

## Will You be Mine?

By Mary Farrell Stieve

VALENTINE'S Day brings out the sweet sentiments in even the most pragmatic people. This especially seemed so in the delicately scalloped series of valentines sent to Ruth Radloff in the early 1900s and donated to us by LaDell Thies Schimmiok.

The collection of six valentines from schoolmates includes a pop-up card and a card with a heart on a ribbon, and each one features rosy-cheeked children enjoying their own valentine cards. These delicate little valentines will join our greeting card collection. We have a nice selection of holiday cards for celebrations throughout the year. The postcards, greeting cards and tags span much of the 1900s. These recent additions to the collection feature sweet verses including "In Cupid's Thrall! Mercy Me! Am I in Love?" "Do Tell Me What's the Matter. Every time I Look at You My Heart Goes Pitter-Patter."

The sentimental verses and intricate edgings of these valentines have made them one of our favorite exhibits in the past. Stop by and take a look at our tribute to Cupid's wiles and I'm sure one of these little greetings will make your heart go pitter-patter too.



*These Valentine's along with other greeting cards from the Society's collections will be on display at the "For the Love of Chocolate" event on Sunday, January 24th at the museum.*

## For the Love of Chocolate

If you love chocolate like you love local history then your chance to combine the two will be possible **Sunday, January 24, 2010 from 1-4 p.m.** at the Sauk County Historical Society Museum located in the Van Orden Mansion at 531 Fourth Avenue in Baraboo. Join other chocolate enthusiasts at the mansion and indulge in chocolate samples from seven area restaurants and chocolatiers including The Garden Party Café, the Treat Suite, The Barn Restaurant and Pizza Hut among others. Chocolate in all forms including candies, desserts and even a chocolate fountain will indulge even the sweetest tooth. This pre-Valentine's Day event will help you find some of the best chocolate around. Antique and vintage Valentine's cards and greeting cards will also be on display at the museum. This fundraiser will help to support the museum throughout the year. Advanced tickets are required and are available at the museum or at the Chambers in Baraboo, Reedsburg and Prairie du Sac as well as Vodak TV. Tickets are \$20 for adults (\$15 for Society members) and children aged 5 – 12 are \$5. Children four and under are free. For more information contact the Society at 608-356-1001 or visit our website at [www.saukcountyhistory.org](http://www.saukcountyhistory.org)

# Old Cistern Discovered at Van Orden Mansion

WHILE doing some landscaping work on the west side of the Van Orden mansion in November a forgotten cistern was discovered containing a treasure trove of artifacts from the Van Orden family. The cistern was covered with a three foot square, four inch thick block of stone which was assumed to be concrete until it was lifted. Under the slab a three foot shaft leads down to a cylindrical cistern about seven feet in diameter.

It was determined that the cistern was used as a repository for Van Orden family garbage at some point after it was no longer needed as a cistern. As the cistern was located next to what had once been the carriage house it is likely that it served to supply the horses with water. A 4 inch pipe, about 2 feet down in the shaft runs towards the barn and was probably connected to a downspout from its roof. Another cistern on the east side of the house with a metal cover was filled in years ago and would have supplied the house with soft water. The house already had city-supplied water but soft water was often used for washing and other purposes.

After initial photographs of the cistern were taken the contents were slowly brought to the surface. The cistern contained a surprisingly diverse collection of glass, metal, wood and even leather objects. Scores of bottles of every size from one inch to twenty inches in height have been discovered, some with paper labels still attached. While most of the tin cans have rusted beyond recognition there apparently has not been standing water in the entire cistern since it was abandoned.

One question about the artifacts was answered by the items that were found, namely what period the artifacts were from. Two automobile license plates were found, one with a "W15" on it indicating it was from 1915. Later a small scrap of a grocery receipt was found with 1916 written on it indicating that the items were deposited shortly before World War I. It is most likely that the cistern was filled to the top before it was covered by the large stone. Over the years the metal items rusted from the high humidity and collapsed creating room at the top of the debris.

Other surprising items included over a dozen light bulbs from the period, a plaster dog statue, two toy guns and a bicycle lamp. Embossed glass bottles display the names of early businesses in Baraboo like Fisher Bros.

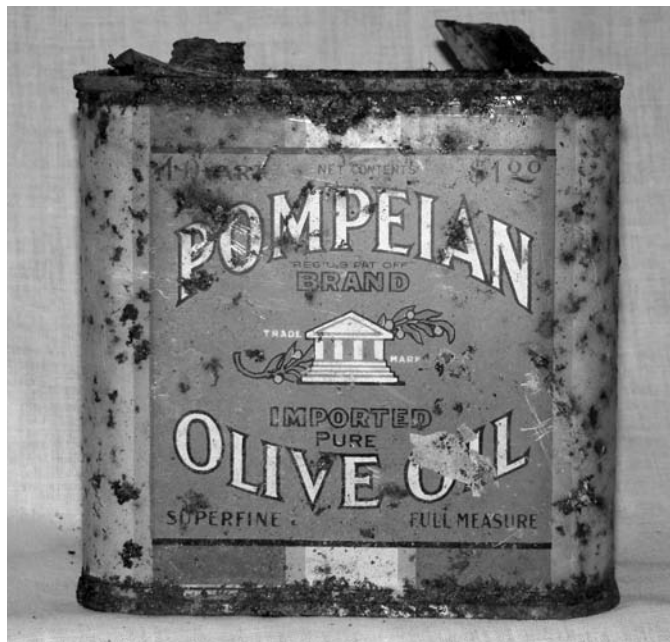
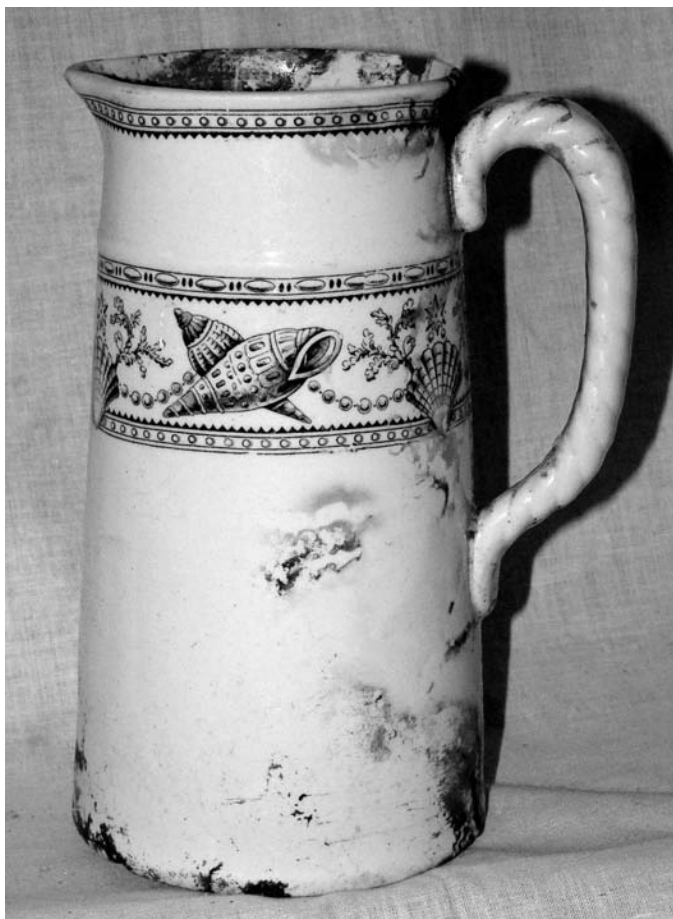


Drugs, J.B. Donovan Druggists, and Effinger Brewery. Other bottles held products familiar to most of us like Hires Improved Root Beer, Hamm's Beer, Listerine, and Bromo Seltzer.

While the Society has a small collection of Van Orden related artifacts, the items inside the cistern not only provide a snapshot of life in the Van Orden household, but also a snapshot of Baraboo after the turn of the 20th century. By studying the artifacts from the cistern we will get a better idea of what the Van Orden's ate and drank and what kinds of everyday items were inside their home. Each bottle, can, toy and scrap of paper create not only a better understanding of this family, but also a better understanding of what goods were available in Baraboo in the early 20th century.



# Artifacts Retrieved from the Cistern



## Secrets of the Cistern —FREE LECTURE—

THE Sauk County Historical Society will present a special lecture on Thursday, January 28, 2010, at 7 p.m about what has been found so far in the recently discovered cistern located next to the Van Orden mansion. The cistern has revealed many surprises and we invite you to spend an evening with us learning about and examining these finds. The lecture will be held at the Van Orden Mansion at 531 Fourth Avenue in Baraboo. The lecture is free to the public and is being sponsored through the generosity of Holiday Wholesale, Inc. of Wisconsin Dells.

### **Old Sauk Trails • January/February 2010**

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**The Sauk County Historical Society and Museum**  
531 Fourth Ave. • PO Box 651 • Baraboo, WI 53913  
Open Tuesday-Saturday 12-4:30pm year-round  
(608) 356.1001 • [history@saukcountyhistory.org](mailto:history@saukcountyhistory.org)  
[www.saukcountyhistory.org](http://www.saukcountyhistory.org)

# President's Report

IT'S hard to believe that the first decade of the new millennium is almost over. I say "almost over" because I am one of those sticklers that holds the line that the new millennium did not start until the year 2000 was completed thereby making the new millennium in its 10th year this year. Whatever the case it's seems like just yesterday we were all worried about Y2K and inevitable computer troubles. Fortunately nothing happened and it is all now a part of history. Which brings up another point, and that is that historical societies are a growth industry. There will always be more history to collect, preserve and share. Sauk County has a great historical society and one that we can all be proud of. We are approximately the fourth oldest local historical society in the state with 104 years under our belt. With that prestige though comes a lot of years' worth of collecting. The Van Orden mansion has been a great home for the Society since it was purchased in 1938, but now it is literally full to the rafters and now one of our largest artifacts. Several years ago the Board of Directors saw the need for another building to house some of the Society's collections and the Sauk County History Center project was born. This unique building, itself a major piece of Sauk County history, will be the future repository of the Society's extensive archival holdings and will become a local history research center and education facility. Much has been done to the outside of the building and now that plans are completed for the inside of the building it is time to bring this important project to completion. I am pleased to report that the City of Baraboo has agreed to provide \$8,500 to the project from the Alma Waite Fund. This support will help us as we start interior renovations. I hope you will consider giving to this worthwhile project. More information will be sent to our membership and the public as soon as we work towards completing this project.

## Post Script

IN the last newsletter Curator, Sue Teska, wrote about the Civil War diary of Alfred Welch. She would like to thank Guy Porth for finding Pvt. Welch's grave and emailing that information to us.

Pvt. Alfred Welch is buried in plot 129 of the Mobile National Cemetery located in Mobile, Alabama.



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# History Center to Receive Alma Waite Funds

The City of Baraboo has approved a grant from the Alma Waite Fund of \$8,500 for renovation work at the Sauk County History Center. This important gift honors the legacy of Alma Lux Waite who died in 1981 and left a substantial gift to the city to be used for worthwhile projects. During her lifetime, Waite was a supporter of local history with gifts to the Circus World Museum library and the Mid-Continent Railway Museum. The Society would like to thank the Common Council of the City of Baraboo for the grant which will help bring this worthwhile project to completion. The Sauk County Historical Society is the only historical society in the city and serves as repository for many important artifacts and archival pieces from the city's past.

## Victorian Christmas

NEARLY 500 people attended the Society's tenth annual Victorian Christmas. The twelve decorated Christmas trees featured a wide variety of themes. The Society would like to thank all of those who decorated trees including Roger Hanko of Amber Moon, Bekah Stehling of Bekah Kate's, and Annie Randall of the Village Booksmith, all of Baraboo, The Flower Shop of Spring Green, Jean Brew of Brew's Landing in the Dells, Bev Dietenberger of North Freedom, Ellen Lee, Dave Saloutos and Lindy Larsen of Baraboo, and Ron Birdd of Reedsburg. A special thank you goes to Dave Saloutos who once again pulled out all of the stops creating an entire room with a 1930s theme. Music was provided throughout the day by over forty musicians, all coordinated by Mona Larsen. Hundreds of cookies were donated for the holiday dessert table which was graced with a gingerbread house replica of the Charles Ringling Mansion. The replica was made by Society volunteers with the help of the Little French Bakery of rural North Freedom. The Society would like to thank everyone who made this event a success, especially our staff and volunteers who took up positions around the house throughout the day making everything run smoothly.

# The Frank J. Hess and Sons White Oak Beer Barrel

By Sue Teska, Curator

A barrel can hold many things; wine, beer, whiskey or even oil, to mention a few. A barrel can also hold history. Twenty-five visitors and I learned just how much history one barrel can hold during our October 29, 2009 lecture at the museum about the Frank J. Hess and Sons Cooperage which was located in Madison, Wisconsin. Gary and Jim Hess, Frank J. Hess's grandsons gave us an in-depth look at the cooperage business through their grandfather's business.

The Frank J. Hess and Sons Cooperage was Wisconsin's largest cooperage operating from 1904 – 1966. At the time the cooperage closed in 1966, it was the last operating cooperage in the United States. Frank J. Hess had learned the cooperage business in Bohemia, where he was born in 1870. At the age of 19, he moved to American and began work manufacturing white oak beer kegs for primarily Midwestern breweries.

One of the unexpected stars that evening was a 1/8 beer barrel from our collection, made by the Frank J. Hess and Sons Cooperage for the Effinger Brewery here in Baraboo. What makes this barrel special is the fact that it looks like it just rolled out of the factory yesterday. The barrel retains all of its original craftsmanship and you can even see the cattails that were put into the barrel seams to prevent leakage. The union stamp of the Frank J. Hess and Sons Cooperage is visible on the barrel along with Effinger Brewery stamped on the outside. Until this evening, Gary and Jim Hess were unaware that this example of their grandfather's work even existed.



This one barrel gave all of us a tangible link to not only a long since forgotten industry, but also to one family's heritage. It was truly moving to see the Hesses discover this link to their family right here at our museum. It's these discoveries that make my job all the more special.



*An old world Christmas was the theme of the SCHS float in Baraboo's annual Holly Jolly Light Parade held last November. A working glockenspiel, candle-powered revolving Christmas pyramid, giant nutcracker and half-timbered house made up this year's float which was built by Society volunteers and members of the Baraboo Rotary club. The float won the Judge's Choice award. A special thanks goes to Senger Lumber of Baraboo for providing the truck, facilities and storage space for float items.*

# National Guard Assists Restoration Efforts at Hulburt Creek Garden Beds

IF you had driven by the Hulburt Creek Garden Beds located at the intersection of County H and Birchwood Road in the Town of Delton on November 14, 2009, you might have done a double take. There, hauling logs and clearing brush were 27 soldiers from the Wisconsin National Guard Co G RSP. They were providing much needed help in clearing forest growth off a large part of the garden beds. James Vaillancourt assisted by cutting trees that were quickly gathered up by the soldiers, who stacked logs or sent limbs into a wood chipper provided by the Ho-Chunk Nation. Also helping were Society board members, Bev Vaillancourt and Rob Nurre.

These 1000 year old agricultural beds were established by Native Americans who farmed the region. Because the area was covered by a forest canopy after abandonment of the beds long ago, today they remain intact. As recognition of their significance, they are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Sauk County Historical Society plans to restore the garden beds as an educational site focused on Native American culture, and in particular on how Native Americans produced corn and squash in a raised-bed fashion in what today is known as Sauk County.

The six acres of land, where the Hulburt Creek garden beds are found, was donated to the Sauk County Historical Society about a year ago by Bill and Phyllis Pierce.

Watch for this site to grow in interest as work continues on it this winter and into next spring. To learn more about the Hulburt Creek Garden Beds, visit the Society website at [saukcountyhistory.org](http://saukcountyhistory.org).



# New Flag Pole Dedicated at History Center

ABOUT 30 people were in attendance on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2009, to help the Sauk County Historical Society dedicate its new flagpole at the History Center. Society President, Paul Wolter welcomed those present, and thanked the anonymous persons who donated the flagpole, foundation, and erection of the pole. The Baraboo Veteran's Honor Guard officiated during the flag-raising ceremony, after which President Wolter led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. The new flag and pole are a welcomed addition to the History Center site.



## History Center Donations (since last newsletter):

Bill Schuette – Claude & Stark Associate  
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## We Care Program

The Sauk County Historical Society receives matching gift awards when you participate in "Pierce's Market Card" program. If you own or get a new "Market Card," please connect it to the Sauk County Historical Society by designating number 700500.

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