

SPAHS is all abuzz for the Christmas season

Lise Meyer-Kobussen

We invite you and your family to join us for the festivities on Saturday, December 2, 2023.



The Tripp Museum will be extending its hours to 9 am through 3 pm. Stop in to test your Grinch trivia and you could win a prize. Santa and Mrs. Claus make their appearance from 12 noon until 2 pm. It will be a great photo-op of your

kids or your family. We will be collecting your letters written to Santa throughout the day. Be sure to include the return address if you want Santa to write back.



At 5 pm, come out and enjoy an old-fashioned Christmas program at the Salem Ragatz Church. (Corner of Highway PF and Church Rd. in the town of Prairie du Sac) Sauk Prairie Historical Society along with the Blackhawk Bethlehem church are hosting the second annual "Christmas Carols in the Country." (They provide musical talent and programming, and we provide a beautifully decorated Church). Join in singing classic Christmas Carols and then stay for refreshments after in the basement fellowship hall. Unfortunately, the church isn't handicap accessible and there are several stairs to climb up or go down.

This was from an email Ron Kindschi sent about last year's "Christmas Carols in the Country":

I just have to extend our compliments and appreciation for the event last night at the Ragatz. The setting, the decorations, and the program were all perfect. I am sure all that were there will expound to all their acquaintances the excitement of their experience there. Consequently, I would expect that if this event were continued in the coming years attendance would increase exponentially. I might expound a bit on our personal impression of the night.

The Kindschi's of course were involved with this church in its earliest days when Johann Kindschi and his family arrived in 1846 from Switzerland and settled in Swiss Valley. My father Harry was born in the Swiss Valley in the now Nolden farm so attended this church, and there learned German. He was born in 1905 so would have gone to Christmas Eve services in this building in 1912, the first year of this current building when he was like 11 years old. Thinking about this, I could not help thinking back about traveling to the church for this event. My mind drifted back to what it was probably like in 1912 for my father and the Kindschi's and others traveling for Christmas Eve services at the Salem Church. Cold, horses to harness, sleds to hook up, kids to bundle, blankets for the sled, and snowbanks to cross on the way.

Arriving there among others from the community parking their sleds, tying up the horses, unloading everyone, and filling into church. Heating the church was less complete then so comfort in the service was cold and uncomfortable. However, I expect that the closeness of the community and the love of fellow neighbor attendees created more warmth than the actual temperature within the building. Then after the service, a similar preparation and travel home ensued. The conclusion of a cold, emotionally uplifting, neighbor contacts, tiring, nativity-honoring God-filled experience at the Salem Church. High marks for an important event for a quality life in those days.

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appointment.

From the Desk of
SPAHS Board President
John Hart

The society has just finished up with our fall season of Tripp Club 21 programs. Nearly 80 people attended the presentation and field trip led by author Patrick Jung to the Wisconsin Heights Battlefield.



John

He really provided a good timeline of the events on July 21, 1832. He stitched together reports from many sources to make this event compelling and relevant.

It was impossible to attend the session with author Rich Rossin, without learning something of interest regarding the history of “Brewing and Distilling in Sauk City”. He provided good information on all the human connections and stories of Sauk City entrepreneurs who in the mid to late 19th century led brewing and distilling businesses in Elroy, Eau Claire, and Chippewa Falls to which they migrated to.

Our third program was a presentation by Paul Wolter, Executive Director of the Sauk County Historical Society. It was another of his typically well researched programs which provided new material to those who attended. We are still dealing with some of the social and political issues that Americans faced for over more than 200 years.

One of my favorite activities as president of SPAHS is working with the many talented members of SPAHS and other community members who have a deep-seated interest in our community’s past. One of my personal favorites is a friend of SPAHS and society member David Schweitzer. As an actor he recreates an outstanding August Derleth impersonation. His interpretation and recitation of Derleth’s writing has just the right touch. Recently in a segment videotaped inside Park Hall as “Derleth” who spoke about his lifelong friendship with Hugo Schwenker. The video will soon be edited, and a title will be decided on. It then will be featured on the SPAHS YouTube Channel. Check it out. His previous segment, titled “Spirits of Sauk Prairie” has been viewed over 300 times.



We are pleased to report that SPAHS will be receiving a grant from the 2024 Sauk Prairie United Way campaign to support our on-going youth education outreach programs at Tripp Heritage Museum. This year we have provided programming to approximately 400 students.

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So, after the conclusion of the event, we exited the church, into a clear cold night illuminated by an almost full moon. The moon shone beautifully across the dark fields in front of us like nothing had changed in the 110 years this building had sat there. The world of course had drastically changed. But the fact that what we had just witnessed coupled with the view we were greeted with as we exited had not changed. God's creation and the facility behind us, have existed unchanged for many, many years and generations. Same building, same moon, same fields, and still has the magic to glorify God by today's people.

Thank you.

Ron and Donna Kindschi

From the Desk of SPAHS Board President

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One highlight of the Society's year has been the number of new memberships. As of mid-November, we have 16 new memberships with some time yet before we finish up the year. This is more new members than in the previous 3 years combined. Please pass the word on that our memberships start at as little as \$25 per year. We have about 325 dues paying memberships. We also have an extended number of local history interested persons with our Facebook Group of more than 3,800 participants. Please see the new member form on the back page of this newsletter and encourage others to join. Always please consider an upgrade to your membership. In the future also please consider leaving a financial legacy through your estate planning by designating the Historical Society as one of your beneficiaries.

Thank you all for being a part of preserving our Sauk Prairie Area History.



New and Renewed Memberships Since Last Newsletter

- Sheila Anderson
- William & Helen Campbell
- William F. & Kathleen Conger
- Tom & Carol Kratochwill
- Mary & Brian Weeks
- Karren & Lauren Raschein
- Linda Wiedenfeld & Dave Lukens
- Catherine Enge Douglass
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- Connie Konkle
- Marietta Reuter
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- Kathy & David May
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Cameo Antiques Mall Closing

Jack Berndt

In 2010, we began running ads in our SPAHS Newsletters to help defray the production costs. Our first business that signed up for an ad was Cameo Antiques Mall in Sauk City. Cameo has been in business for 21 years and on November 30, 2023, will close its doors for the last time. Their Retirement Sale is going on for the remainder of this month. "Thanks Cameo, for all your support. Always a great place to stop 'n shop 'n chat!" Here are some scenes from the recent retirement celebration at Cameo.



Return to Tripp Club 21

Jack Berndt

After a five year hiatus, SPAHS has revived our series of Tripp Club 21 programs. These are local history presentations, one in each month of September, October, & November. Our first program on Sept. 30 featured author Dr. Patrick Jung speaking at Tripp on the Sauk war chief Black Hawk and the 1832 Battle of Wisconsin Heights, followed by a field trip to the actual battlefield in Dane Co., by Hwy. 78, two miles from Sauk City. The event was well-attended (over 70 people); and as such, we're planning another "talk & walk" with Dr. Jung in May 2024.



Our second program in October was "Beer & Spirits in Sauk City," a presentation based on the book *"Historical Times of Brewing and Distilling in Sauk City, Wisconsin,"* by Mauston author Richard J. Rossin, Jr. Richard explained that the typical 1870s small town had one brewery, Sauk City had five. The new MT Brewery of Sauk City brought two styles of their beers to Tripp for sampling. And Steve Statz was on hand, selling some of his beer cans collection with proceeds going to SPAHS. "A good time was had by all!"

An Old River Pole on the Beach

Jack Berndt

In November 2006 the Bradford Bison was discovered in the Wisconsin Riverbed, slightly below the Prairie du Sac dam. This 5000-7000 year old skull was discovered by six year old Joshua Bradford during a hike with his Kid's Companion, Bob Weiss. This discovery was important for a number of reasons, foremost being that it confirmed the existence of the extinct *bison occidentalis* in the Sauk Prairie area. Today, it remains the centerpiece artifact at Tripp celebrating the long rich history of the riverway and the Sauk Prairie area. And now, 17 years later, the Wisconsin River has given up another first-of-its-kind treasure. This past July, Ron Ryan, an employee with the village of SC, was cleaning up the beach area of the Riverfront Park canoe launch (formerly. the August Derleth Park). The river had been high earlier in the month, flooding up over the beach and beyond; when the river receded, it left behind the usual debris one finds afterwards. Only this time, there was an oddity on the ground, visibly lying between two memorial benches. It appeared to be a long tree branch, but when seen up-close, there was a rusted cone shaped iron tip on one end. Ron took the item, brought it to the Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce building and SPAHS was notified of this unusual finding. We retrieved it and brought it to Tripp for safe-keeping. It's a manufactured 10' long pole, possibly used by a ferry, a flat barge, or lumber rafts that were common on the river in the mid-late 1800s. More recently, we discovered that an old steamboat from the area (the *ELLEN HARDY*) had poles like this on deck. They came in handy to push-off when the boat became stuck on a sandbar, not an uncommon occurrence on the Wisconsin River.



Ron Ryan at Tripp with the pole he discovered in July 2023.

More research is needed on this pole. Because of the Bradford Bison, the Tripp has an artifact friendly environment, where temperature and relative humidity are monitored throughout the day. Thanks to Ron, there's another important river artifact at the museum. And special thanks to the village of Sauk City for gifting this to SPAHS. Check out this YouTube video for a discovery of a similar pole in another river: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVY2Lamm5jE&t=9s>

Edward Jones



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Biographical Sketches of Early Sauk Prairie

Stephen and Curtis Bates

Stephen Bates was not the typical settler when he came to Sauk City in 1843. He was born in 1773 which made him 70 years old. He and his wife Naomi had raised 9 children to adulthood. Most of the early settlers were single men or young families. The Bates arrived on the Sauk Prairie along with one son and two daughters. They were “Yankees” from the Finger Lakes region of New York. He had been a contractor building a portion of the Erie Canal. He was a judge and served several terms in the State Senate.

Stephen Bates served as jurist in the trial of several freemasons who were indicted in the kidnapping and murder of William Morgan in 1826. Morgan had alleged that he had written a book exposing Freemasonry’s secrets, he was arrested on trumped-up charges. He disappeared soon after and was believed to have been kidnapped and killed by Masons from western New York. Three Masons were convicted of taking part in the kidnapping and served sentences. This became a national scandal resulting in anti-Mason sentiment causing many elections to go to non-Masons for a number of years afterwards.

Stephen Bates along with Agoston Haraszthy and Charles Baxter signed the original plat for the village of Haraszthy (1843), which later became Westfield (1850) and later Sauk City (1854). Bates Street running west from Water Street was named after him. He died September 24, 1845, and is buried in the Free Thinkers section of the Sauk City Cemetery. His was most certainly was one of the first burials.

The Bate’s son Curtis married Nancy Seaver in 1845. He was elected County Treasurer in 1846,



the year that Baraboo became the County Seat. He was elected Sauk County Commissioner in 1847. In 1849 Curtis Bates was appointed Postmaster for the village of Haraszthy. Agoston Haraszthy and family emigrated to California in 1849 and the village name was changed to “Westfield”. In the following decade Curtis would be elected Treasurer, Village Trustee, and President of the Sauk Prairie Bible Society. For several years his employment was listed as “Miller”.

When Wisconsin obtained statehood in 1848 retail banking was not allowed by the constitution. In 1852 a banking law was passed that allowed retail banks to be chartered by the Wisconsin Banking Commission. George Baxter Burrows and Simeon Asa Mills were the officers of The Sauk City Bank. In 1864 the Curtis Bates family would lose Alfred age 7 and Katie age 9 from scarlet fever. Bates purchased the bank from Burrows and Mills in 1865. Burrows moved to Madison, entered politics and become Speaker of the Assembly. In 1867 Curtis was elected village clerk.

One economic need that these state charter banks provided was the printing of paper currency.



Biographical Sketches of Early Sauk Prairie

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The Sauk City bank printed \$5.00 notes. See the example illustrated. It is an artifact in the SPAHS collection. It appears that the bank ceased operating by 1869. Curtis and family moved to Nebraska and later Mason City Iowa. The closing of the bank probably created a hole in the economy of Sauk Prairie. It was reported that Sauk City lawyer J. Stephens Tripp at this time started to provide private banking services from his law office.

It would be nearly 30 years before he would seek a state charter for his "The Sauk Bank" and become a public banker. For nearly 40 years the "Bates" family contributed to the founding of our community. All that remains is the street that was named after them.



From the Alice and Edna Graff Collection - SPAHS



Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 2, 2023

"Holly Jolly Grinchmas" 9am-3pm | Grinch Trivia, & Crafts | Letters to Santa & Mrs. Claus (12-2pm)

Saturday, January 13, 2024

11am "Bald Eagles in the Native American Culture" Art & Dawn Shegonee



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