

## Along the Riverway

Summer/Fall 2020

### COVID'S HAVOC ON EVENTS

Pandemic makes history in cancellations and reinventions of Sauk Prairie area signature events

#### EAGLE WATCHING DAYS TO GO VIRTUAL

Planning for the 2021 Bald Eagle Watching Days is in the preliminary stages. At the time this newsletter went to print, the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council, along with their planning partners including the SPAHS, made the decision to take this 34-year old event to the virtual world. The strategy for what that will look like for the general public is in progress and more information will come in our Fall/Winter newsletter.

All the fascinating speakers and presentations that are typically held at the Tripp Heritage Museum can be accessed by phone, table, laptop or with the family gathered around the home computer.

The signature event and culmination of Eagle



Watching Days has traditionally been Raptor Education Group executive director Marge Gibson's live eagle release at Veterans Memorial Park in Prairie du Sac. At this point, there is no information regarding whether this event will take place. Anyone who has attended this magnificent and moving event knows about the crowd of

about 2,000 all gathered close together to get the best perspective of rehabilitated eagles being set free over the Wisconsin River with the backdrop of snow covered bluffs and the Alliant Energy Prairie du Sac Dam.

Watch the SPAHS Facebook page and website for updates to this beloved event.

#### WHAT'S COMING FOR SPAHS EVENTS

It's no news flash to say 2020 has been canceled. It's true all over the country for almost every imaginable public event because of a national health crisis with the Covid-19 pandemic. 2020, therefore, has its own reasons for being an unusually historic year for the books, both nationally and locally.

Among the unfortunate cancellations in our

community, the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society had some wonderful, first-time-ever events planned that have been indefinitely postponed.

This summer would have been the SPAHS's first ever *Spirits of Sauk Prairie*, featuring the voices of historic figures of the Sauk Prairie area speaking from the grave at the Sauk City Cemetery. The stories of these early residents are told in often vivid descriptions in the works of author August Derleth, who was among the characters appearing in this guided journey

Continued on page 2



## Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society Board of Directors

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## SPAHS EVENTS continued from page 1

through the beautiful cemetery on Lueders Road. In partnership with the August Derleth Society, this was a dramatic event with local, long dead personalities of the area (played by actors) like Civil War heroes, feisty women fighting for justice, founders of the business community and the area's most famous personality, author August Derleth. It was a chance for visitors to walk the cemetery and hear from those who helped shape two burgeoning river towns in Wisconsin. It was Derleth and some of the early residents who were real characters in his prose and poetry.

However, this event isn't dead, so to speak. It's postponed, and organizers will revisit the planning and scheduling in 2021.



An appearance at the Tripp Heritage Museum by author and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ecologist Sumner Matteson was canceled in April. The SPAHS hopes to reschedule Matteson for 2021. He would have been speaking about his book, "Afield: Portraits of Wisconsin Naturalists, Empowering Leopold's Legacy."



## About the Tripp Heritage Museum new hours

The museum is open by appointment only for an indefinite period of time. Anyone interested in doing research may still access the wealth of resources housed at the museum, one just needs to call for an appointment.

"The whole concept of research is still happening," museum manager Jack Berndt said. "So many people come in to look up information like on old houses and a lot of genealogy. What's different now is you can't just walk in off the street. As much as we miss that, we felt it important to do this as a safety measure for everyone."



## Annual meeting set for Sept. 30

The SPAHS board of directors will hold their 2020 annual meeting September 30, at 6 p.m. at the Tripp Heritage Museum. It will be followed at 6:45 p.m. by the regular monthly meeting.



# WHEN LOVE MOVED A BUILDING

By Kim Lamoreaux

Lisa Alyea was a force to be reckoned with. Her passion for all things vintage, especially historic homes, was downright contagious. She didn't just love local history, she created projects that became part of it.

A member and supporter of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society, Lisa peacefully concluded her time on earth in May, following a long battle with cancer.

Lisa made headlines five years ago this summer, when she purchased a 165-year old home for \$100 and moved it to her own property on Water Street in Prairie du Sac. She would refer to it as her "rescue house" because she saved the vintage home from demolition that would make way for a public parking lot. She made a plea to the village board of Prairie du Sac who helped her cut through the proverbial "red tape" for all the approvals it takes to pull off such a feat.

In late June 2015 on a Friday at 5:30 in the morning, the 70-ton house made its way from from near the corner of Washington Street



In June of 2015, the late Lisa Alyea "rescued" this now 170-year old home from demolition by moving it to her own property on Water Street. *Photo courtesy of the Sauk Prairie Eagle*

down Water Street, to the backdrop of the sun beginning to peek over the bluffs of the Wisconsin River.

The move drew a crowd because no one had remembered seeing a mammoth-size house move down the main drag before. It was placed next door to where Lisa and her husband Scott lived in another historic home known as the Graff House they had purchased a few

years earlier and renovated. The house move was a success, and Lisa and Scott made a project out of it with many improvements like a restored chimney, new roof, windows and siding.

## A personal connection

Lisa said at the time, it wasn't just about preserving a beautiful vintage home. This was personal.

Continued on page 5

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# SPAHS CAN HELP WITH SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW...

Walk down the aisle in historic style at Salem Ragatz

**By Kim Lamoreaux**

A cool evening breeze rustled the leaves in the tall, aged trees in late August on the grounds of the Salem Ragatz Historic Church outside Prairie du Sac. It was like the whispering spirits of souls that walked the grounds of the little log Salem Evangelical Church on Sunday mornings almost 175 years ago.

That log church is long gone, replaced 30 years later with a newer stone structure bearing the hallmarks of the unique block and stack masonry of the Swiss settlers of the area. At the beginning of the century in 1904, lightning struck, a fire blazed and only the stone walls were spared. It was quickly rebuilt and services continued as they always did. By the 1960s, it was known as the Salem United Methodist Church. In 1990, the church was awarded status on the National Register of Historic Places, a program of the National Park Service.

Regular services ceased at the

church in 2000 when it was deeded to the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society. But the essence of a century and a half of worship continues at what is now known as the Salem Ragatz church at the corner of County Road PF and Church Road five miles west of Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin.

It's available for rent for anyone looking for an idyllic setting for a celebration of love and the beginnings of a new life for any couple and their loved ones.

Anyone looking for a cozy, vintage location to get married or celebrate another occasion will love this unique setting. The grounds offer large shade trees surrounding the building as the backdrop for a wedding dinner tent. The sanctuary itself lends itself to smaller groups, but normally seats 150-175 in 26 rows of wooden pews amid Gothic arches. It's a perfect environment for safe social distancing as long as the pandemic health crisis

continues.

The traditional stained glass and other windows lend natural and ambient lighting in the late afternoon or early evening. The stage decor is simple but reverent, and the acoustics are perfect for voices and instruments.

SPAHS board president Lise Meyer-Kobussen said she fell in love with the historic church the first time she saw it.

Continued on page 5



Salem Ragatz Historic Church  
Photo by Kim Lamoreaux

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## BUILDING continued from page 3

"I had direct connections to three generations of the family that owned the house," Lisa said at the time. "I have fond memories of being in the place before it was sold in 1978 by the people that I knew. I was in the house quite a bit when I was growing up."

Lisa's move was actually the second time the house had been moved. In 1931, it was moved by Bill Jenewein in order to build a gas station on the corner of Washington and Water streets.

Lisa knew Jenewein's daughter Marjorie, her husband Ray Platt and their daughters Corinne and Betty. They were her close family friends, with Corinne being her kindergarten teacher. Ray was a well known business man who delivered fuel oil to many area residents, and was a member of many local service organizations.

Lisa thought the history of the home was pretty cool, too. She

enlisted the help of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society to help with the research, and found the house once was the residence of Dr. Allen Kendall, hired specifically to give medical care to the construction workers building the Prairie du Sac dam more than 100 years before that.

A year later Lisa performed what she called another "rescue." This time it was a 1920s Gulbransen baby grand piano that had been in the Al Ringling Theatre in Baraboo.

Lisa was a fun, loving, caring person

who will be remembered for her zest for life with a love of music, history, and antiques, her wonderful story telling, her quick witted sense of humor, but especially her love for her two boys Gareth and Trevor and husband Scott. She will be sorely missed in the community.



A historic site as new and old turrets pass on Water Street in Prairie du Sac on June 24, 2015 as Lisa and Scott Alyea's house moved down Water Street.

*Photo courtesy of the Sauk Prairie Eagle*

## SOMETHING OLD continued from page 4

"I came in and it was like, oh my goodness, we need this for weddings," Meyer-Kobussen said. "This small, country location lends itself to smaller gatherings in the age of Covid. Instead of having 200-300 people for a wedding, they're having 10, 25 or 50. This gives you a beautiful, intimate type of setting for that. It's a cozy, vintage feel for a wedding and other occasions."

The basement comes with tables that seat 48 people,

a full kitchen with a six-burner gas Wolf stove, a large Subzero refrigerator, triple stainless steel sinks and plenty of preparation room.

The church is heated and air conditioned, and has been freshly painted downstairs along with other improvements.

For information about reserving the church for a special occasion, call 608-370-2525.



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# FROM FIELDS FAR AWAY

By Kim Lamoreaux

*Editor's note: Ron Kindschi was on a mission to gather memories from folks who remembered working on the Kindschi farm detasseling corn when they were young. Earlier this year, he put out a call on the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society's Facebook page asking those former corn field workers to share their memories. The response was overwhelming. Fans of that page can expect more to come on the SPAHS Facebook page when we feature Kindschi detasseling memories.*

In today's world, most teenagers seem to spend more time with their phones than working hot, dirty jobs their parents may have done. Take the age-old but common job of corn detasseling on an oppressively hot July day. Unless you're from a farming family, it's not something with which kids today are familiar. But it was once a common, familiar summer job to generations of kids.

The Kindschi family name is synonymous in this area with giving generations of kids from all walks of life the experience of working in a corn field. It's because of that the Kindschi name evokes a significant and unique recognition in this area of Wisconsin.

For eight decades, literally thousands of kids from the Sauk Prairie area worked at the Kindschi farms detasseling and hoeing in the corn fields outside Prairie du Sac. Crews of kids walked the entire fields with hoes to eliminate unwanted growth and then

detasseling the tops of the stalks as the corn grew.

Those kids have since grown with families and grandkids of their own. But many of them talk of their memories of sunburns, cuts from sharp leaves, hot, muggy days, dirt, bugs called tassel lice, encounters with corn fungus and even days in the rain.

The work went on even in a downpour when the ground got so muddy that the machines had to be shut down. Workers had to trudge through the mud reaching up for each tassel as rain pelted

their faces. The surface of corn leaves is somewhat abrasive and sharp, so skin rash and small cuts were prevalent. Wearing long sleeves on a hot summer day was the norm.

Clearly, detasseling was not an easy, comfortable job. But teenagers were the work force, and

Continued on page 7



These six teenage girls were working hard and having fun in the summer of 1962 on the Kindschi farm as corn detassellers. Pictured here are Darcy Reuter Hetzel standing at the wheel, Jean Lemke, Jean Giese, Diane Frosch, Pat Meyer and Lonnie Roth. Photo courtesy of Darcy Reuter Hetzel

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the camaraderie led to lifelong friendships and irreplaceable memories.

### Lifelong memories

Even with the discomforts of the job, those kids today say they couldn't have been happier or had more fun, and look back on those days with a warm fondness.

Just ask Ron Kindschi, who said he's been hearing the stories for the last 30 to 40 years, often encountering them accidentally just introducing himself to strangers.

"It was always basically the same: 'Oh, I detasseled corn back in 19-something for the Kindschis,'" Kindschi said. "I worked for Jerry Kindschi. He was such a nice guy...' Or sometimes it was their father, mother, sister, brother, cousin, or someone they know that did that job. And now, being back in Sauk Prairie it is normal to get those recollections of past corn field experiences when talking to folks who are fifty and beyond."

He enjoys the stories so much he wanted to start documenting them. In February, he logged onto the wildly popular, high traffic SPAHS Facebook page and put out a call to those former corn detassellers. The responses came swiftly.

Many of the replies are remembrances of Jerry Kindschi,



Karen Tabor helps her friend Mary Ellen Schwarz get ready for a day working in the corn field on the Kindschi farm in the 1960s. *Photo courtesy of Darcy Reuter Hetzel*

Ron's cousin, who oversaw the crews for many years in the 70s and 80s. Jerry passed away in 2016.

Darlene Kirch was among the people who responded to Kindschi's request for memories. She remembered Jerry during her corn field days in 1969-1970. "Jerry was a wonderful person to work for," she wrote.

David Lamberty worked in the Kindschi fields in the mid-70s. "We would joke and play pranks on each other often. Good memories," he

wrote.

"Lots of great memories of the smell of the dew on the corn leaves and the feel of damp black earth on my feet when we had to walk the rows because it was too wet for the tractors," Cindy Kelly Anthofer wrote.

Jackie Schara Hoege harkened back to her corn detasseling in the late 50s: "We always had a lot of fun, (well maybe not the tassel lice and smut)."

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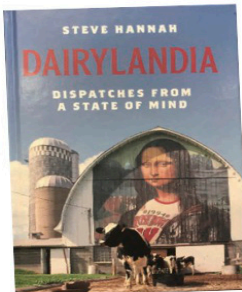
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Until further notice, visits to the museum can be made by appointment. Call us at (608) 644-8444 or you can email us at [spahs@frontier.com](mailto:spahs@frontier.com)

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