and homes — recently and most notably, the notorious Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Louisville, Kentucky.

Guests will be able to share their paranormal encounters with the team of investigators. Paper Valley Paranormal will share their best pieces of evidence from past investigations, showcasing what they have found from their two previous investigations at Hazelwood. The team will split up with the guests and investigate the house for two hours, using equipment such as their SB-7 Spirit Box, REM Pod, K2 Meters, and many more unique investigative tools. Following the investigation, guests will enjoy pizza and share their experiences.

**\$50/person. Reservations required. Space limited to 25.**

Call us at [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/evening-with-the-dead-tickets-71707570273>.

## BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORIC PHOTO SHOW TUESDAY, OCT. 22, 6:15-7:30P BROWN COUNTY LIBRARY AUDITORIUM 515 PINE STREET, GREEN BAY

Featuring images from our digital archives project! Please join us and bring your friends for a fascinating look at the past!

**Free Admission!!**

# EVENTS

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## HAZELWOOD HARVEST TEA FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, NOV. 15 & 16, 1:00-3:00P

Join us for a Harvest Tea, including a menu of fall-inspired recipes for savory and sweet treats. Enjoy a program about the history of Autumn Holidays!

**\$22/person. Reservations required due to limited seating.** Please call [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) or email us at [bchsvolunteer@netnet.net](mailto:bchsvolunteer@netnet.net). For more details, visit [www.browncohistoricalsoc.org](http://www.browncohistoricalsoc.org).

## THE GREEN BAY & DE PERE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY PRESENTS THE 63RD ANNUAL HOLIDAY ANTIQUE SHOW AND SALE FRIDAY, NOV. 22, 10:00A-7:00P SATURDAY, NOV. 23, 10:00A-4:00P ROCK GARDEN BANQUET/CONF. CENTER 1951 BOND STREET, GREEN BAY

\$6.00 Admission covers both days,  
One Free Identification of an Object, Crystal  
Repair while you wait, plus Raffle and Bakery.  
[www.antiquariansocietygb.org](http://www.antiquariansocietygb.org)

## ETHNIC HOLIDAY AT HAZELWOOD SAT., DEC. 7 & 14, 11:00A-7:00P

Are you familiar with the Norwegian Julenisse? St. Nicholas? The Christmas Carp? Visit Hazelwood Historic House this holiday season for **Ethnic Holiday at Hazelwood**. Discover the similar and different customs that many cultures have during the holidays. Decorated by local ethnic groups, visitors can immerse themselves in the rich history of their holiday traditions. Visitors will hear traditional stories, listen to songs, and meet a few ethnic Christmas figures! Enjoy a cup of cider and sample holiday treats made with traditional ethnic recipes. Try your hand at creating an ethnically inspired craft.

**General admission applies; BCHS members FREE**



Rally Cruisers team at Oneida Cultural Heritage Village. Photo by Mark Wilson.

## 2019 BCHS ROAD RALLY ~ THE RESULTS! ~

So what is a Road Rally Scavenger Hunt? Teams drive around in cars, follow clues, complete tasks and puzzles, and have fun! The BCHS held its second road rally on August 17, beginning at the historic Polo Resto gas station in Voyageur Park. Teams completed challenges at fourteen different locations throughout the county before heading back to Voyageur Park for food, beverages and prizes. This event is a great way to explore some new sights in the county and discover our county's rich history in an entertaining way. Join our planning team for the 2020 rally! Call us at [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840).

Thanks to the volunteers and organizations that made this event a success. We are truly grateful for their efforts and sponsorships.

**Major Sponsors:** PDQ Carwash, Green Bay Packers Give Back, Cliff Wall Automotive, One Law Group, S.C.

**Participating stops sponsored by:** Ashwaubenon Historical Society, Automobile Gallery, Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, Brown County Parks, City of Green Bay Parks and Recreation, De Pere Historical Society, Oneida Nation Museum, Oneida Tourism, Pulaski Area Historical Society, UWGB Viking House, Vickery Village and Woodlawn Cemetery.

**An enormous thank you to the following amazing volunteers and board members:**

Barb Beaver	Jim & Jil Jim Hock	Elisabeth Ngo
Bret & Leihla	Meghan Hock	Chuck Nordell
Blozinski	Jamie Ireland	Ana Olp
Rachel Bowker	Jayne Jackowski	Jason Petrella
Tammy Castonia	Dennis Jacobs	Katie Przybylski
Stacy Coon	Chris Jaworski	Lisa Raasch
Avarie Daly	Nick Jorgenson	Peter Reinhart
Clete & Loretta	& Kate White	Matthew Rupnik
Delvaux	Jason Krings	Janani Sampath
Lily Duquaine	Tony La Luzerne	Heidi Sherman
Kathryn Gardner	Denis & Judy	Steven Stary
Nate Gerhardt	L'Empereur	Luke & Molly
Chuck Golueke	Mary Katherine	Vollrath
Jon Henry	Matharani & Family	Diane Wright





## Love History?

Help history come alive  
at the Brown County Historical Society  
& Hazelwood Historic House!  
Become a docent at Hazelwood,  
assist as a guide in our cemetery walks  
or help with special events and  
so much more!

By joining our team, volunteers  
will gain experience in public speaking,  
research and event design.  
Not comfortable with public speaking?  
We have other volunteer tasks  
that do not involve the public.

If interested in learning more about  
volunteering with us, please contact  
our volunteer coordinator, Brooke Uhl,  
at [bchsvolunteer@netnet.net](mailto:bchsvolunteer@netnet.net) or call  
[920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) to set up a meeting.





# RENOVATED WAYSIDE CHAPEL OPEN TO VISITORS

by Christine Dunbar

The wayside votive chapels of Northeastern Wisconsin are a religious tradition brought by Belgian immigrants from the Old World. These family chapels were often built to give thanks for prayers answered or to honor a certain saint. The Peninsula Belgian American Club, in sponsorship with the Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation, and the Brown County, Door County and Kewaunee County historical societies produced a brochure to map the remaining 30 roadside chapels. It was a pleasure to read the article in the *Compass* about the preservation of the Saint Odile chapel. Contact us if you would like a brochure of all 30 chapel locations. The following information is taken from "Family Cares for Door County Roadside Chapel; Built in 1872, Renovated Destree Chapel is Open to Visitors." (Kurowski, Jeff. *The Compass*. July 29, 2015. <https://www.thecompassnews.org/2015/07/family-cares-for-door-county-roadside-chapel/>)

GARDNER—A 143-year-old roadside chapel continues to provide a place for prayer and is expected to for generations to come. Last month, renovations were completed at the Destree Chapel, located on Fox Lane in the Gardner Township, north of Brussels in Door County. The work included a new fascia with aluminum trim for the entire building, a new roof and a painted interior.

The 8x10-foot chapel was built in 1872 by Joseph Destree, a stone mason. Destree's eyes were accidentally burned by hot lime. He feared the loss of sight, so he promised to build a chapel in honor of St. Odile, patron of eyesight. Destree's sight was fully restored and he didn't experience any further eye trouble after the chapel was built.

Destree died in 1911 at age 70. Arnie and Bernice Rentmeester of Green Bay serve as caretakers of the chapel. They discovered the stone structure in 1958, when they purchased property for a summer home. "It was in rough shape and had graffiti on the walls," said Bernice. "We thought, 'We can't let it look like that.'"

The recent renovation work was done by David Kaye, a great grandson of Joseph Destree, and Warren Larkin, who is married to Sharon, a



Bernice and Arnie Rentmeester of Green Bay serve as the caretakers of the Destree Chapel. To visit, follow Hwy. 57 to Brussels and turn north on County C. Continue on County C until reaching Fox Lane. Turn left on Fox Lane. The chapel is located a quarter mile on the north side of the road. Photo originally published in the *Compass*; July 29, 2015.

great granddaughter of Joseph. The George Destree (grandson) family donated the materials.

Moving forward, no major renovations should be required. "The building right now is what we call maintenance free," said Arnie. "The stone will probably need to be painted at some point, but that is easily done. We invite all from near and far to stop, say a prayer, sign the book and thank the people who made it look new."

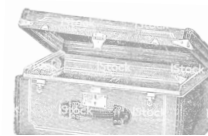
## EARLY PUBLIC PARKS

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### Footnotes —

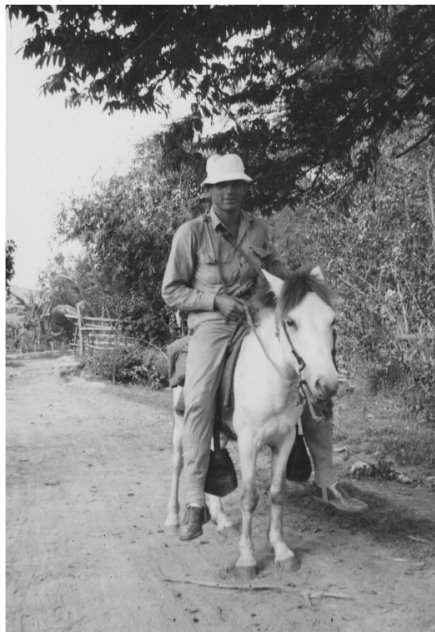
- <sup>1</sup> Whitney Park file. Local History Dept., Brown County Library, Green Bay, Wis.
- <sup>2</sup> Foley, Betsy, editor. "Astor Gives Navarino a Fight." *The Green Bay Area in History and Legend*. Green Bay Press Gazette articles by Jack Rudolph; illustrations by Harold Elder. Brown County Historical Society. 2004, pg. 44.
- <sup>3</sup> Sommerville, Lee. "The Public Squares of Navarino and Astor." *Voyageur Magazine*, Summer/Fall 2008, pg. 38
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> History of Green Bay's Parks — Joannes Park. [www.parchive.pivotrock.net/Joannes\\_history.html](http://www.parchive.pivotrock.net/Joannes_history.html). Date accessed 09/01/2015.
- <sup>6</sup> Green Bay Parks and Recreation, File: Park Areas: Fisk Park, 1922-1958.
- <sup>7</sup> *Green Bay Press Gazette* 85th Anniversary Issue. June 29, 2000, pg. 6, quoting material published June 28, 1924.
- <sup>8</sup> Mihm, Kaurie. Park Planner City of Green Bay Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.

# From Our Collections...



In 1946, Brown County named its new airport Austin Straubel Field (now Austin Straubel International), honoring the first Brown County aviator to lose his life during WWII. Air Corps Lieutenant Colonel Straubel had flown at least 38 types of aircraft, flew in the first air attack against Japanese forces by the United States, and had risen in rank to commander of a bomber group.

We recently received a donation of images of Austin Straubel taken while he was in the Philippines (*circa 1941 to early 1942*). The detailed descriptions on the back of the images provide excellent documentation and cultural information. We were delighted to receive these images and look forward to including them in our digital archive project.



**Above, left:** "This picture was taken in Nueva Viscaya. The natives are members of the Olangat Tribe and thought to be the wildest of all the old headhunting tribes. These people are the largest of any of the eighty tribes of the Archipeligo. The men wear their hair long and that in conjunction with their fine features gives them a somewhat feminine appearance. The brass neck and waist bands are typical of the Olangat tribe."

**Above, center:** "Leaving Bambang, Nueva Viscaya, for the Olangat Country at Kasibu. These native ponies are the hardest and most sure-footed mounts I have ever seen and withstood the rigors of a ten-day trip of 30 to 40 miles a day."

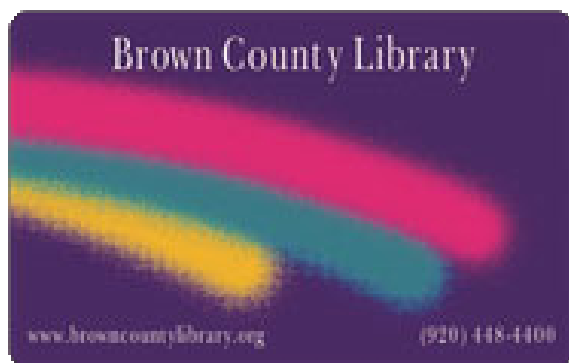
**Above, right:** "Tamaraw — killed the last day of a six-day hunt on the Bussanga River in southeastern Mindoro. The tamaraw is a rare and vicious species of buffalo found only on the Island of Mindoro. It is the only animal that will deliberately backtrack and ambush the hunter when being pursued. One of our Filipino cargadores was severely gored by a wounded tamaraw a few hours before this picture was taken."



**Bottom, left:** "The natives in this image belong to the Manyan Tribe on the Island of Mindoro [Philippines] and are described as loyal and honest and can be trusted implicitly as long as they are not abused."

"They joined the hunting party and willingly stayed with us for the duration of the camp, knowing they would receive rice and meat as reward. They are like ferrets in going through the jungle-covered ravines to drive the game into the open. Their primary weapons are the blow-gun and spear, and it is said their poisoned darts will bring death within a few minutes to any creature they hit."

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR NEIGHBORS —



### 31ST ANNUAL LOCAL HISTORY SERIES

6:30P, THURSDAY EVENINGS  
BROWN COUNTY LIBRARY  
515 PINE STREET, GREEN BAY

### SEPTEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Sept. 12 — “The Misunderstood Mission of Jean Nicolet” with Prof. Patrick J. Jung

Brown County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1411  
Green Bay WI 54305-1411

### ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

#### HOURS for SEPTEMBER — DECEMBER 2019

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
BCHS offices — 8:30a-4:00p, weekdays  
1008 South Monroe Street, Green Bay WI 54301 [MAP](#)  
Phone: [920-437-1840](tel:920-437-1840) / [www.BrownCoHistoricalSoc.org](http://www.BrownCoHistoricalSoc.org)

#### HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

*See details for events on page3 and 4 of this issue.*

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

#### ADMISSION

Adult \$6.00 • Seniors (60+) \$5.00  
Children (5-17) \$4.00 • Children under 5 are FREE.  
AAA and Time Traveler discounts available.

LIKE US ON [FACEBOOK](#)! BROWN COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY & HAZELWOOD HISTORIC HOUSE

Sept. 19 — “Two Faces of Patriotism,” World War I in Wisconsin with Dr. Richard Pifer

### OCTOBER PRESENTATIONS

Oct. 3 — “A Good American Family: the Red Scare and My Father” with David Maraniss  
*Note: This is a dinner program at the Rock Garden. Reservation required by September 26. Go to [browncountylibrary.org/localhistory](http://browncountylibrary.org/localhistory) to print RSVP.*

Oct. 10 — The James Madison Lecture — “Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America” with Prof. Michael McDonnell, University of Sydney, sponsored by the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Wisconsin History Foundation. *Note: Reception at 5:00p.*

Oct. 17 — “The Belgians are Coming: the History of the Belgian Settlement” with Joe Alexander

Oct. 24 — “The People’s Team: An Illustrated History of the Green Bay Packers” with Mark Beech

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