

sauk prairie area historical society

Along the Riverway

A Night with Steve Hannah

Dairylandia

Dispatches from a State of Mind

Thursday | October 24

Tripp Heritage Museum

6:00 to 6:30 PM Mingle

7:00 PM Program

Years ago, Steve Hannah's chance detour through the Midwest cut short a planned cross-country trip. He found himself in Wisconsin, a distinctly different place from the east coast where he was born and raised. Charmingly beautiful and full of welcoming people, America's dairyland would soon become his home.

Dairylandia recounts Steve Hannah's burgeoning love for his adopted state through the writings of his long-lived column, "State of Mind." He profiles the lives of the seemingly ordinary, yet quite (and quietly) extraordinary folks he met and befriended on his travels. From Norwegian farmers to rattlesnake hunters to a woman who kept her favorite dead bird in the freezer, Hannah was charmed and fascinated by practically everyone he met. These captivating vignettes are by turns humorous, tragic, and remarkable—and remind us of our shared humanity.

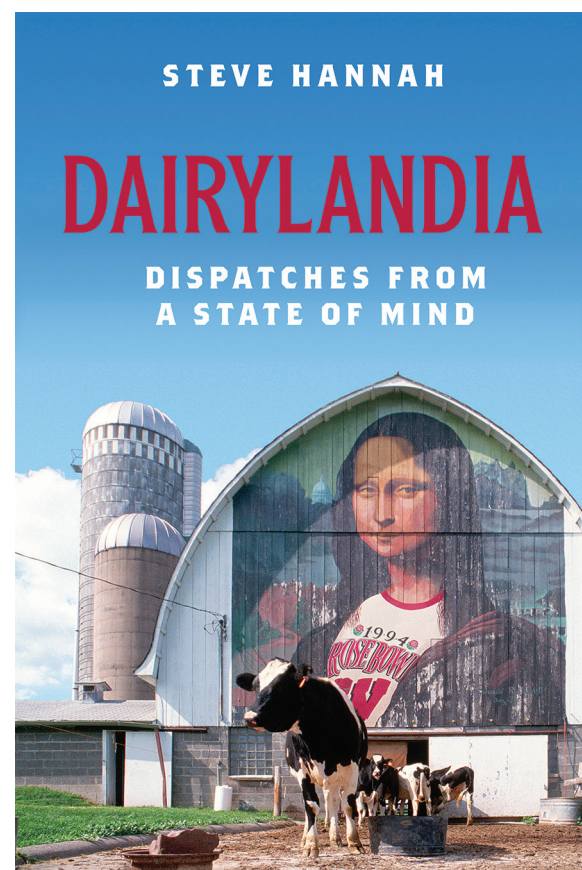
Hannah's book includes two Sauk Prairie stories. A must read for anyone with a sense of humor and shared love for all things Wisconsin.

About Steve Hannah

Steve Hannah began his career working for CBS News in New York, then spent almost two decades as a pretty good reporter, sometime columnist, State Capitol Bureau Chief, Metropolitan Editor, Managing Editor and Executive Editor of the Milwaukee Journal. He devoted twelve years of his life to writing a syndicated column called "State of Mind," which was far and away the best job he ever had. The last eleven years of his career were spent as CEO of The Onion, America's Finest News Source.

He grew up on the east coast and, quite by accident, found himself in a mysterious place called Wisconsin when--in a nutshell--he took a wrong turn en route to Los Angeles. He liked Wisconsin very much but, seeing how he was planning on becoming a household name in network TV news, he decided that he would stay for just a year, two at most.

...continued on Page 3



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Winter Hours:

9:30 a.m. - Noon Tuesdays
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9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturdays

Summer Hours:

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Sauk Prairie Area
Historical Society

Monday | October 21
SPAHS Annual Meeting

6:00 to 6:30 PM

The annual meeting is an opportunity for SPAHS members and the general public to catch up on what's happening behind the scenes at the Tripp, Salem Ragatz and Our Lady of Loretto historic churches—from income to expense, happenings over the past year, and ideas for future programs. Members may then vote on a slate of candidates for Board of Directors and approve the budget. If you would like to be considered for the SPAHS board or have a nomination, please submit names in advance of the meeting for review. Candidates can be nominated, but not elected, from the floor. Contact the Tripp at 608.644.8444 or spahs@frontier.com.

Dairylandia with Steve Hannah

Thursday | October 24

6:00 to 6:30 PM Mingle

7:00 PM Program

Come hear acclaimed humorist Steve Hannah share tales from his newest book Dairylandia, which includes two Sauk Prairie stories! We'll let him talk, then give everyone a chance to ask questions. Themed nibbles and seasonal cider. \$5 donations and a good time encouraged.



Santa @ Tripp

Saturday | December 14

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Santa Claus and his pack of goodies returns to his bench in front of the Tripp's fireplace ready to listen to the Christmas wishes of all ages. Bring your cameras and take photos to create lasting memories. Old-fashioned make-it/take-it activities for children. Festive Christmas displays and music. Sweet treats for the kids sponsored by area businesses. Free! This event will be one of many events during the Sauk Prairie Chamber of Commerce's Holly Jolly weekend.

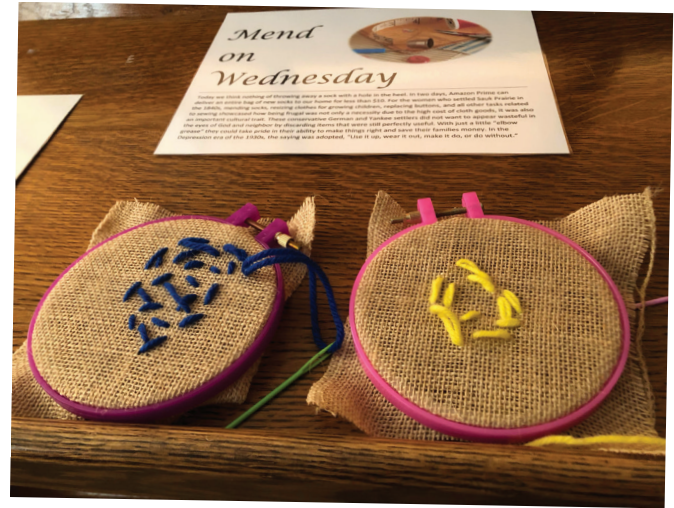
Congratulations to Meyer Insurance
on 100 Years serving Sauk Prairie

In 2019, Meyer Insurance joins McFarlanes' (1917) as one of two businesses within the village of Sauk City to have a 100-year-history of continuous family ownership. Giegerich's Sons (1909) in Prairie du Sac has the same distinction.

Meyer recently held a community party to celebrate three generations of business. Meyer Insurance began back in 1919, shortly after World War I. Rolf Meyer, its founder, had left Sauk City to serve in the United States Army Quartermaster Corps, stationed in Newport News, VA. Influenza, the "flu," took the world by storm during those years and Rolf was not spared. He was given a medical discharge and spent some time in St. Louis, Missouri, recuperating in the home of his sister, Lina. Once he returned home to Sauk City, he married Lorene Littel, whose family was established in Sauk City in 1846. Together they built not only a family, but a family business that has lasted 100 years and is still going strong. ~~

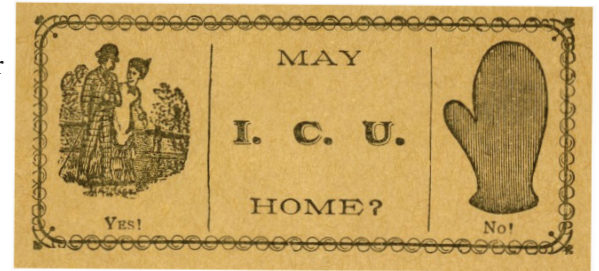


President Lise Meyer-Kobussen sets out items from her father Paul Meyer's legacy.



new @ the mUSEum

Thanks to the generous support of SPAHS members, the Tripp's upstairs Ochsner Gallery now hosts a new discovery play area designed to introduce our youngest visitors and their families to common everyday chores of the first settlers on the Sauk prairie. Starting with, "Wash on Monday," this hands-on area allows for open-ended exploration. Visitors can wash, iron, chop vegetables for soup in the Dutch oven, put on the coffee, go "calling," or "Rest on Sunday" by reading or playing Kate Tarnutzer's piano, and even practice mending with yarn and burlap. Glass plate negative images from the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society collection set in window panes hang on the walls of the little cardboard cabin, inviting those inside the home to look out the windows directly into Sauk Prairie's past. ~



Hannah ...continued from front cover

As of this writing, he has lived and worked in Wisconsin for most of the past 43 years. He has owned a home on the Wisconsin River in Sauk County since 1978. It is his favorite place in the world.

He won numerous prizes for writing during his career, including awards from the Associated Press, United Press International, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, the Milwaukee Press Club, and the Scripps Howard Foundation. Furthermore, he shared a Peabody Award for creation of the Onion News Network. He was also President of the Wisconsin Associated Press.

He earned his undergraduate degree at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York, then did a year of graduate study at University College, Dublin, Ireland, but, alas, spent too much time hitting the pubs and not enough hitting the books. So he left without getting his graduate degree. His mother was very disappointed.

He once spent a winter night in northern Wisconsin with a guy who invented a contraption that would strip the intact shell off a hardboiled egg by employing an electrifying two-handed thrust that resembled the Heimlich maneuver. While the experience didn't exactly change his life, it was a lot more interesting than covering the State Legislature.

He divides his time these days between his home in Sauk County and Austin, Texas. ~



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The old Halasz/Lachmund home on Water Street still boasts front porch views of Sauk City's beloved places and characters.

A Pioneer Schoolboy Reminiscences ~ Part II

February 14, 1930
Hollywood, California

Edward Keller sends a long letter to Miss Irma Lachmund of Sauk City, describing in great detail his cherished memories of boarding with her parents in her family home at 717 Water Street. The letter is a priceless treasure for its descriptions of Sauk City's culture, landscape, and industry in the 1860s.

...After much digression, I now return to the Halasz household. Here your grandmother reigned with gentle care. I never heard her utter a harsh word, nor one of gossip. One evening I did not come home until long after supper. A boy several years my senior had induced me to go out on the river with him, on skates. The ice was very rough, showing that there had been movement of it. It was, no doubt, a dangerous venture, and I deserved punishment, but your grandmother admonished me with a gentle lecture.

In the foregoing, I mentioned quite a number of names besides those of your relatives, and it now seems to me but just to add others whom I favorably remember. It will show what an active place Sauk City was, especially in the way of handicrafts.

There was Dr. McKennan, of whom it was said he acquired his proficiency by ruthless surgery in the Civil War. Rendtorff and Cunradi were the druggists. To my knowledge there was no bona fide lawyer in Sauk City at that time; maybe that Mr. Tripp was able to give some legal advice. Carpenters and builders were the most numerous in the trades; to those already mentioned are to be added Ross, Schlegemilch, Thede, and Clas. As cabinetmakers there were Thiele and Schumm. Further: Merk, the cooper; Bohnsack, the waggoner; Derleth, the blacksmith; Baer, the painter; Tausend, the baker; Billeter,

the tinsmith; and Schlungbaum, the harnessmaker. A man of more than local reputation was Lodde, the millwright. Spiehr and Buerki were the shoemakers. I do not remember a tailor.

To visit Deininger the taxidermist and to see his collection of stuffed birds was a great treat to me. There was a clockmaker, too. I think his name was Werner. One of the windows which attracted my attention was that of Schoenfeld's shop. I think he was a gun and locksmith. From him I received my first self-earned money by selling him some old copper kettle bottoms which I found on some scrap pile.

The mercantile line was represented by Naffz, Heller, Homberger on the west side of the street and by Boller and Nebel on the other. I think Veidt and Lachmund came a little later. Dean and Leickem were agents for agricultural machinery, both located on the waterfront. There was no regularly established bank, as far as I can remember, but Warren, considered the wealthiest man in town, and Tripp, did business as money-lenders.

Last, but not least, I must mention the German weekly "Der Pioneer am Wisconsin." Kleinpell was the owner and editor. I did not read this paper until 1870, when the Franco-German war aroused great curiosity in me.

The conclusion that I did not emerge from the Sauk City school with flying colors needs no further accentuation, but I had gained in several ways: I was now able to speak English, what one might call in a fashion, so that some years later I did not need to take a back seat in the Baraboo High School. At the latter there was a regular colony of youths from Honey Creek containing the names of Ochsner, Grotophorst, Trachsler, and Fischer. To be remembered as one of our young lady classmates is, she who later became Mrs. Robert M. LaFollette—having mostly spoken the Swiss-German dialect in our home, I have no doubt that my High German was considerably improved during my Sauk City sojourn.

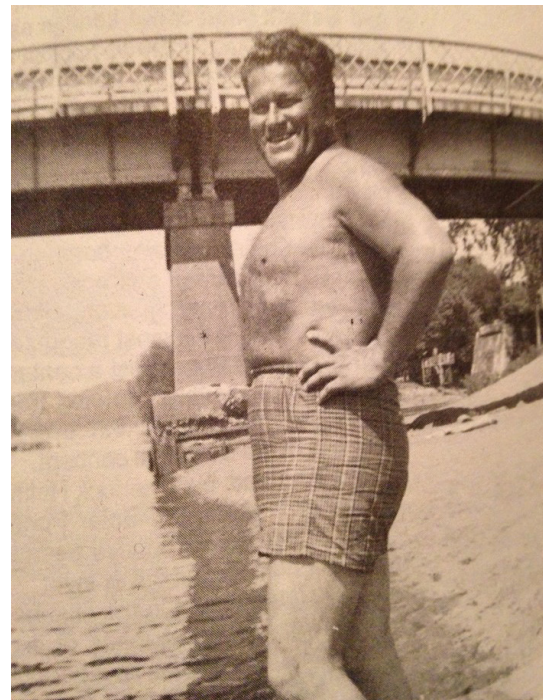
Finally, I had learned to swim. The latter I owed to the fact that while sitting at the edge of a raft far out in the river one summer day a much bigger boy, August Derleth, threw me a considerable distance into deep water. It was a matter of sink or swim so I chose to swim, which sport I have much enjoyed ever since. When I visited Sauk City last summer I met Mr. Derleth on the street and stopped him, for I wished to thank him for the service he rendered to me 62 years ago.

I hope to see Sauk City again, also *mit herzlichen Gruessen, Auf Wiedersehen!*

Ihr ergebener,
Edward Keller

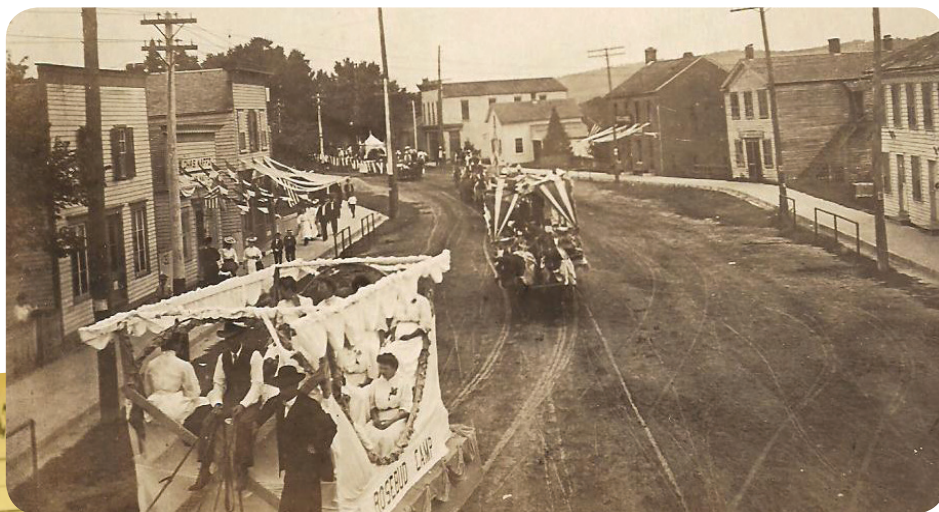


The construction of the Prairie du Sac Dam in 1914 brought with it open waters on the Wisconsin River nearly year-round. Before the dam, the river would often freeze over winter, creating both a source of profit (ice cutting) and recreation for locals.



"There aren't many people left in Sac Prairie with the gumption to do as they like and not care what others think." - August Derleth. The apple didn't fall too far from the tree. Writer August Derleth, above, loved a swim by the old Sauk City Bridge as much as his grandfather, and namesake, did. Both men were the type to throw a boy in!

what
Edward
Keller
saw

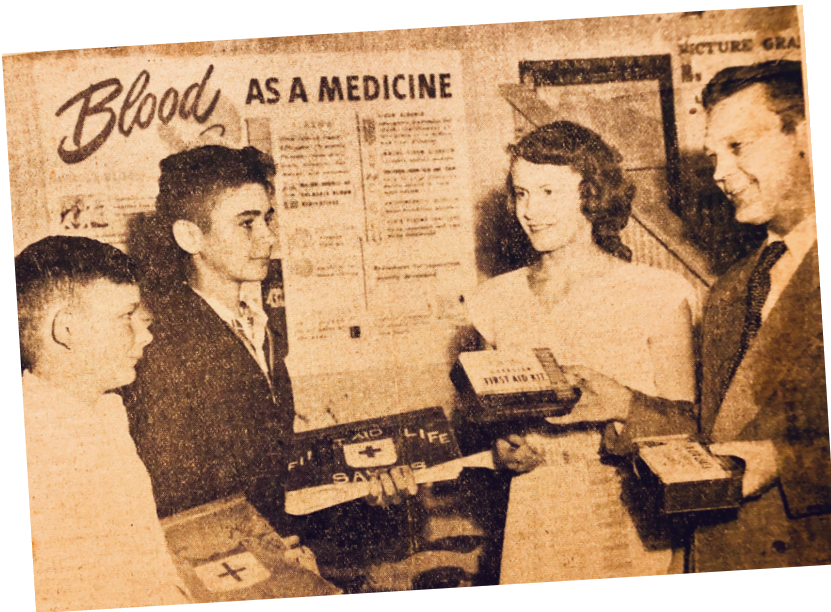


Pionier am Wisconsin
Gefunden von G. G. Kuhn.
Sankt City, Wis., Donnerstag, den 20. September 1907.
Jahrgang.

Ofen-Store und Tin-Shop von Albert Billeter,
Wasserstraße, Sankt City.

Blech-Waaren
Derfelbe hält stets einen großen Vorrath von
aller Art und fertigt solche auf Bestellung in kürzester Frist an.
Ferner hat derselbe eine große und schöne Auswahl der modernsten
Koch- und Parlor-Oefen.

Third from the right, above, the Astor House still sits today directly across from the Lachmund Home (out of view) on Sauk City's downtown Water Street. As a parade makes its way down the dirt street in 1907, it passes many of the businesses mentioned by Edward Keller. Ads from the Pionier am Wisconsin, left, in German, also bring to life Keller's memories. This one, from the tinsmith Billeter, boasts of a new stove families can purchase better than any stove they'd find out east.



Above right, Kurt R. Schoenoff, Jr. Red Cross chairman, is presenting two of the winners, David Hooker and Raymond Kraemer, their first aid kits. Mrs. Doris Gasser, Jr. Red Cross teacher, expresses her approval.



*Thank You
The Ladies Aid is a very good thing.
So here is the apron, the pocket, the string.
The pocket will hold from a dime to a dollar.
The more there is in the louder it will hollar.
We would be glad to welcome you any time.
Our meetings are instructive entertaining
and fine.
M.E. Aid Society.
Mrs. Salome Hudson*

Ladies Aid Society Apron Invite
Doris Litscher Gasser Collection
Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society

Found in Collection

By Jody Kapp

Some people in our community become such fixtures they are as familiar to us as our bridges, streetscapes, and hillsides. For Sauk Prairie, one such person was Doris Litscher Gasser. Whether waiting for a taxi on her bench just inside Sentry Grocery or lost in a shuffle of copies being made at Giegerich's Sons, Doris was tied to her mission of documenting the interior lives of this region. Her countless interviews of familiar faces no longer so familiar remain inspirational to the modern reader seeking to understand the cultural glue that made Sauk Prairie what it is today.

Thanks to her tireless documentation and the generosity of the Jane Litscher family, the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society is home to an extensive collection of Litscher Gasser's personal scrapbooks, drawings, writings, and audio interviews. Found inside one of her scrapbooks was this miniature apron, left, small enough to fit in the palm of a hand. Tucked in its tiny pocket was a folded note with cursive script:


Thank You

The Ladies Aid is a very good thing.
So here is the apron, the pocket, and string.
The pocket will hold from a dime to a dollar.
The more there is in the louder it will hollar.
We would be glad to welcome you any time.
Our meeting[s] are instructive entertaining
and fine.

M.E. Aid Society,
Mrs. Salome Hudson

In this apron is more than an invitation. It's a representation of the dedication and creativity of a group of women who pooled their labors of love to make their corner of the world a better place.

A posthumous thank you to Doris Litscher Gasser for sharing her labor of love. Her talents in writing and interviewing will live on in the time she gave of herself to make sure the world would remember others.



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Five Happy Faces . . Pool Opens

There was a magnetic attraction up Prairie way Monday as the hottest day of the summer and the opening of the Prairie swimming pool both came along at the same time. Youngsters from all over the twin communities were drawn toward the pool, where the promise of cool, refreshing water offered relief from the hot, humid weather. Among the couple of hundred youngsters who spent the day splashing and frolicking in the water were these five young ladies who found the warmth of Old Man Sun pretty welcome after coming out of the water. Pictured, left to right, are Linda Nolden, Viola and Mary Ann Schwarz of Sauk City and Carol Ann Dellmann and Kathy Blaha of Prairie.



Watch Mailboxes for 20/20 Vision Survey

This October the Sauk Prairie School District will be mailing a 20/20 Vision survey to every household within the school district boundaries. District administration will be looking to the community to share their feedback on ideas designed to support our schools' growing numbers and needs while retaining the fiscal responsibility and practical approach our district is known for.

One portion of the plan specifically addresses the future needs of a building near and dear to many Sauk Prairie hearts—the outdoor pool. Sauk Prairie's outdoor pool first opened in 1936, spearheaded by then Prairie du Sac High School Principal, R.S. Babington, alongside others. The project, at a total cost of \$24,000, was important enough for the school board to borrow \$10,000 from the Bank of Prairie du Sac to make the investment. The pool was seen as a safe and sanitary alternative to swimming in the Wisconsin River. Many local families had been touched by the tragedy of losing a loved one to drowning in its unpredictable waters. They were looking for a safe place for their children to learn how to swim while still enjoying the benefits of fresh air. The outdoor pool became a place for cool relief and recreation. It also became the binding force of community relationships as both out of town farm kids and students from both Sauk and Prairie schools all discovered a common sense of fellowship under the warm summer sun.

Fast forward 83 years later. While the bath house remains architecturally stunning, the mechanical systems of the pool have not aged as well as the exterior. What about the size of the pool? Does it meet our community need for both public recreation and competitive swim meets? Would it benefit from the addition of other water features? Increased opportunities for events or classes? With the short Wisconsin summer season, does an expanded investment in an outdoor pool make sense? Is there a creative solution to year-round use other communities have turned to? Like the inflatable dome used during winter months by the Liberty Township, Ohio, Lakota YMCA. All questions to consider, research, and discuss as we think about the value of the pool to the fabric of the community.

What does the outdoor pool mean to you? What would you like it to mean to your children and grandchildren? Please share your feedback on the 20/20 Survey or contact Jeff Wright, Sauk Prairie School District Superintendent, or John Lehan, Sauk Prairie Community Education & Recreation Director. ~~

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