



Old Sauk Trails

March/April 2008 The Newsletter of the Sauk County Historical Society

William Canfield Day, April 8

THE SAUK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY will celebrate the eighth annual William H. Canfield Day on the eve of the 189th birthday of Sauk County's first historian. The meeting will take place at the Sauk County Historical Museum on Tuesday, April 8 at 7 p.m. This year's program will focus on Canfield's children to coincide with our theme for 2008, Growing up in Sauk County. When William Canfield and his wife settled on Skillet Creek just southwest of Baraboo in 1842 they were already expecting their first child. The Canfield children were born into the pioneer lifestyle and grew up learning pioneer methods of survival but also saw the rapid growth of communities and neighborhoods around them. Those that survived witnessed one of the

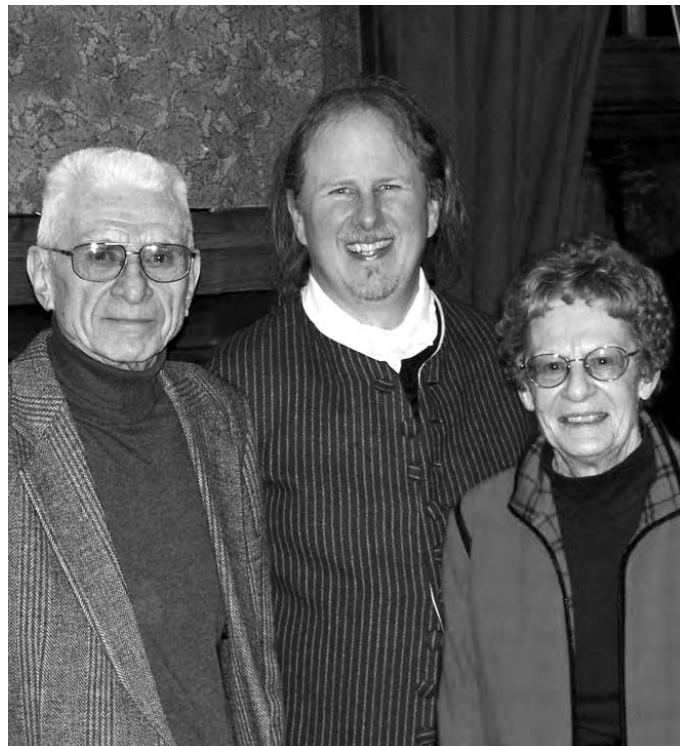
greatest eras of transformation in US history.

During the evening the Society will also present its annual William H. Canfield History Award to honor the work of a present day local historian who displays the same passion for history as Canfield. Society members are asked to nominate a local historian for the award by filling out the nomination form inside this issue (see page 7). The deadline for nominations is April 5. Birthday cake and refreshments will round out the evening. The public is invited to attend.

Previous recipients of the Canfield Award include: Erhart Mueller, Kenneth Lange, Phyllis Dearborn, Dr. Bob Dewel, Carol Sorg and Joe Ward.

Gene and Marge Baraboo visit Baraboo

THE Sauk County Historical Society hosted Gene and Marge Baraboo at a special event on January 31 at the Van Orden mansion. The occasion was a talk by local author and historian, Mark Tully, who wrote the book *A Man Called Baraboo, The Life and Times of an 18th-century Voyageur*. The Baraboo family, from Rothschild, WI, were special guests of the Society, having been invited through the efforts of local historian, Bob Dewel. Tully, dressed as an 18th-century voyageur, held the rapt attention of an audience of more than 80 people who came to learn where the Baraboo River got its name. According to Tully's research, Gene and Marge are direct descendants of Gabriel Barbeau, who was the older brother of François Barbeau, a French Canadian fur trader who had a trading post in the area in the mid-1700s. Through the centuries, the family name was Anglicized to Baraboo, and the name was applied to the river, city and picturesque bluffs surrounding them. Tully also presented the Baraboo's with a large color illustration of their ancestor that he had done for his book.



History Center Work to Continue in Spring

WORK on the new Sauk County History Center this winter has concentrated largely on planning for the spring and summer construction season. The new windows were installed last November just in time for one of the worst winters on record. This spring work will commence on restoring the front stairs to the building and installation of new sidewalks. The City of Baraboo has approved a donation of \$4,500 for this part of the project. The front door to the building will also be restored to its original look with the help of the original blueprints and historic photos. Interior demolition work and restoration work will continue with volunteer help as preparations are made for installation of new heating, cooling and ventilation systems. Fund raising continues for this crucial part of the project with bidding indicating that this will be a \$50,000 project. The Society has been pleased to receive a donation of \$5,000 from the Village of Lake Delton which recognizes the Society's important work in the county. Half of this donation will be used for the history center. Other donations have insured that work will begin this spring to continue the transformation of the historic Island Woolen Mill office building into the Sauk County History Center.



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Bold names are new since our last newsletter

If you are interested in making a gift to toward this important project, please contact the Society at (608) 356-1001.

50 [Years] x “Y” [Sauk County Residents During Those Years] x “Z” [Infinite Number of Personal Histories and Historic Themes] = A 50 Sq. Ft. Exhibit????

By Destinee Swanson, Curator

THE newest exhibit at the Sauk County Historical Museum, “Through a Child’s Eyes” Growing Up in Sauk County, 1870-1920,” is a super-condensed look at a pivotal half-century of local history. It attempts to impart to the visitor (in an interesting, logical, and concise manner) fifty years of history as experienced by the county’s youngest residents.

A very tall order indeed.

Like any historical topic, this theme has unlimited research potential and infinite educational merit, in combination with decidedly limited and definite restrictions on available physical space and production time.

So, how does one decide what voices should be heard? Which personal stories should be shared? What basic historical information should be included? As curator of collections and exhibits, these are all issues that I must take into consideration when planning a new display.

A first logical step in exhibit planning at a museum is to take an assessment of what related material and objects your collection holds; what stories can you sufficiently tell with what you have on hand? Public survey after public survey reiterates that genuine artifacts remain our most powerful and tangible connection to the past. Words are not enough; people want to see the STUFF.

A brief survey of the Society’s collections revealed that although we are definitely slim in child-related artifacts (especially those dating from the nineteenth century and earlier), those we do have are fairly broad in scope. From detailed doll buggies, to a variety of exquisitely made christening gowns, to a country-school desk, I was excited by the potential our collections held.

From here, I had to then decide what themes to cover. Visitors to the “Through a Child’s Eyes Exhibit” will encounter my interpretation of a “typical” childhood in Sauk County. Three major components, representing the most important aspects of childhood, are covered: school, work, and play. The exhibit showcases rare and irreplaceable artifacts underpinned by a framework of historical research—all of this further augmented by the addition of fascinating personal vignettes and historic photographs of Sauk County residents.

Because of Sauk County’s rural beginnings, a

focus is given to the one-room country school experience. Museum guests here have the opportunity to view a reconstruction of such a classroom, complete with a well-worn wooden desk, dinner pail, slate, and even the ever-present George Washington portrait. Another portion of the exhibit highlights the ways in which work and play overlap. Both the young and the young at heart will enjoy the toys and other artifacts here displayed, including a set of lead soldiers, an early nineteenth century sampler, and building blocks used by a young Louis Claude.

As the title of this article suggests, the field of mathematics is woefully inapplicable to the largely theoretical and creative world of museum education and research. Like any other exhibit, the success of “Through a Child’s Eyes must be measured in some other way—and we at the Society would love nothing more than to have you visit and critique our latest exhibit endeavor.



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www.saukcounty.com

School Tours

THE Sauk County Historical Society gives museum tours to students as part of its ongoing educational program. November found the Van Orden Mansion hosting three second grade classes from the Sauk-Prairie school district. The youth enjoyed learning about games from decades past, touring all the historic rooms, and reviewing new words included in the day's tours provided by Museum staff. This year, the Society also plans to travel to schools whose budget constraints do not include the cost of bus transportation to the museum.



Those wishing to support this great cause of bringing students to our museum may send donations to SCHS, P.O. Box 651, Baraboo, WI 53913

Archaeology Road Show

IN an area as rich in prehistoric artifacts as Sauk County, any farmer tilling a field or homebuilder digging up an empty lot can become an amateur artifact collector.

If you've discovered arrowheads, spear points, stone tools or other artifacts, now is your chance to have a professional archaeologist identify your finds. On Saturday, May 3, the University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County will host an Artifact Identification Day on campus.

The event coincides with Wisconsin Archaeology Month and will bring archaeologists and collections from UW-La Crosse and UW-Madison, as well as local artifacts from the Sauk County Historical Society collection.

The event will take place in the cafeteria in the Lange Center on campus from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

"It's an opportunity for the professional archaeologists to help people understand what they have in their collections," said Robert "Ernie" Boszhardt of the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center. "From the archaeologist's standpoint, it's an opportunity for us to get a better idea of what was happening from 12,000 to 350 years ago in the Baraboo area."

Other archaeologists on hand to present collections and identify artifacts will include UW-Baraboo/Sauk County Dean Dr. Thomas Pleger; Danielle Benden, academic curator at the UW-Madison Department of Anthropology; and George Christiansen of the Great Lakes Archaeological Research Center.

Though amateur collectors are welcome to bring in artifacts for identification, the archaeologists will not appraise the value of artifacts or allow collectors to buy

or sell artifacts at the show.

For more information on this event, or on the Wisconsin Archaeology (ANT 302) course Pleger will teach at the UW-Baraboo/Sauk County this summer, visit the campus website at www.baraboo.uwc.edu.

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We Care Program

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Old Picture Postcards Worth More Than 1,000 Words

(North Freedom, Wisconsin) — The saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words.” If that’s true, then the old-time photos collected by Mid-Continent Railway Museum at North Freedom, Wisconsin speak volumes.

The museum has accumulated photographic images of railroading for most of its nearly fifty-year existence. For the last forty of those years, many have appeared in the museum’s quarterly magazine *Railway Gazette* and annual calendars. But now, the museum is embracing modern technology to bring the images to the masses. A new online database of railroad-themed postcards is being unveiled on the museum’s website.

The genesis of the effort is a searchable database of picture postcards from the era of Golden Age Railroading that is the museum’s main focus. The years span from 1880 to 1916. “Real photo’ postcards are a perfect source for railroad photographs from the tail end of this era,” observes Paul Swanson, the museum’s co-webmaster.

While postcard collecting has been around as long as the postcards themselves, Swanson has been collecting them for just a few years. “I have narrowed my collecting to images that relate to Mid-Continent’s collection and focus,” he says. “Most have been found on ebay, which can become an expensive hobby!”

As the cards streamed in, Swanson scanned them into his computer and came to a conclusion that they’d best be shared with the world via the museum’s website. Thus the searchable database was born. Museum member Scott Monsma of Madison assisted with writing code for the database.

But this was not enough. 77 postcards were chosen to appear in a special issue of the museum’s quarterly publication *Railway Gazette*. Swanson personally selected the cards and wrote a brief history on the evolution of the photo postcard. Copies are being sold by the museum for \$4.95 each, plus postage, and may be ordered from Mid-Continent’s office or online at the museum’s web store at: www.midcontinent.org

The museum’s collections will also appear on the website over time. Several inventories are already posted, and photos will be available as well. For those who wish to visit the archives in person for research purposes, the Archives and Library are generally open on Saturdays, but it is recommended that an appointment be made first.

The Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit corporation founded in 1959 to preserve the Golden Age of railroad history for the upper Midwest. Membership is open to anyone interested in supporting our mission.



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William H. Canfield History Award Nomination

Deadline: April 5, 2008. Submit to: Sauk County Historical Society PO Box 651 Baraboo, WI 53913

SUBMITTER'S NAME _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Email Address _____

NOMINEE'S NAME _____ Telephone # _____

Address _____

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On a separate piece of paper, please complete the following paragraph in 500 words or less:

I nominate _____, who, like William H. Canfield, shows a passion for local history as shown by his/her...

Educational Outreach Is Historic

By Orris Smith, Executive Director

At work, you probably know that other employees do not have a good grasp for all the daily duties you perform unless they've just recently walked in your shoes. An area like that at the Sauk County Historical Society is our community outreach effort.

Since this fiscal year started in September, I've had the pleasure to visit residents at the Sauk County Health Care Center, the Reedsburg Senior Life Center, Meadow Ridge Assisted Living in Baraboo, with St. Clare Meadows planned for next month. While I share facts, listeners with favorite memories to share join me in the stories. This is always a great exchange, and enjoyable for everybody. Activity directors tell me that the stories continue on into the evening and the days following the interaction.

Our Society also provides lecture series, especially in the cold weather months. We have more programs in the next few weeks, and a past one provided a standing-room only crowd. Some guests traveled a hundred miles to attend, and said they wouldn't have missed sharing some life experiences. Everyone there learned something and shared smiles doing so.

School students are always invited to the Van Orden Museum, with one memory being a November busload of second-graders from Sauk-Prairie. Museum staff took them away from computer games and TV with old-fashioned outside games that were sometimes "new" to them. It was a great way to ensure they immediately enjoyed the visit plus let off some energy before visiting

artifacts inside. Each staff tour guide had special displays to highlight, and handpicked words and facts to focus on.

With school budgets tighter than ever, many schools struggle to afford the bus cost to the museum. We are currently looking for business sponsors to absorb that cost. We're also developing a fun, new program to take to the schools. Called SCI for Sauk County Investigators, it should intrigue fourth-grade students as they utilize duplicated old documents, maps, diaries, and newspapers to answer county and state history questions. We have been fortunate enough to enlist the help of a couple of retired elementary school teachers to help our curator with development, and current teachers we've contacted seem genuinely excited about the prospects of such a good program at no cost to them. Fortunately, we've been aided by member contributions and local grant dollars, and hope to secure additional funds in the future.

Staff and volunteers also visit the schools with artifacts, repeatedly speak to community service groups and businesses, report to the newspapers, and interview on radio as part of our outreach. If you know of someone who would like such a service, please call the museum (356-1001) between noon and 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. A lot happens every week at the Society, and we'd be happy to consider sharing our activities with your group.

March/April 2008
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