

Along the Riverway

A publication of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society

Winter 2020

Santa & Mrs. Claus stop off at the Tripp for Holly Jolly Days



Santa and Mrs. Claus (Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society board members John and Becky Nickel), parked in front of the Tripp Heritage Museum in their borrowed vintage sleigh on Saturday, Dec. 5. They brought their favorite elf, (SPAHS board president Lise Meyer), to greet everyone who stopped by.

The sleigh was on loan from Julie and Philippe Coquard of Wollersheim Winery who inherited the sleigh from its original owner, the late Wally Clavadatscher, who was a long-time member of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society.



Berkley Mistele who is just one year old, met Santa for the first time in front of the Tripp Heritage Museum on Dec. 5.



Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society Board of Directors

Lise Meyer-Kobussen, president
John Hart, secretary
Ron Kindschi
Becky Nickel
John Nickel
Cheryl Carroll

How to Contact Us:
By mail:
565 Water Street Prairie du Sac, WI 53578
E-mail:
spahs@frontier.com

Telephone
608.644.8444

Visit us on the web at
saukprairiehistory.org

Visits to the Tripp Heritage Museum are by appointment only. Please call museum manager Jack Berndt at 608.644.8444

Looking for a historic, vintage venue for your wedding or other occasion?

The Tripp Heritage Museum or our two country churches may be your perfect venue. Call today to learn more.

Along the Riverway editor
Kim Lamoreaux



From the desk of SPAHS board president Lise Meyer Kobussen



Dear valued members of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society,

I am truly enjoying my time as president of the SPAHS and helping with its important mission of preserving the history of the “lives lived here” in our gorgeous Wisconsin River valley community. I wanted to update everyone on a few things we’ve been doing as 2020 comes to a close.

Covid has not stopped our work of the SPAHS. It has just changed our list of priorities on what to work on.

The beginning of this year we were planning with the August Derleth Society the “Spirits of Sauk Prairie Cemetery” walk that was to be held in August. In March, when the Covid shutdowns took place, we put those plans on hold with a new date yet to be determined. Hopefully, we will be able to hold it this coming summer. We are excited to bring reenactors of unique characters or people of local renown from days of past to give us a glimpse of what life was like for them when they walked the streets of Sauk Prairie.

My attention then was switched to the Salem Ragatz church, one of the properties the Society was gifted many years ago when the church closed

their doors to regular worship services. This is a gorgeous church that needed some fresh paint, a bit of elbow grease, and a fresh new vision of opportunities for people to come and enjoy.

Most of the work has been completed, thanks to the countless hours of volunteers or contractors who gave us special reduced prices and the committed and responsible Salem Ragatz family members from across this country providing financial contributions to keep up the church.

Although the museum is closed to the public at this time due to Covid safety precautions, we are now starting to work on what the next special exhibit will be. When we are finally able to open our doors to the public again, we should have a wonderful historical experience waiting for you to enjoy.

In addition, we will have two brand new, energy efficient and safe furnaces installed at the Tripp for your comfort.

We hope that soon you can come see everything that we have been working on over this past year. Thank you for your continued patronage. You are the reason why we do what we do.

Happy holidays and the best to all in 2021.

Lise



Join the fun on Facebook

Join us on the SPAHS group Facebook page along with our other 2,700-plus members, and share the memories. Just go to Facebook, click in the search box at the top and type in *Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society*, and watch the good times roll through your feed. Better yet, once you’re on the page, press the “Join” button. You’ll be added to the group and you can post your own historic memories and photos. See you there.



Bald eagles will alight virtually in January

Programs will be virtual for four weekends in January and February

Get the warm socks, hot chocolate and cookies ready. Bald Eagle Watching Days are coming—to your house.

The 34th annual Bald Eagle Watching Days beginning Jan. 16 and organized by the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council (FBEC), has had to adjust its delivery amidst the growth of the Covid-19 pandemic. You may not be able to physically go to a venue for an event, but hang on—there are plenty of fun, cool and compelling programs to watch with the whole family.

The Sauk Prairie area's annual signature event offers a bonus this year with four weekends of eagle related events instead of just one, via the FBEC website to be viewed on one's choice of devices. Programs will be offered beginning Saturday, Jan. 16, and continue on Jan. 23, Feb. 6 and Feb. 20. All events occur from 1 - 4 p.m.

Historically, the main feature of Bald Eagle Watching Days is the live release of eagles over the Wisconsin River in Prairie du Sac by eagle rehabilitation specialist Marge Gibson of the Raptor Education Group, Inc. based in Antigo. Gibson's eagle release typically draws upwards of 2,000 spectators. January's eagle release will be pre-recorded and available Jan. 16, followed by an online live Q&A session.

Updates to programs and presentations, as well as links by which to access them, will be found on the FBEC's website at ferrybluffeaglecouncil.org.



While the Bald Eagle Days events are offered virtually, there are still plenty of live eagle viewing opportunities. A new feature this year allows visitors and local residents to download a phone app that offers a self-guided tour of eagle habitats, developed especially for Bald Eagle Watching Days. More information about accessing and downloading the app will be available on the FBEC's website.

“With the the Covid pandemic, it's not safe to have large crowds at the River Arts Center or at the river,” Bald Eagle Watching Days co-chair John Keefe said. “It's a way of maintaining the momentum of over 30 years. The eagles will be here. It's a matter of watching them safely and enjoying the river and the community.”

The Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society is a long-time sponsor, and the SPAHS Tripp Museum is a well known venue during Bald Eagle Watching Days.

The SPAHS will offer a popular feature with an appearance of Art and Dawn Shegonee on Jan. 16 to be accessed between 1 and 4 p.m. Art and Dawn are members of the Menominee Tribe, and Art is known as an expert in Native American culture education, part of which is the spiritual symbolism of the bald eagle. Art's presentation is an interesting journey through Native American traditions surrounding the majestic bald eagle.

Continued on page 5



140 years of faith lives on in Our Lady of Loretto

As the sun shines through the east windows, it casts a glow over a statue made in the likeness of Christ. The midday light sets the tone in the silent sanctuary of Our Lady of Loretto church that sits along County Highway C in the Town of Honey Creek, across from the St. Aloysius Catholic cemetery where many of its long ago faithful parishioners rest.

The picturesque, little historic church turned 140 years old this year. It has not had services held inside it for 60 years. But even with its age and inactivity, it has been cared for and loved by many people, some of whom attended there or had loved ones who attended there.

It could be considered one of Sauk County's best kept secrets of yesteryear, quietly holding its own secrets of lives come and gone, not abandoned, but left to age on its own.

That's until the Sauk Prairie Historical Society became its caretaker in 1975, inheriting the church from the last owner, the late Robert Jaedike.



which auctioned off many of its artifacts before the church was torn down in 1968. Among them are several statues and various relics. The church's ornate altar is the original one.



This welcoming statue of Christ is among the many artifacts donated to Our Lady of Loretto historic church from the old St. Aloysius Catholic Church that was torn down in Sauk City in 1968.

Since then, the caretakers of the SPAHS have utilized valuable artifacts donated to the church from its sister church, the old St. Aloysius in Sauk City

Some of those same kinds of artifacts have recently turned up mysteriously. Small, beautiful altar pieces, still in pristine condition at around 160 years old, and likely from the main altar in the old Sauk City St. Aloysius Catholic Church, are the latest to appear. They were donated by St. Vincent de Paul, but the donor could not be identified.

Each one is a hand made wood piece, with an overlaid lead leaf, fastened with square nails. According to records, the pieces were crafted by German immigrant William Dresen, including the lead cast.

"We had some of those little altar pieces already in our collection at the Tripp," Tripp Heritage Museum manager Jack Berndt said. "They were found in a collection and we have no clue where they came from."

There is no more perfect home for the pieces than at the Loretto church, joining a range of other artifacts which had a previous life at the old St.

Aloysius Catholic Church.

"What you see here may not have been in the original Loretto church, but it's Catholic and meaningful," Berndt said.

They are part of what makes the Loretto church unlike no other historic place in the area, with its haunting beauty and solemn atmosphere.

The SPAHS opens the church to the public every other Sunday during the summer. It's also available for weddings and other events.

In October, about 100 people came for self-guided tours during the annual Farm/Art Dtour, many of whom commented they had never been inside the church.

"We kept visitors to five at a time," Berndt said. "The one common thing I heard was, 'oh, my gosh, I've never been in here, and it's so beautiful, and look at all the artwork.' The knowledgeable Catholics were talking

Continued on page 6



Dawn and Art Shegonee will teach about the eagle's sacred place in the Native American culture in a virtual presentation on Jan. 16 pre-recorded at the Tripp Heritage Museum.

On Feb. 6, the SPAHS will offer a return of the beloved Old Abe the Civil War eagle mascot presentation with the fifth and sixth generations of the LaCour family. Their ancestors were the caretakers of Old Abe as a pet eaglet that LaCours' ancestors bartered for with an Indian brave named Chief Sky. They raised took care of him for awhile, then sold it for \$2.50 to the Eau Claire 8th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment which kept him as their mascot. In the years to follow, Old Abe became a celebrity of sorts.

Joe LaCour and his two sons Spencer and William will present their family's history of Old Abe as a virtual presentation between 1 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 23. Joe's father Frank LaCour spent years researching the family history and other available historic documents to learn Old Abe's full life journey. The LaCours speak of

Bald Eagle Watching Days 2021

All events will occur between 1 and 4 p.m.

Jan. 16

"Off to the Wild Blue Yonder!"

Pre-recorded eagle release by Marge Gibson, followed by Q & A session with Marge

"Animals That Live With Eagles" Live virtual animal program with David Stokes

"Eagles in Native American Culture" with Art and Dawn Shegonee - pre-recorded at the Tripp Heritage Museum



Jan. 23

"Eagle Eye to Eye" with the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center; live bird of prey show stars a bald eagle. Live Q&A .

Uncle Butzie, the cutest turkey buzzer ever, with wildlife biologist Lisa Hartman

Sat. Feb. 6

"Watching Eagles Along the River" with wildlife biologist, eagle expert and president of the FBEC, Jeb Barzen ,on eagle behavior, habitat and where to find them in the area

LaCour family with tales of Old Abe, the Civil War eagle mascot. Pre-recorded at the Tripp Heritage Museum.

Re-play of eagle release with Marge Gibson of Raptor Education Group, Inc.

Sat. Feb. 20

"Watching Eagles Along the River, End of Season" Jeb Barzen puts mating season in perspective and talks about where eagles can still be spotted

Re-plays of Schlitz Audubon presentation and David Stokes



Open 7 days a week Outdoor dining available

Bar opens 4 pm Dinner 4:30 pm, Mon. - Thurs. 4 pm Fri. - Sun.

Call for Reservations 643-2305

GreenAcresRestaurant@gmail.com

Old Abe much like anyone would speak of a long gone family member. But Old Abe wasn't like other eagles.

"I think he kind of had the best of both worlds," Joe said. "He was a wild bird, but he liked attention, and wanted to please people. He was a really intelligent bird who wanted to be free but always came back."

Joe said doing the Bald Eagle Watching Days presentations virtually this year may be a boost to the event.

"It might reach a larger audience this way," he said.

about the symbolism here.”

Charged with the last 45 years of care of Loretto, the SPAHS is perpetually fundraising for its maintenance so that this historic beauty can continue being shared with the public.

It’s been almost 30 years since its roof was replaced during a renovation that included bringing in an artist in residence from the University of Wisconsin who was a specialist in renovation and art. The pews were removed and small renovations were completed including the construction of a pulpit and a major re-painting.

Buildings, just like homes, require on-going maintenance, which requires money and people. Those are two things of which not-for-profit organizations are continually in short supply, and desperately needed.

Necessary maintenance needs continue on in perpetuity, Berndt said.

A view of the altar at Our Lady of Loretto



But he added that there aren’t major needs except for a new roof, or roof repair, eventually.

Donations can be made by sending a check to the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society, 565 Water Street Prairie du Sac, WI 53578. Please designate that you would like your contribution to be applied to the care of the Loretto church.



CAMEO ANTIQUE MALL

Visit Our Large Used Bookstore



We have Sauk Prairie area memorabilia

Open Thursday through Monday 9 - 5
Closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays

827 Water St.
Sauk City, WI 53583
608-643-8000

Shop online @ Etsy & Ruby Lane

Eannelli
Pharmacy

GOOD NEIGHBOR PHARMACY

Immunizations Available

GUARANTEED LOWER PRICES	MOST INSURANCE PLANS
15 MINUTE PRESCRIPTION	INCLUDING TRICARE ACCEPTED
SERVICE GUARANTEED	FAX SERVICE (608) 643-4361
FREE DELIVERY AVAILABLE (M-F)	DRIVE-THRU WINDOW

405 Water St. Prairie du Sac, WI 53578

608-643-3396 Mon-Fri 9-6 Sat 9-1 Sun 9-Noon

Spellman Monument Co., Inc.

800 COMMUNITY DR. • SAUK CITY, WI 53583
608.643.8241 • 1.800.852.5775
FAX 608.643.6224



With heartfelt gratitude, we spotlight our valued SPAHS members

Individual

Edna Grotjan Early
Jessica Hasheider
Susan Schmoekel
Connie Harrison
David Lundgren
Lynn Bloomquist
Maureen Baum
Reon Onstine
Bonita Bryant
Donna Kaufman
Mark Enge

Family

Carl & Vicky Ochsner
Susan Morss
Marjorie & Joe Neumaier

Sandy Glotfelty
Robert Whitmoyer
Richard & Linda Frey
David & Kathy May
Lauren & Karren Raschein
Johnsen Central Agency, Inc.
Eric Bash
Jack & Jody Berndt
Bart & Margaret Mauch
Dale & Becky Kowalski
Tom & Mary Jo Tierney
John & Becky Nickel
Paul & Ann Wolter
Kathryn Schwarz & Bruce White
Paige Hosking
Louise & Delorman Enge
Lisa Bell

Sponsor

Phil Trautmann
William & Kathleen Conger
Tools of Marketing, Inc.
Hart Painting
Karen & Rick Armstrong
Keith Wegner
Pam Elsing
Brian Mack

Patron

Steve Hegerfeld

Steward

Cheryl Carroll
Kay Hutchison
Cheryl Carroll

Dischler

Heating, Cooling & Fireplaces

900 19th St.
Prairie du Sac
608.643.4536

Visit our Fireplace Showroom
Mon - Fri 7 AM to 4:30 PM

Maplewood

Sauk Prairie

608.643.3383

Rehabilitation • Memory Care • Long-Term Care

Helping Independent Seniors Lead Active Lives.
608.643.8494

www.maplewoodsaukprairie.com

Premier Rehabilitation Program.

"Restoring Health One Step At A Time."

Maplewood Village

Assisted Living Apartments

Auto • Home • Life • Business • Farm

Customized insurance solutions and personal service since 1919.

MEYER Insurance

Strength and Security

Trusted Choice

Independent Insurance Agent

(608) 643-3000 • meyeragency.com

HART PAINTING

Since 1972

Interior & Exterior
Commercial & Residential Painting

608-643-6049

828 Industry Road • Sauk City, WI 53583

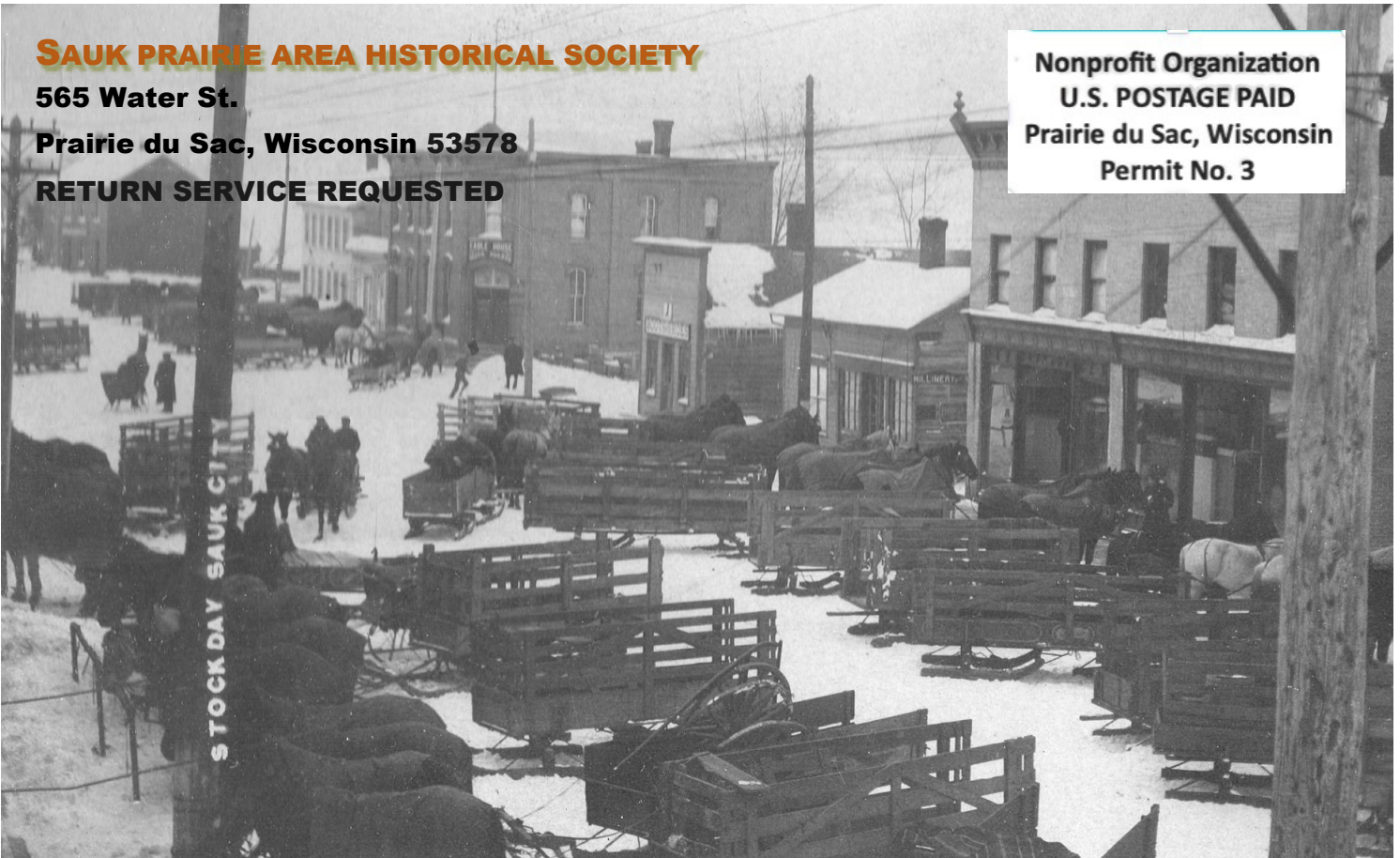
SAUK PRAIRIE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

565 Water St.


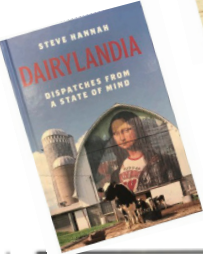


Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin 53578

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin
Permit No. 3



It was a busy time on this day in the winter of 1910 in Sauk City. Area residents gathered pulling sleighs for their purchases.



Looking for a unique Christmas gift? You found it.

Visit the Tripp Heritage Museum via our online store to find gifts for your favorite Sauk Prairie friends and family. From books, to DVDs, CDs and more, you're not only fostering a love of all things Sauk Prairie, your purchase also supports the mission of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society.






So, your gift is two gifts in one.

Find us at www.saukprairiehistory.org

(Online prices include shipping and handling charges.)

Until further notice, visits to the museum can be made by appointment.

Call us at (608) 644-8444 or email us at spahs@frontier.com



Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society Membership Sale

Purchase online @ www.saukprairiehistory.org OR fill out and mail this form to 565 Water Street, Prairie du Sac, WI 53578

Name of new member(s): _____ Person gifting membership: _____

Street Address: _____

of new member

Email/phone to reach you: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Membership level (circle one) Individual \$25 | Family \$40 | Sponsor \$100 | Patron \$250 | Historian \$500 | Steward \$1,000