

Along the Riverway

A publication of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society

WINTER
2024-25

Volume 50
Issue 3

In Our Collection—The Letters of Tess Mueller Part Two

[Part one covered the first month of Tess Mueller's 14 month trip around the world. Part two continues for three more months, travelling in Japan, Korea and China.]

On August 20th, 1937, Tess writes from Tokyo after touring Kikko.

"There must have been a mobilization order about the time we left Kikko, because a contingent of drafted soldiers took the same train we did. The mayor made a speech, friends stood around holding white flags with red circles, everything was very orderly and quiet. Just as the train pulled out someone started the national anthem, and everyone waved his flag. We picked up soldiers at every stop. Well-wishers were lined up along the right of way and waved their flags and heered. The school children were out in force. It was all very disheartening.

From the beginning, in Tokyo we had noticed women standing at busy street corners to collect the thousand stitches for the charm belts for their soldiers. These are long strips of cotton cloth with a thousands little dots stamped on them. A thousand women embroider each one little dot, and I suppose, say a little prayer for the safe keeping of the soldier is to receive the belt."

Later in the letter Tess writes: "We plan on going to Korea to stay one week in Seoul and two weeks in the Diamond Mountains and then return for three more weeks in Japan."

The Diamond Mountains are in present day North Korea. **Upon their return to Japan Tess writes:**

"Now that the matter is settled against us, I must confess that we tried our darnedest to get to Peking if only for a week. The Tourism Bureau in Seoul, Korea, wouldn't sell us a ticket so we tried again in Kobe, Japan. We went to see the consul one day. He urged us not to go. When we went to the OSK Steamship line the next morning the American consul had been in that morning and asked a special favor that they sell no tickets to Americans without the consul's special ok in every case, so we quit trying."

"On the train between Shimonoseki and Miyajima, Bess had the good fortune to sit next to the managing editor of a Japanese newspaper in Dairen. He thought we were very foolish not to go to Peking. He had been there just the week before. He assured us there were two passenger trains daily running

between Tangtu, the port for Tientsin and Peking, and while he admitted that the passenger trains were shunted to a siding to let the troop trains pass, he insisted they always got there."

This encounter gave courage to Tess and Beth to revise their plans and make their way to China.

Tess writes on October 15, 1937.

"We are on the "Chokomaru" anchored outside the bar, which cannot be crossed at low tide, waiting to get into Tangku and from there to Tsientsin and Peking. We have booked our return passage for two weeks from now, so that by the time you receive this, I shall be safe in Japan, and it will be too late for you to worry."

Tess writes that after waiting onboard 12 hours for the tide to rise, they were able to disembark. They then had to wait 6 more hours before they boarded the train to Peking. They passed the time in a Kailin Mining Association Club House as there were no restaurants in Tangku. The building was bombed just the week prior.

Tess continues with her letter of October 16th.

"The train left at the scheduled hour, 2:30 AM and got to Tientsin on time, 4 PM. The first-class coach was very comfortable and well taken care of. From the train windows this part of China appeared to be a land of the dead. I looked out over flat fields and saw endless stacks of grain and hay running off toward the horizon, or so I thought. Imagine my surprise when Miss Dyott said they were graves! The Chinese put conical mounds of mud over their dead: large mounds for important people, exaggerated molehills for lesser people. At the top of each mound, they wound a knob like the button on top of a mandarin cap."

"The mandarin cap is very common here and finishes off the long Chinese Gown most appropriately. The northern Chinese are a tall sturdy muscular race with strong white teeth."

"We took a long walk through the English and French concessions. The English section is most impressive with handsome new buildings. By the way, we saw some of the

Continue on to Page 3



Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT
John Hart

VICE PRESIDENT
John Nickel

SECRETARY
David Geier

TREASURER
Cheryl Carroll

Board Members
Lise Meyer-Kobussen
Becky Nickel
Jennifer Niles
Ethan Kolnik

How to Contact Us
BY MAIL:
565 Water Street
Prairie du Sac, WI
53578

SEND US AN EMAIL:
spahs@frontier.com

CALL US:
(608) 644-8444

VISIT US ONLINE:
saukprairiehistory.org
salemragatzchurch.org

VISIT IN PERSON:
Check out **Tripp Heritage Museum** by appointment or during open hours. Saturdays 10am-1pm. Please call Museum Manager, Jack Berndt at (608) 644-8444 to schedule an appointment.

From the Desk of
SPAHS Board President
John Hart

We are pleased to report that we recently received an anonymous gift of \$1,000 towards the support of Our Lady of Loretto Historic Church. The limestone church, located in Honey Creek Township, was built in 1880 as a mission of St. Aloysius Catholic Church in Sauk City. It had a membership of German and Irish settlers.



John

The church building was gifted to the Sauk Prairie Historical Society (SPAHS) in 1975. It was added to the National Register of Historical Places in 1990 and was restored by SPAHS over the following decade. We are thankful for the continued support by the descendants of former parishioners and others in the community.

Just as we are going to press with this newsletter, we received an unrestricted gift of \$10,000 from Orwin Eilertson of Merrimac. Orie has been a long-time supporter of SPAHS. He is a former board member and Tripp Heritage Museum curator. We look forward to using part of his generous gift to improve our audio-visual capabilities. Many thanks to you "Orie".

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes", was Benjamin Franklin's often repeated proverb. I propose adding a third event to his quote: "Inflation." We all have experienced significant cost increases in both goods and services. At SPAHS, our three historic buildings have experienced a greater increase in ordinary maintenance costs and repairs. All our operating costs (utilities, insurance, and printing) have gone up as well.

Our membership levels have remained the same for more than 20 years. The SPAHS Board has determined that we need to increase our Individual Membership levels in January from \$25 to \$30 per year. The Family/Couple Membership level will increase from \$40 to \$50 per year. We hope that you will continue to support our organization with its mission.

On a brighter note SPAHS has for the second year has been awarded a grant from the United Way of Sauk Prairie. We use these funds to support our educational youth outreach programming with our school communities. This year we added programming for High School age students that included a guided tour of the Wisconsin Heights 1832 Battlefield. Our 2024 SPAHS fundraiser letter will be sent separately by USPS mail. Please consider participating in this yearly campaign in addition to your annual membership.

This issue includes the continuation of Tess Mueller's travel letters and Carl Lehman's WWI Xmas "letter home" as all soldiers were required to write. Carl was 31 years when he entered the military. With two brothers-in-law he would start the Ford dealership in Pds.

We at SPAHS wish a happy and blessed holiday season to you all.



In Our Collection...

...Continued from Page 1

buildings wrecked in the earlier bombing near the station. In the French concession – which is a bit of Paris transplanted – we like best the food street, where vander after vander had trays of appetizing roasted ducks and roasted chickens, to say nothing of roast chestnuts, rolled pancakes, various kinds of fry cakes and many other things, the sight of which wetted our appetite for the very fine dinner we had here at the hotel.”

“We get up at 5:45 tomorrow to catch the 7:40 train for Peking.... These handsome Oriental cities amaze me. Did you know that Tientsin has over 3,000,000 inhabitants?”

From Peking China, October 23, 1937.

“Our first week in Peking has been an unqualified success. Everything is so pleasant that it is hard to believe that the American Consul thought it dangerous for us to come here. We bowl along the streets in our rickshaws without a hindrance. We have covered the entire two week’s sight-seeing program of the average tourist in the six days just past.”

From Peking China, November 8, 1937.

“Last Saturday an English woman named Lady Wood, a Miss MacLean of New Zealand, Miss Plaum of California, a Chinese woman named Mrs. Chou, and I went to the Great Wall. The Japan Tourist Bureau and the Japanese embassy said it was entirely safe, and they were certainly right. It was not only safe, it was an extremely pleasant day. The wall was thrilling and the bright sunshine kept us warm even at a 2000-foot altitude. You should have seen me on my tall donkey! I had to stand on a rock to mount him, to the great amusement of some Japanese sentries.”

From Shimonoseki, Japan, November 15, 1937.

“Here I am, on my way to Kobe to sail on the “President Taff” for Hong Kong on November 17th. The trip to Peking went off without a hitch in spite of all dire predictions. Even the trains ran on schedule for us.

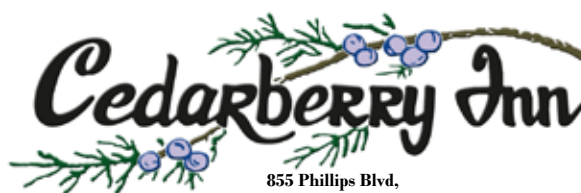
There is always a two hour wait in Shimonoseki after the night ferry arrives from Fusan in Korea, but this hotel opposite the station is excellent. For a little less than 35 cents American, I have just finished a breakfast of fresh orange juice, oatmeal, ham and eggs, brown bread toast and coffee. I was casting up accounts the train yesterday and find that since landing in Japan on August 7, I have been spending at the rate of \$6.00 a day which is considerably more than I expected to spend. The side trip to Peking came high, but I don’t begrudge a cent of the money, as I may never be able to afford to come this way again. I don’t spend \$6 every day, but \$600 divided by the number of days gives the average.

After spending 4 months traveling throughout Japan, Korea and China, Tess was ready to move on with 10 months and many thousands of miles to go.

Part 3 will print in our Spring 2025 newsletter and will pick up her travels in Hong Kong, Manila, Bali, Jama, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon Burma, Cambodia, Calcutta, Delhi and Jaspur India, the Suez Canal, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Athens, Sicily, Naples, Rome, Florence, Bolonga, Innsbruck, Munich, Rothenberg, Nurnberg, Vienna, Pague, Warsaw, Moscow, Leningrad, Stockholm, Norway, Scotland, England, and Ireland, She often spent from one to eight weeks at each stop.



Open 7 Days a Week
Bar open 4pm. Dinner service 4:30pm.
608-643-2305 GreenAcresRestaurant.com



855 Phillips Blvd,
Sauk City, WI 53583

608-643-6625

www.cedarberryinn.com

A Christmas Letter from the Past

Jack Berndt

In the SPAHS collection is a hand-made scrapbook of World War I articles and photos. While browsing its yellowed pages, we came across a special letter appropriate for this time of year - a Christmas letter. This letter was sent from the trenches of France by Prairie du Sac resident Carl Lehmann (Right) to his Sauk City mentor, friend, and Civil War veteran, Conrad Kuoni. (Reprinted from Winter 2012 newsletter edited by Jody Kapp Berndt.)

From: Carl Lehmann (1887-1969)

To: Veteran Conrad Kuoni of Sauk City

Date: November 24, 1918

Dear Mr. Kuoni:

Today is the day when every American soldier in the A.E.F. writes a letter to his father or somebody else's father. As you know that I cannot execute the former, I shall take the pleasure to write you a "Dad's Xmas Letter." In as few words as possible I will describe some of my experiences in this greatest of wars. Left home in Prairie du Sac September 18, 1917, per auto to the county court house where I reported. From that minute on we belonged to Uncle Sam to fight for liberty. Left Baraboo about 2 p.m. and arrived at Camp Grant, Rockford, Ill., early that evening. There was the first I ever marched in a formation under military command, however, in civilian clothes. ...At this camp I belonged to Co. D 331st Field Artillery. Oh, how well I remember when I first learned to execute squads right and left.

The school of a soldier. About October 23rd I was transferred to Headquarters Co. At the time I thought it was awful to leave all my good pals but I well understood that an order in the army was an order, so there was no argument. October 30th I was promoted from private to top sergeant of a company of 163 men. Now I realized that a sergeant had many, many responsibilities to shoulder and my hard work began.

December 10, I was transferred to Co. 7, 1st Motor Mechanics regiment at Camp Hancock, Georgia, by war department order. ...Arrived at Camp Hancock December

13, 1917. Oh, what beautiful weather we all expected, but to our sorrow we were greeted with a sharp gale, sleet and ice. ... We now had a company of 167 men all raving to go. We had considerable hard drilling and daily inspection. January 21, 1918, the good word came to leave for some port. I arrived at Camp Merrit, N.J., the 25th, making it a four days' trip. This camp is a beautiful place, however, it was very cold at the time we were there. Here is where we all discovered it was h— to be quarantined as we were restricted to quarters for eight days.

February 6th we received orders to embark the 8th. The day of the 6th a friend and myself were given a pass to visit New York and we surely celebrated as it was the last one in U.S. for a while. The morning of the 8th came and we slung our packs and marched to the train on our way to Hoboken. It was a peculiar sensation to take the last step off mother earth and walk up the plank. We set sail February 10th on the President Lincoln which carried 5,000 soldiers. After we had landed in France for some time I read an official notice that this transport was torpedoed on a homeward bound voyage. The ship sank an hour after being struck.

We landed in Port St. Naziere February 24, disembarked the 26th, making the trip in 14 days. On our trip we spied but one submarine and seven shots put it out of existence.

March 23rd we left Camp St. Naziere and arrived at Advance Park No. 1 Langers.

Here our line of work started—trucks and touring cars for repair. ... This work did not last long and we started to haul munition, soldiers, and supplies from one sector to another at the front. Here is where our hardships and thrilling experiences started. All we were furnished was a rifle, gas mask, mess kit and two blankets and we started off. I cannot go into any details for if I did it would make a book instead of a letter. There is no need mentioning any of the important sectors as I'm sure you have traced them with a red pencil on the map. Anyhow I was in it at a good many. I have seen where the streams were turned to blood color. Will not mention anything about the dead, wounded, moans and groans as in writing I cannot express it properly.



Continue on to Page 5

In Our Collection...

...Continued from Page 1

The summary of it all can be written in seven words. (It was hell from start to finish.) Nobody will ever realize how terrible this war really was unless one took part in it. All a fellow can do is pat himself on the shoulder and say, "we all have played tag with death, but made a safe goal."

I consider myself very fortunate as I have been in the hospital but twice since over here. Oh, how glorious was the 11th hour, 11th day and 11th month of 1918, no one will ever be able to describe the feeling, however, I can imagine that the joy was fully as great at home. Although at many a home the joy of victory was a reminder of grief. At present I am located where the Americans made their first big drive in September, the name I cannot state on account of censorship. We expect to move onto German territory very soon. Oh, how we are all longing for the day to come to sail for the good U.S.A. At the present camp we have 2,500 German prisoners who are kept busy all day, however, we give them good treatment, only they must remember their place or they might be out of luck.

...In regard to France: It is a pretty country for sight seeing, but I would not care to live here. The country in general is very hilly and swampy in many sections, but I must say that they have wonderful roads. Italy is also a pretty country, much more prairie-like in sections than France and I would like it much better to live in.

Comparing this war with the civil war in which you and my father fought for about three years is very different, because all the new inventions up to date have made it a deep scientific war affair. As an illustration I might mention that the type of shell used today is capable of doing one hundred times the damage that would be done

by one of those that you used to hear whiz through the air. Furthermore the gas shells that were used in this world war were more destructive than that.

I have taken numerous trips in the air and aeroplanes to us over here are very common, as they were humming above us day and night. I frankly state that no soldier in the A.E.F. will have any complaints to make about our clothing, quarters, and food. We always had plenty if conditions allowed, however, many times we went 24 to 30 hours without, but it could not be different and many, many times when some of those chaps that were left behind were lying in a nice soft bed dreaming that "war is hell" many of us were sleeping in trucks, on rock piles, dugouts, any place but what I would call comfortable. An old army query is "When do we eat?" This has been changed to "When do we go home?" We are all ready to fall in line for that.

I will bring this letter to a close even though I have not started to tell you anything. Wishing you a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year. Remember me to the bunch. Especially to John, Oscar, Max and Buff. This leaves me in good health.

Yours very truly,

M.S.E. Carl Lehmann, Co. 7, 1st Air Service Mech. Reg. American Exp. Forces. France.

After his duty was complete, Carl returned home to settle down. Many today still remember his wife, Esther, as she drove from their home on Park Ave. around town for years in a big 1930 Model "A" Ford. Carl, along with Fred Lemm and Rollie Steuber, opened up the Ford Garage in the building that recently hosted Luck's Antique Mall.



Edward Jones



Joe LaCour, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
493 Water St
Prairie Du Sac, WI 53578
608-643-7890

edwardjones.com

MKT-5894M-A

Spellman Monument Co., Inc.



800 COMMUNITY DR. • SAUK CITY, WI 53583
608.643.8241 • 1.800.862.5775
FAX 608.643.6224

Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society Presents



**“CHRISTMAS CAROLS
IN THE COUNTRY”**

Sing the “Songs of the Season”, Hear the “Heart of Christmas”

Saturday, December 7th, 2024

5:00-6:00 PM

Cookie Reception Follows Program
Ragatz Honey Creek Historic Church
Corner of PF & Church Rd. PdS

**Celebrating Salem Ragatz Church of
Honey Creek’s 180th Anniversary of
the Founding of the Congregation.**

This German/Swiss Block and Stack church has been known by many names over the years: the Ragatz Church, the Swiss Church, the German Salem Church of the Evangelical Association of USA, the Honey Creek Church, and lastly before it retired and passed on to the Sauk Prairie Historical Society, it was the Salem United Methodist Church.

Erhart Mueller wrote a prologue in the History of the Salem Church of Honey Creek book about the members of the church:

Their tomorrows are now our yesterdays, -colored by the people of that day, the little world they lived in, the schools they attended, and the church in which they worshipped. Today, the descendants of this church are scattered over the United States and beyond, and many more have gone to their eternal reward. And the church yet remains-Perhaps in time it too will cease to operate as a church and become a Memorial.



Season's Greetings

BZ Market Free Delivery - Phone 13 SAUK CITY

BEDWELL **ICE CREAM** Gal.

\$1.19

FRUIT BASKETS Made To Order



Upcoming Events

Holly Jolly Elf Day
Saturday, December 7th,
9am-3pm
Tripp Heritage Museum

Christmas Carols in
the Country
Saturday, December 7th, 5pm
Salem Ragatz Historic Church

John Joseph Coffee

Want coffee? johnjosephcoffee.com 112 Van Buren St. Sauk City, WI 53583

LAURA BREUNIG

608.963.2720

breunigl@FirstWeber.com
LauraBreunig.firstweber.com

FIRSTWEBER REALTORS
The human side of real estate.



*New and Renewed Memberships
Since Last Newsletter*

- Jack & Jody Berndt
- William F. & Kathleen Conger
- Marilyn Denzer Horstman
- Pam Elsing
- Al & Alberta Frey
- Richard & Linda Frey
- Sandy & Joe Glotfelty
- John Keefe & Sandy Hayes
- Connie Konkle
- Becky & Dale Kowalski
- David Lundgren
- Loren & Karren Raschein
- Linda Mack
- Carl & Vicky Ochsner
- Neal & Penny Ragatz
- Marietta Reuter
- Jim Slattery
- Phil Trautmann
- Christine Tyler
- Mary & Brian Weeks
- Robert & Marianne Whitmoyer
- Linda Wiedenfeld & Dave Lukens

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

**ONE CAMPUS
ONE TEAM**

Assisted Living
Rehabilitation
Memory Care
Long-term Care

maplewoodsaukprairie.com




Auto • Home • Life • Business • Farm

Customized insurance solutions
and personal service since 1919.

MEYER
Insurance

Strength and Security

Trusted ChoiceSM

(608) 643-3000 • meyeragency.com

Everett's
Body Shop & Towing Inc.

Auto Body • Classic Restoration • 24/7 Towing

847 15th Street, Prairie du Sac, WI 53578
608-643-8624

Bryan Niles - Owner,
Auto Body Technician, Towing Operator

contact@everettsbodyshop.com | www.everettsbodyshop.com

SAUK PRAIRIE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

565 Water Street
Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin 53578

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Community Christmas Tree 1958
John Gruber Collection

Please support Sauk Prairie Historical Society by becoming a member or giving a gift membership!

Sign up and purchase online
www.saukprairiehistory.org

OR

Fill out and mail this form to:
565 Water Street, Prairie du Sac, WI 53578

Name(s): _____

Person gifting membership: _____

Street Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Membership Level Interested (circle one): Historian \$1000 | Benefactor \$500
Patron \$250 | Individual \$25 | Family \$40 | Sponsor \$100



SPONSOR MEMBERSHIP

\$100.00

Your membership keeps the Sauk Prairie legacy alive by supporting the ongoing archiving of photos, artifacts, and oral histories.



FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

\$40.00

All SPAHS members receive the "Along the Riverway" newsletter, chock-full of photos and stories of Sauk Prairie past and present.



INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

\$25.00

Your membership helps keep the Sauk Prairie legacy alive by supporting the ongoing archiving of photos, artifacts, and oral histories.