VOYAGEUR

Winter / Spring 2023 | Northeast Wisconsin's Historical Review | Volume 39 | Number 2

A Celebration of Nordic Skiing

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Ku Klux Klan Recruiting Methods in the Fox Cities
Sheboygan's Forgotten Zoo
Establishing the Wisconsin Veterans' Home at Waupaca

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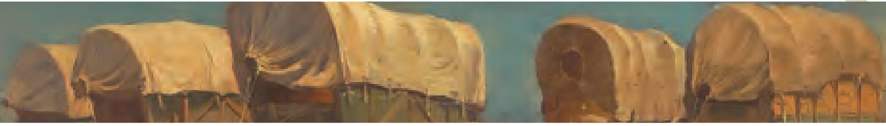

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Letters, Submissions, and Queries
Eric J. Morgan | Editor-in-Chief
2420 Nicolet Dr.
UW-Green Bay
Green Bay, WI 54311
920-465-2714
morgane@uwgb.edu

Voyageur Mailing Address
P.O. Box 1411
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Website
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About the Cover
Five people are standing at a fence rail looking down at King's Gateway Hotel from the top of the ski slide in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin.

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Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-37968

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Chelsea Salzsieder

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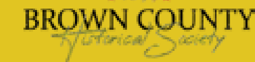

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To preserve and share the rich and deep history of Northeast Wisconsin by producing a relevant, attractive, and stimulating publication that shares our history through both academic and popular articles and encourages others in their pursuit of local history.

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7. Rochester, Minnesota
17. Chicago, Illinois

The Benedict Family
13. Butte des Morts, Wisconsin
14. Vinland, Wisconsin
18. Alum Creek Friends Settlement, Ohio
20. Dutchess County, New York

"Don't Let an Old Soldier Go to the Poor House"
8. Waupaca, Wisconsin
16. Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Sheboygan's Forgotten Zoo
15. Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Ku Klux Klan Recruiting Methods in the Fox Cities
9. Neenah, Wisconsin
10. Menasha, Wisconsin
11. Appleton, Wisconsin

Yump, Ole, Yump!
1. Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
2. New Richmond, Wisconsin
3. Spooner, Wisconsin
4. Ashland, Wisconsin
5. Ishpeming, Michigan
6. Red Wing, Minnesota
21. Norway

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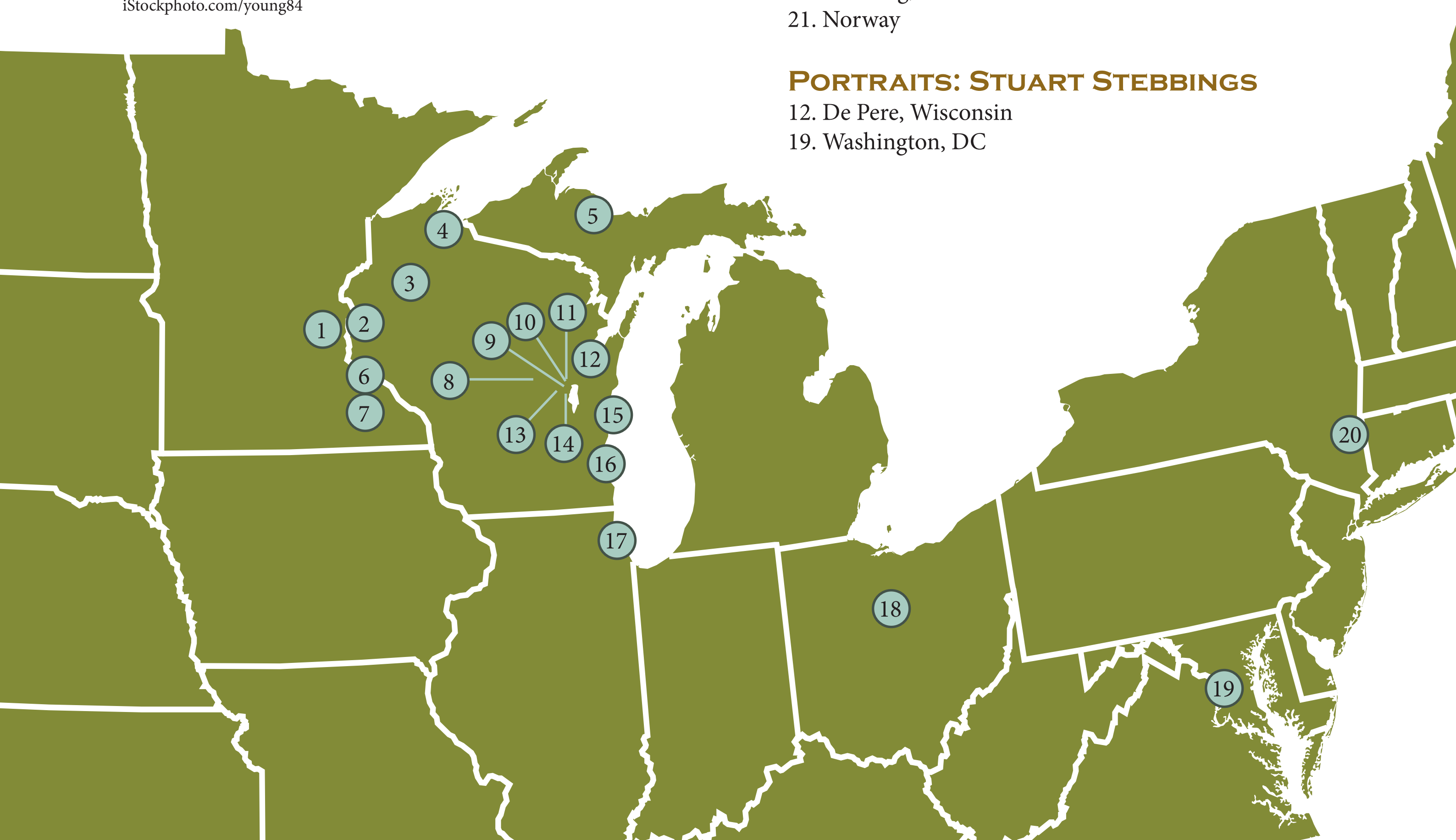

Another Wisconsin winter is upon us. It is a time of cold Lake Michigan winds and falling snow; for nights huddled under blankets and around fireplaces; for hot chocolates and hot toddies; for sledding, ice skating, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing; for reading and other quiet pursuits. It is a time, as author Katherine May writes in her wonderful 2020 book, *Wintering*, of "rest and retreat in difficult times." We hope that this issue of *Voyageur*—with stories on the histories of Nordic skiing, a forgotten zoo, radical politics, a cheese inventor, and much more—brings you some happiness and stimulation during this winter season.

We would love to hear more from our readers, whether through our social media channels or by electronic or regular mail. Do you have an idea for a story or podcast that you would like us to pursue? Do you have photographs or stories of your own that you would like to share with your fellow readers? Is there a question you would like to ask or comment you would like to make to one of our authors? We haven't received a Letter to the Editor in some time and would love to open more dialogues between our readership and authors.

To that end, after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the *Voyageur* Author Talk Series will recommence this winter. Michael D. Jacobs, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, will present a talk based on his article, "Ku Klux Klan Recruiting Methods in the Fox Cities," featured in this issue, at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1st at the History Museum at the Castle in Appleton. Please join us for what promises to be an exciting event and to engage with your fellow *Voyageur* readers. Our sincere thanks to Erin Comer and Dustin Mack at the History Museum at the Castle for helping to make this talk possible.

I wish all of you a winter of rest, retreat, and renewal. Please enjoy this issue of *Voyageur*.

Eric J. Morgan
Editor-in-Chief, *Voyageur: Northeast Wisconsin's Historical Review*
Associate Professor of Democracy and Justice Studies and History, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

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STITCHING HISTORY FROM THE HOLOCAUST

The History Museum at the Castle in Appleton showed a powerful exhibit called "Stitching the Holocaust," loaned from the Jewish Museum in Milwaukee. The exhibition tells a story through letters of a married couple who sent dress designs to a friend in Milwaukee in an attempt to get a visa to the U.S. Tragically, they were killed in the Holocaust, but their story lives on through a recreation of their designs. This exhibit **will close on January 30th**, but is on permanent display at the Jewish Museum in Milwaukee, and can be viewed at Jewishmuseummilwaukee.org. The History Museum at the Castle is open every day except Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., admission is $10 for adults, $7.50 for children, and children under three are free. For more information visit: **myhistorymuseum.org** or call **920-735-9370.**

This February come to Fond du Lac to enjoy the **Celebrate CommUNITY** event hosted by United for Diversity. Celebrate CommUNITY will take place on **February 18th** and is a celebration of the differences within the community. The purpose of this event is to further awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the lives of all people. This is the sixteenth anniversary of this event and will begin at 11 a.m. at the Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds Expo Center located at 520 Fond du Lac Avenue. Admission for this event is $5 and children twelve and under attend free of charge. For more information visit: **fdl.com/event/celebrate-community.**

On **April 13th**, Heritage Hill State Park will feature a lecture and dinner event focusing on the environmental history of the Green Bay and Fox River areas. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with cocktails and a social hour. At 6:30, there will be a lecture by Brie Kupsky, the Green Bay Program Coordinator within the Office of Great Waters at the Wisconsin DNR. She will explain the history of the degradation of ecosystem environments in the Fox River and Green Bay areas and efforts to restore native aquatic plant species and the health of these waterbodies. A perch fry dinner prepared by Minzo's Kitchen will be served. The evening concludes with coffee and desserts, which will be available until 8:30 p.m. Tickets are available online on Heritage Hill's website. For more information visit: **heritagehillgb.org** or call **920-448-5150.**

Wright State University Libraries

Join the Neville Public Museum on **April 20th** for dinner and a discussion of the Wright brothers' often overlooked sister, Katharine. While the genius of Orville and Wilbur has been widely celebrated, their sister is often left out of the story. She was not only a devoted and much-beloved sibling to her famous brothers, but also an integral part in helping them unlock the secret of flight. Learn about her through a performance by Jessica Michna, an award-winning historical reenactor who has brought many historical women back to life in her riveting one-woman presentations. Advanced registration is required. For more information visit: **nevillepublicmuseum.org**.

Now on permanent display at the Hearthstone Historic House Museum is "**Lewis Latimer: Self-Made Renaissance Man.**" Latimer was born in Massachusetts in 1848 to George and Rebecca Latimer, who had just escaped enslavement and were able to purchase their freedom. Latimer enlisted into the U.S. Navy during the Civil War at the age of sixteen, and began working at a patent law firm after the war. Teaching himself how to draft and make mechanical drawings, he went on to have a brilliant career, working for the likes of Alexander Graham Bell, Hiram Maxim, and Thomas Edison. This exhibit explores in-depth the achievements and contributions of Latimer's work and its impact on the world we know today. The museum is located at 625 West Prospect Avenue in Appleton, and is open for daytime tours **Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 3:30 p.m**. For more information visit: **hearthstoremuseum.org** or call **920-730-8204**.

Opening Early 2023!

The Lake Winnebago region, once promoted as a recreational paradise called Winnebagoland, is home to timeless adventure! Enjoy the competition, camaraderie, and community through the years of sporting and recreation history brought to life. Jump in and feel the lure of the lake, root for the home teams of the past, and play along in our newest long-term exhibition.

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Janet (Ihrig-Fuhs) Eiler

Janet (Ihrig-Fuhs) Eiler was raised on a farm outside the Winneconne and Butte des Morts area, where her roots run deep, back to 1847. Her interests include preserving local history by conducting annual cemetery walks, serving on the board of directors for the Butte des Morts Historical Preservation Society, the Winneconne Historical Society, and the Winnebagoland Genealogical Society. She has also worked on the local Poor Farm Cemetery project, indexing vital records, writes two newsletters, and headed a local history book project for Butte des Morts, Wisconsin.

Mat Hoffman is an independent blogger and local history enthusiast. He has a strong appreciation and constant curiosity for all things which show that our past is interwoven with our present. By sharing long-lost stories in innovative ways, Mat hopes to inspire future generations to take a peek into the past and increase their desire to preserve local history. His blog can be found at: oldgb.org.

Dustin Hoffmann is a lifelong resident of Sheboygan, where he lives with his wife, Caitlyn, and three sons, Huck, Holden and Arlo. As an enthusiast of both wildlife and local history, he decided to explore the story of the local zoo that once existed just a few blocks from where he lives. A zookeeper by trade, Dustin was excited to research the story of the formation and ultimately the events surrounding the closure of the Vollrath Park Zoo.

Michael D. Jacobs is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. He earned his PhD in history from Marquette University in 2001 and has been working in the UW System since. His principal research interests focuses on American intolerance movements, especially white supremacy and anti-Catholicism.

Ryan Rodgers is a freelance writer and avid skier whose work has been published in *Backpacker*, *The Sun*, *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, *Hamline*, and *Northern Wilds* magazines. The former board president of the Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy, a 1,500-acre nonprofit land trust along the St. Croix River, he lives with his family in northern Minnesota.

Steven T. Sheehan is an associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh-Fox Cities where he teaches courses in U.S. history. He holds a PhD in American history from Indiana University. He has worked extensively with the Neenah Historical Society planning and curating exhibitions, including one on returning Civil War soldiers.

S. Benjamin Wideman is the director of marketing and communications for the National Railroad Museum in Ashwaubenon. Prior to joining the museum in August 2021, he served as a director of marketing and communications for seven years at educational institutions in Green Bay and Manitowoc. Before that, he spent two decades as a writer, photographer, and editor for several media outlets in Northeast Wisconsin.

Contributors and Staff

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Back row, left to right: Chelsea Salzsieder, Savannah Mikle, Joy St.Pierre, Elsie McElroy, and Logan Wissman
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Before sending manuscripts to the editor-in-chief, prospective authors should contact the editor about their proposed article. If a manuscript is submitted for review, authors should email an electronic copy of the text and endnotes, along with image suggestions. The review process takes a minimum of two months. For those desiring more information about submitting manuscripts, the magazine's author guidelines can be obtained by emailing the editor or at: voyageurmagazine.org.

Illustrations by Savannah Mikle

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Complete sets of all issues of ***Voyageur*** from its first issue in 1984 are available at various local and regional libraries and archives in Wisconsin, Hazelwood Historic House Museum in Green Bay, the Wisconsin Historical Society Library in Madison, the national genealogical collections of the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, the ABC-CLIO Library in Santa Barbara, California, and both the Library of Congress and the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Library in Washington, DC Selected back issues are available for purchase from ***Voyageur*** for $5.00.

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Joseph Lister Hospital Car

by S. Benjamin Wideman

After more than two and a half years of dedicated, meticulous work, the National Railroad Museum has unveiled the beautifully restored Joseph Lister hospital car. The Lister, built in 1930 by the famed Pullman Company, transported patients from Chicago to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, for more than thirty years as part of the Chicago and North Western railroad (CNW).

The Lister is being displayed in the National Railroad Museum's Lenfestey Center, with plans to relocate it once the Center's east end addition is constructed. "Through more than two and a half years of hard work by our staff and a dedicated volunteer corps, we have been able to recreate a significant piece of American railroad history," said Jacqueline Frank, CEO of the National Railroad Museum, located at 2285 S. Broadway in Ashwaubenon. "I look forward to families enjoying this immersive exhibit, and to the opportunity the museum now has to create educational experiences for students who may not thrive in a traditional classroom setting, but suddenly discover the magic of history, science and other subjects simply by stepping 'back in time' when they enter a restored Lister." Generous financial support for the project was provided by the David L. and Rita E. Nelson Family Fund ($83,100), as well as donations from Dr. Paul and Linda Koch, and other smaller donations totaling about $37,000. Dr. Koch also donated historic medical equipment that will be used in the display once the east end addition is built.

National Railroad Museum

Above: The Joseph Lister going to the Lenfestey Center.

Middle: The central interior room of Joseph Lister.

Below: A smaller room that mainly held patients, portraying a bed with a reproduction Pullman blanket.

Thousands of hours have been devoted to resurrecting the Lister since it was moved inside the Museum's shop in July 2019. Hands-on restoration team members included museum employees Jeff Truckey and Andrew Duescher, retired museum employee Hank Van Stedum, and volunteers Peter Angeli, Paul Koch, Mike Pavick, Jerry Vander Heyden, Larry LePage, and Jay Froming. "It's nice to be part of a project like this that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn from," said Jeff Truckey, the museum's facilities specialist. "This was the most difficult restoration project I've been part of so far, because there's a lot of work involved. But I think it is turning out very nice."

Alfred Eisenstaedt/The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock

A patient being brought into the Joseph Lister Hospital Car for treatment.

The hospital car has been part of the National Railroad Museum's rolling stock since 1988. CNW named it the Joseph Lister in honor of the famed English surgeon who is best known as the founder of antiseptic medicine and a pioneer in preventive medicine. The Lister was one of two identical hospital cars manufactured for CNW. The other was dubbed Ephraim McDowell for the former American physician and pioneer surgeon; that car eventually was dismantled and used for parts. Once the Joseph Lister was removed from hospital car service, its interior was gutted and it finished its career as a bunk car for CNW rail crews. Upon arrival at the museum, the Lister was used for storage before being converted into a maintenance space and then transitioning back to a storage space.

In 2018 the Lister was deemed a high priority project, so the museum fundraised and researched the car's history, including how it was constructed and how it appeared decades ago. Referencing more than one hundred detailed blueprints, restoration team members fabricated many parts that deteriorated or were missing before the museum acquired the car. The Lister also received extensive metalwork, new wiring, and fresh paint both inside and outside.

CNW literature describes the Lister as a customized, composite Pullman sleeping car that could hold six patients and medical personnel. The car had multiple private rooms. To afford patients a greater level of comfort, the Lister featured three double doors along one side that each opened to thirty inches wide, enough to accommodate a stretcher. Two of the doors provided direct entrance into extra wide rooms. The third set accessed multiple open sections located at one end of the car. By using the double doors, patients avoided the numerous turns associated with the usual vestibule entrance. To further aid mobility within the car, corridors were widened to facilitate stretchers and to aid patients moving about with an escort.

The Lister, part of the Rochester-Minnesota Special train, was intended to provide sleeping quarters for overnight occupancy. As such, the car was equipped with several special engineering features to reduce noise and vibration. In addition to roller bearings on the axles, a smoother ride was ensured by rubber "shock absorbers" placed between the car body and its trucks. The diaphragms at each end of the car were spring-hung, eliminating much of the noise associated with the between-car walkways. "It is always exciting to see rolling stock after a large restoration process," said Daniel Liedtke, curator at the National Railroad Museum. "The Joseph Lister has been given a renewed life, and visitors will be given the chance to see a different aspect of passenger travel relating to health. In today's environment, with COVID-19 and other diseases, health is in the forefront of people's minds. So the Joseph Lister car's history of transporting patients to the Mayo Clinic resonates with people as they may have had to travel to a hospital for care."

The September 4, 1939 edition of *Life* magazine featured a multi-page spread on the Mayo Clinic that included a photo of a patient being brought aboard the Joseph Lister train car. The article said two ambulances, and sometimes as many as five ambulances, greeted hospital cars at the Mayo Clinic, with roughly 100,000 people visiting the clinic each year via one means of transportation or another. In the book, *Steam, Steel & Limiteds: A Definitive History of the Golden Age of America's Steam Powered Passenger Trains*, William W. Kratville writes, "It was always a somber sight to walk to your sleeper, because there were many passengers heading for the Mayo Clinic for treatment….You would have to step aside while a stretcher case was lifted through the special doors in the Ephraim McDowell or Joseph Lister. This strange feeling carried through to the wood partitioned club car too, for rarely was there much fun on this train. The (train route) caused operating headaches by always having to have the right side of the hospital car next to the platform!"

A 1995 article in *The Post-Bulletin* newspaper in Rochester, Minnesota noted that the train service was key to the expansion of the Mayo Clinic's patient-service area in its early years of development. The *Post-Bulletin* quoted retired CNW station agent Cy Day as saying that "on many days (the hospital cars) were full with patients." Retired Mayo Clinic administrator Slade Schuster also was quoted as saying that the rail service was a boon to the clinic's expanding patient load, especially from the 1930s through the 1950s. "The railroad was a lifeline for Mayo in those early days," a 2006 *Post-Bulletin* article noted.

Improved highways and expanded airline service decreased the Mayo Clinic's dependence on rail service, and in the early 1960s CNW discontinued all rail passenger service to Rochester. The Lister's history now will be forever connected with the National Railroad Museum and the Mayo Clinic.

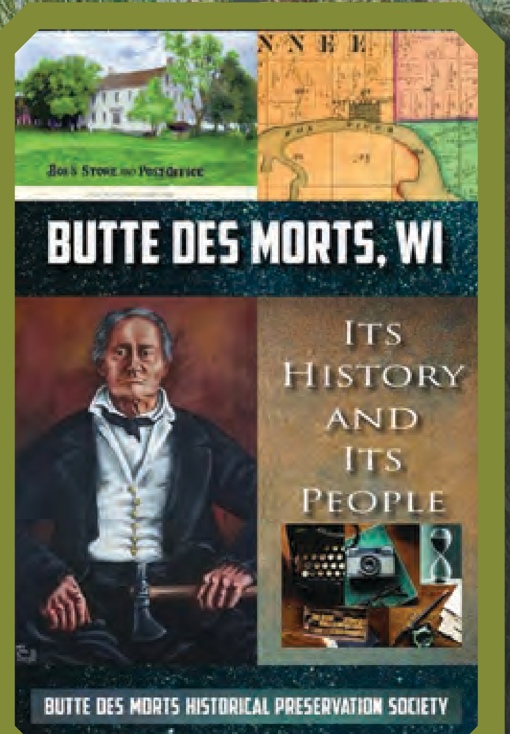
For more information about the National Railroad Museum, visit: nationalrrmuseum.org or call 920-437-7623.

THE BENEDICT FAMILY

Colonists, Pioneers, Trappers

by Janet (Ihrig-Fuhs) Eiler

The following is an excerpt from *Butte Des Morts, WI: Its History and Its People*, published by the Butte Des Morts Historical Preservation Society in 2020. It is available for purchase at: buttedesmortshistory.com.



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> "Imagine never returning to see your loved ones again. Imagine your mode of transportation was a wagon pulled by an oxen team, winding through uncivilized land and forests; and for the most part, following Indian trails."

The Mayflower landed at Plymouth Harbor in November 1620. Seventeen years later, in 1637, Thomas Benedict and his bride arrived at Salem, Massachusetts on the ship *Mary Ann*. This ship was not authorized to depart England.

Thomas Benedict, from Nottinghamshire, England, went into voluntary exile rather than endure the cruelties and oppressions from religious prosecution. After arriving in Salem, eventually he made his way to Long Island, New York, where most of his nine children were born.

The Benedict family that settled in Butte des Morts, Winnebago County, Wisconsin were descendants from Thomas' fifth child, John Benedict, Sr. The lineage is as follows: Thomas > John, Sr. > Joseph, Sr. > Gideon > Aaron, Sr. > Sylvester > Amos (immigrant to Winnebago County, Wisconsin). The author of this article, Janet (Ihrig-Fuhs) Eiler, is the third great-granddaughter of Amos Benedict from this sketch. My ancestry follows Amos through: Cyrus S. > Oura Oliver > Raymond Arthur, Sr. > Judy Ray (Benedict) Fuhs.

Thomas Benedict, the immigrant from England, resided in Southold, Long Island, and Jamaica, New York, and Norwalk, Connecticut. He was involved in government offices, town clerk and the general assembly. He was credited with the founding of the first erected Presbyterian Church in America at Jamaica, New York in 1662 and was one of the founders of Danbury, Fairfield County, Connecticut in 1685.[1]

John Benedict, Sr., like his father, also held several government positions. He was a freeman, selectman, and served in the General Assembly in 1722 and 1725. He was very pious and a deacon of the church until old age rendered him unable to serve. He was elected in 1705 to sit in the seat before the pulpit, a very high honor.[2]

Not much is known about Joseph and his son Gideon except Gideon died at the hands of his father somehow. Gideon's son, Aaron Benedict, was brought up by his grandfather, Joseph, after his father's death.

Aaron Benedict is the ancestor that qualifies all of his descendants for membership into the Sons and/or Daughters of the American Revolution. Delaware County, Ohio was part of the United States military district which Congress set aside for land grants to Revolutionary War soldiers. Settlement of the area was delayed for years and most recipients sold their grants; Aaron Benedict did not.

Residing in Dutchess County, New York in 1809, Aaron sent his son, Cyrus Benedict ahead to scout the land and make a choice for the family. Cyrus is credited with being the founding father of the Alum Creek Settlement, Morrow County, Ohio. By 1812 most of the family had moved to Ohio to escape the hardships imposed by the war in the eastern states, while others came later.[3]

The Benedicts were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, both in New York and Ohio. Reuben Benedict donated the land that houses the Friends Meeting House and the cemetery. Aaron had built a fine brick Federal-style building which is still standing today. It was an impressive home for its day out on the frontier and was a busy stop on the Underground Railroad before the Civil War.[4]

In 2001, I discovered a Sesquicentennial booklet from 1967 describing the Benedicts' involvement in the Underground Railroad and the fact that two of the houses were still standing. This prompted me take a spontaneous trip to Marengo, Ohio in search of more information. I found the Alum Creek Cemetery, never expecting the Alum Creek Evangelical Friends Church was still in existence as well.

Upon my arrival I discovered a two-sided historical marker with my family name of Benedict.[5] As luck would have it, I did not know the Meeting House still existed and was lucky enough to arrive when the janitor was cleaning up. She contacted the "minister" and he was at the Meeting House within a half hour.

I not only visited the final resting places of my Ohio ancestors but got to look through church records. I received three sketches of my ancestors from Alum Creek's history and was taken to see the two houses used in the Underground Railroad! The "minister" introduced me to a distant cousin as well, the Greenwoods. A year before my visit, Reuben Benedict's house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sylvester Benedict is a mystery, other than being born October 18, 1780 in New Milford, Litchfield County, Connecticut and passing away on April 8, 1821 in Bennington, Delaware County, Ohio.[6] He married Martha Allen on September 16, 1804 in Dutchess County, New York and had eight children. He was an active Quaker and moved to Ohio. Not much is known about him except several of his children migrated to Wisconsin.

In 1847 Samuel Colt sold his first revolver to the United States government. James K. Polk was president. The Mexican-Ameri-

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Study of Covered Wagons by Samuel Colman, circa 1871.

can War was underway; the first postage stamps featuring George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were issued; and Thomas Edison and Jesse James were both born. Peru Township, Ohio was still part of Delaware County for another year, when it became part of the newly formed Morrow County in 1848.[7] Life was tough and the population grew to just over 20,000 in a predominantly farming county.[8] Imagine traveling with a group of over thirty family members, taking only the necessities to survive 500 miles. Imagine never returning to see your loved ones again. Imagine your mode of transportation was a wagon pulled by an oxen team, winding through uncivilized land and forests; and for the most part, following Indian trails.

This is exactly what Amos Benedict did in 1847, along with at least thirteen other adults and roughly twenty-four children. Known travelers were: Amos and Phila (Pierce) Benedict and their two children (Rufus P. and Cyrus S.); Amos's brother, Cyrus and Susan (Doughty) Benedict and seven of their children (Allen, Thomas, Sarah, Martha, Stephen D., Malvina, and Manford); Amos' sister, Mary and Alvah McCrary and their five children (Allen, Theresa, Hiram and Martha); Amos' brother, William Wallace and Achsah (Horr) Benedict and their three children (Oscar, Josiah, and Walter); Amos' sister, Jane and Thomas Doughty and 3 of their children (Amos, Samuel and Austin). Two cousins traveling the trail with them were David Benedict and Cyrus and Hannah (Cope) Benedict. Phila (Pierce) Benedict also had family that made the journey: her parents, Rufus and Elizabeth (Snyder) Pierce and four of their children (Oliver, Merritt, George and Alvina).

The family came from a strict family of Quakers, properly known as the Religious Society of Friends; or sometimes just referred to as Friends. The Quakers followed a peaceful way; worshipping and believing in the "inner light," that Christ worked directly through their soul. The Quakers follow an unprogrammed and silent type of worship. Their beliefs and customs are very strict and believed they must participate in regular meetings to retain their membership. They also believed that Christ admonished us to love our enemies and that all war is wrong.[9]

Despite being Quakers, Amos' grandfather, Aaron Benedict, fought in the Revolutionary War under Col. Van Rensselaer, for the sole purpose of receiving a land grant for his service. Aaron claimed his land and settled in Delaware County, Ohio by 1809. The family was very strong in their Quaker faith, donating land for the Alum Creek Meeting House and the adjoining cemetery, where Aaron Benedict was the first to be interred in 1816.[10] Aaron's son, Sylvester (Amos's father), was also laid to rest in the Alum Creek Cemetery in 1821.[11]

When Sylvester died, Amos was only two years old. His mother, Martha (Allen) Benedict, remarried to Aaron Chapman, who continued to raise the Benedict children in the Quaker faith. His mother lived until July 17, 1870. Being advanced in age, Martha did not make the journey to WI and knew she would not ever see her children again.[12]

Wisconsin Territory had opened up for entry around 1840. Settlers began arriving to claim their homesteads by 1846 and most of the best lands were claimed by 1850. In 1847, at the age of twenty-eight years old, Amos and the above-mentioned family members made their way to the wilderness of Winnebago County, Wisconsin.

When Amos first arrived in Winnebago County, Wisconsin, he purchased eighty acres in the southwest quarter of section twenty

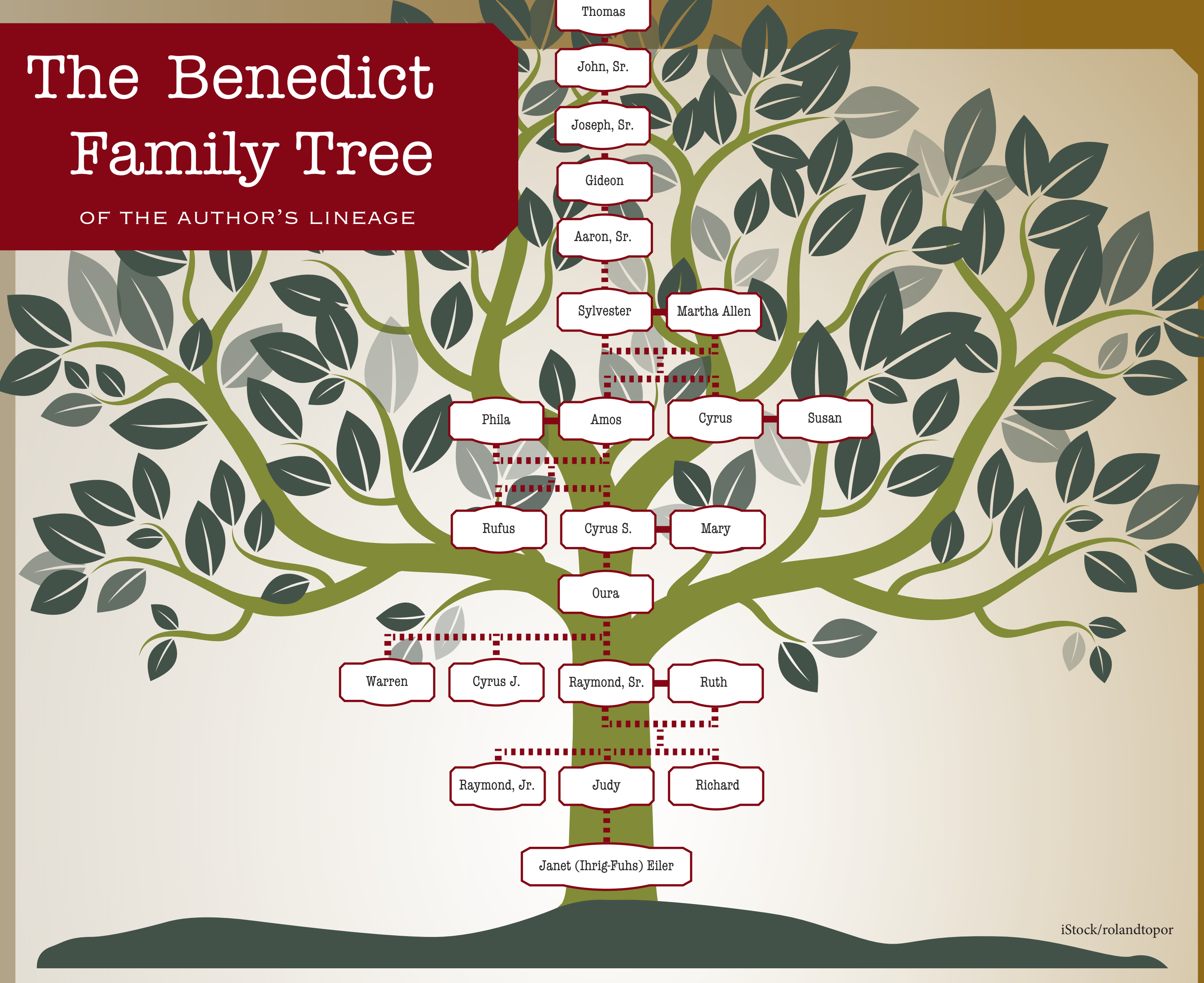
Alum Creek Friends Church; Rev. Ronald Irick

Left: A sketch of Aaron Benedict.

Right: The Alum Creek Friends Church, pictured in 2015, was built in 1857.

The Benedict Family Tree

OF THE AUTHOR'S LINEAGE



iStock/rolandtopor

in Vinland Township.[13] Daggett's Creek runs through this property. Today this land is located on the northeast corner of Brooks and Skeleton Bridge Roads and is an open field owned by the Schmoker family. Amos still owned his farm in 1862 but started purchasing thousands of acres of marshland on both sides of the Fox River, in Butte des Morts and Omro areas.

In the 1860 Census, Amos listed his real estate to be worth $2000 and $600 for personal property, which is pretty successful for that time.[14] Ohio did not have the lakes like Wisconsin, Amos soon discovered that trapping and hunting proved to be more profitable than farming and sold his farm in Vinland Township to his neighbor, S. A. March and moved to Butte des Morts by 1870.[15]

Back home in Ohio, Amos' family, being Quakers, would not fight in the Civil War due to their religious beliefs. Instead, the Benedict family, in Morrow County, Ohio, were active participants in the Underground Railroad. Aaron Lancaster Benedict actually had a $5000 bounty on his head, dead or alive. In front of the Alum Creek Meeting House is a double-sided historical marker depicting the Benedicts involvement and how they appeared to come out of the ground when slave hunters were dangerously close.[16]

Amos continued to pave a new life for himself and family, but what happened to the Quaker faith once this group of Benedicts settled in Wisconsin is unclear. There is not any record of them leaving the Quaker membership and nothing has been found to indicate they continued the Quaker faith. Considering the area was a vast wilderness and any form of a "church" being absent could possibly account for their eventual separation from the Quaker faith. Perhaps, no one in the group felt qualified enough to form another Meeting branch. The religion definitely was not passed on to the children here in Wisconsin, several of those children serving in the Civil War, which would have been against the Quaker faith.

Two of Amos' sons enlisted in the Civil War. First, Cyrus S. Benedict enlisted as a private on September 5, 1863 in Company C, 1st Wisconsin Heavy Artillery Regiment. He mustered out on July 29, 1865.[17]

Second, Rufus Pierson Benedict enlisted as a musician in Company B, 21st Wisconsin Infantry Regiment on August 14, 1862 and was promoted to principal musician on November 9, 1864, then mustered out on June 8, 1865.[18] Both men returned home safely to their families.

Library of Congress

Above: A Civil War band similar to the one that Rufus Pierson Benedict would have been a part of.

Pearl Huntington Benedict Collection

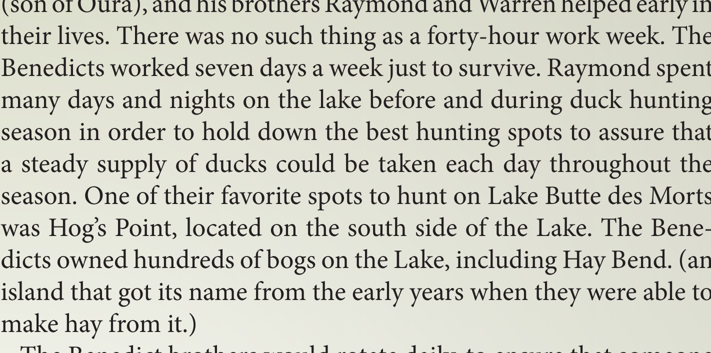
Right: Raymond Arthur Benedict in his World War II uniform.

Below: Mary Fox Benedict, wife of Cyrus S. Benedict.

Cyrus S. Benedict had been put on a "deserter" list, but his military papers from the National Archives shows he did not desert his post. In fact, he was in a hospital at the time of the roll call. After his hospital stay, he returned to his unit and finished out his commitment.[19]

After the Civil War ended in April 1865, Amos' two sons, Rufus and Cyrus, returned home to Butte des Morts and joined their father in the trapping business. Amos had the only registered fur farm in Butte des Morts and the family business began, carrying on for four generations.[20]

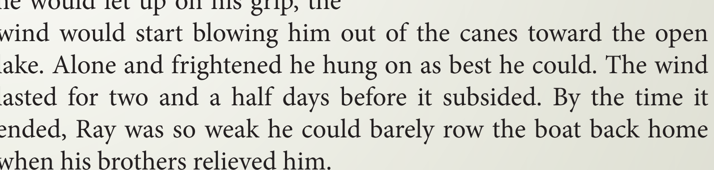
There has been a family story that when Cyrus S. returned home from the Civil War, he canoed up the Fox River and bought himself an Indian bride, Mary Charlotte Fox, daughter of William and Elizabeth (Langs) Fox. I have researched and have not found any proof that Mary Fox was indeed of Indian heritage. Pictures indicate she and her sisters "look" like they could have Native American features, but those features could also be contributed to a French ancestry. I followed her family back in the Census readings, when Indians were not included, and the family claimed to be white. One of Mary's sisters, Margaret (Fox) Wampole, married a man, Daniel Washington Wampole, who was half Native American and perhaps that is where the story originated?



The descendants who carried on the trapping and hunting tradition were: Cyrus S. and Rufus P. Benedict (sons of Amos); Rufus' son, Ernest L. Benedict; Oura, Jesse, Robert P., and Clarence Benedict (sons of Cyrus S.); Cyrus J. Benedict (son of Oura).

The last generation to trap, fish and hunt for their livelihood was Cyrus J. (son of Oura), and his brothers Raymond and Warren helped early in their lives. There was no such thing as a forty-hour work week. The Benedicts worked seven days a week just to survive. Raymond spent many days and nights on the lake before and during duck hunting season in order to hold down the best hunting spots to assure that a steady supply of ducks could be taken each day throughout the season. One of their favorite spots to hunt on Lake Butte des Morts was Hog's Point, located on the south side of the Lake. The Benedicts owned hundreds of bogs on the Lake, including Hay Bend. (an island that got its name from the early years when they were able to make hay from it.)

The Benedict brothers would rotate daily, to ensure that someone would be there at all times, day and night and through any kind of weather conditions. Severe thunderstorms, high winds, heat, mosquitoes, rain, sleet, freezing cold and even snow. Boredom would set in from the long hours of sitting alone until someone would relieve you, until your next turn. This rotation would last from August to December. If you left the point unattended some other group would move in and take it and you would not get it back. The rule was, you did not leave until you were relieved. Living off the lake was not a game; it was part of surviving in the twenties and thirties.



In 1931 or 1932, when Ray was about sixteen or seventeen years old, he recalled when a terrible storm hit when he was holding down the point. The wind came up and blew so hard he thought he was going to drown (he never learned how to swim). He pushed his rowboat as far into the canes as he could and hung on for dear life. Every time he would let up on his grip, the wind would start blowing him out of the canes toward the open lake. Alone and frightened he hung on as best he could. The wind lasted for two and a half days before it subsided. By the time it ended, Ray was so weak he could barely row the boat back home when his brothers relieved him.

When Ray was fifteen or sixteen years old, he and Cy were running loop lines through the ice, illegally, off the point of the north canes when they got quite a surprise. It seems the wardens had been watching them from a distance with their binoculars unbeknownst to Ray and Cy. In the past when the wardens tried to catch them, they always came from Sunset Point in a car. Ray and Cy would spot them and escape by disappearing in the canes on the opposite side of the lake. They always got away because the wardens could not cross the channel with their car. Ray was an excellent ice skater and always wore ice skates, but Cy did not wear skates at all.

On one particular day, Cy spotted the wardens approaching with two cars from both sides of the lake in an attempt to cut them off before they could reach the canes and escape. The Benedicts each had a sled full of fishing supplies with them. Immediately they took off towards the Village of Butte des Morts pulling the sleds but realized they could not outrun the wardens in the cars, because Cy was not wearing ice skates. Ray told Cy to leave his sled and take off through the canes where the cars could not go and he would continue out onto the lake, pulling his sled at a slow pace to decoy the law into thinking they would easily catch him. This would enable his brother to have enough time to escape.

As anticipated, the wardens started after Ray and he took off like a shot and left them behind. The law was so eager to make an arrest that they did not notice that they were being led out onto thinner ice until the front wheels on one of their cars went through the ice and they came to a sudden stop. When Ray looked back, they were standing on the ice next to their car shaking their fists and swearing quite profusely.

The wardens ended up confiscating Cy's sled and supplies and called it a partial victory, thinking that without supplies they could not fish. Oura gave the wardens a story about someone stealing his kids sled, but said he knew nothing about any illegal fishing supplies. He was allowed to buy the sled back for $5.00, but the wardens kept the fishing equipment. No one was fined because the wardens never got close enough to make an arrest or identify who had the sled. They knew the culprits were the Benedicts, but could not prove which one!

Another time when Ray was in his teens, he and Cy were in a rat shanty that the Benedicts used by Scott's Bay, near the old Dredge Bank, skinning muskrats. There were a lot of rats to skin, so they decided to do it in the shanty on the marsh instead of waiting until they got home. The problem was, they also had illegal sturgeon and were way over their limit in ducks in the shack. They were hurriedly tending to their skinning job so they could finish and haul the illegal cache of ducks and sturgeon home.

This rat shanty had two rooms and was built on posts with a door between the rooms and a trapdoor in the floor of the back room. As the boys were quietly tending to the job at hand, noises from outside were heard. "Wardens!" Cy said excitedly and the scramble was on. Bags of fish, ducks and muskrats went into the back room. Ray barred the front door while Cy was in the back room opening the trap door preparing to load their boat. As the wardens began pounding on the door, Ray retreated to the back room and barred that door also.

Once inside, the wardens saw that the first room was empty, and they began yelling and pounding on the second door. The wardens were so intent on breaking in the door that they did not notice what was happening right under their noses. Ray and Cy with their boat now loaded, had slipped through the trap door, cut the warden's boat loose and escaped through the rushes unbeknown to the wardens.

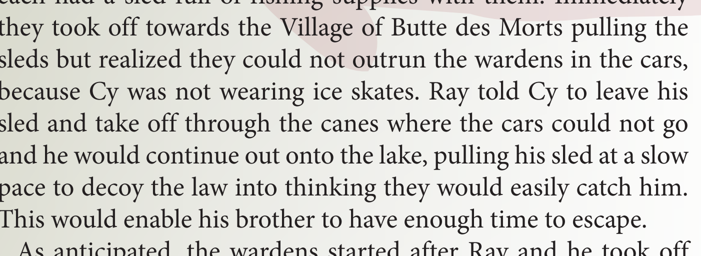
Needless to say, the boys with badges were very surprised and ticked off when they broke through the second door only to discover an empty room. All they got for their trouble was a bunch of skinned out rat carcasses. Can you imagine the look on their faces when they realized that their boat was floating just out of reach and one of them would have to get soaked to retrieve it?

Throughout their lives, Ray and Cy remained the closest of all the boys in the Benedict family. Cy, being Ray's older brother by eleven years, taught him almost everything he knew about hunting, fishing and trapping.

In March 1949, Cy became ill with pneumonia and was bed ridden and unable to tend to his trap line. Ray offered to tend

"Wardens!"

Cy said excitedly and the scramble was on.



Pearl Huntington Benedict Collection; Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-109186

Left: Cyrus J. Benedict in 1929.

Right: A hunting scene. Displayed on the exterior of the shed are animal skins, primarily raccoon, skunk, and muskrat.

Cy's traps as he was laid-off from his construction job during the winter. It was necessary to use a skiff with steel runners on the bottom to cross the channel to get to the area that was being trapped. The lake would be frozen, but not the channel. Once across the open water, the skiff would be pulled up on the ice and left until they returned later in the day. Then the trappers would continue on foot to tend the trap line, which would take all day to check.

On this particular day, Ray poled the skiff across the ice to open water, paddled across, pulled it up on the opposite side, and continued on foot as usual. While he was checking the traps, a snowstorm hit. It snowed and sleeted so hard that visibility was pretty much zero. This continued hour after hour throughout the day and the family became extremely concerned for Ray.

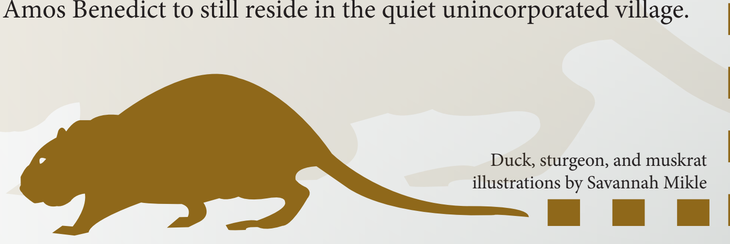
While anxiously waiting for any sign of Ray, the storm's intensity increased and the ice along the channel began to break up taking Ray's skiff down river. Where was Ray? Was he lost in the blinding snow and sleet and freezing to death? These were some terrifying hours for the family. Ray's son, Richard, remembers standing on his bed, glued to the window watching for any sign of his dad. Ruth (Huntington) Benedict, Ray's wife, was crying and pacing the floor.

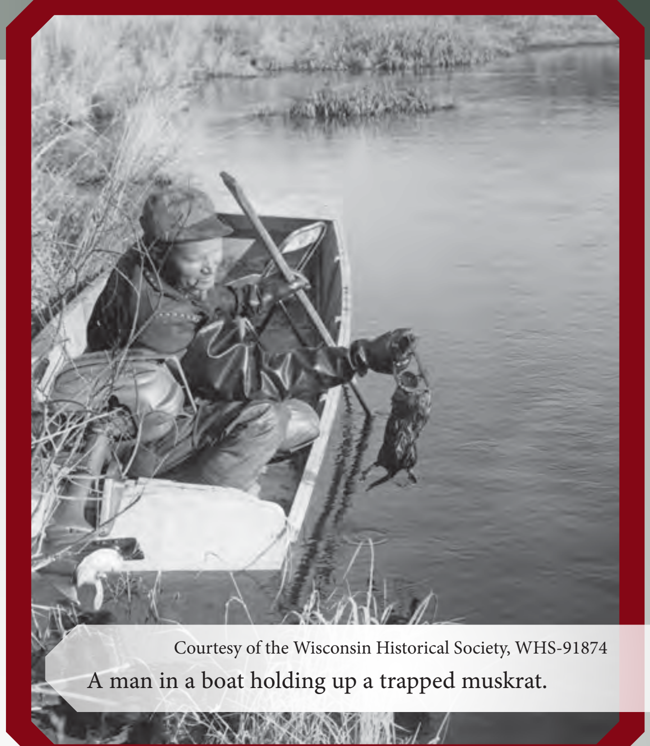
Then as if a miracle happened, a figure appeared out of the snow and it was Ray! The family was overwhelmed with joy, but the joy was short lived. How was Ray going to cross the open water without the skiff? They watched, terrified as Ray would walk one way then the other along the channel looking for his boat, each time disappearing and reappearing in the clouds of snow, and all the while they were praying that he would not fall through the ice. No one was around to help because a skiff with runners was needed to cross the ice to get to the water.

Panic stricken Ruth ran to Cy's house to ask for help even though he was sick in bed. When he saw how severe the weather was and realized Ray's predicament, he immediately got out of bed and went out in the storm and took his spare skiff off its rack and pulled it down to the lake. He went out to rescue his brother.

The spare skiff Cy used was in very bad condition, and because of his illness it had not been repaired yet. It leaked badly, the runners were loose, and some of the ribs were cracked, but Cy was not about to leave his brother stranded! It took about an hour before the rescue was complete because of Cy being so weak with pneumonia. How the two brothers and the load of furs survived crossing the open water without capsizing, we will never know. The family believed God was certainly watching over both of them that day. [21]

Cyrus J. Benedict died on February 16, 1965, and with his death, the Benedict tradition of muskrat trapping, fishing and hunting on the waters of Butte des Morts died too. Butte des Morts used to be bursting with Benedict families; today Raymond Ren Benedict, Jr (son of Raymond Arthur Benedict, Sr) is the only descendant of Amos Benedict to still reside in the quiet unincorporated village.


Duck, sturgeon, and muskrat illustrations by Savannah Mikle


Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-91874

A man in a boat holding up a trapped muskrat.

Notes

1. Henry Marvin Benedict, *The Genealogy of the Benedicts in America* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870); William Richard Cutter, *Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River Valley: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of a Commonwealth and the Building of a Nation*, vol. 3 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1913).
2. Edwin, Hall, *The Ancient Historical Records of Norwalk, Connecticut: With a Plan of the Ancient Settlement and of the Town in 1847* (Norwalk, CT: James Mallory & Co., 1847), 83, 88, 93, 100, and 102.
3. Sesquicentennial Observance, Alum Creek Friends Meeting, October 15, 1967, 5.
4. *Alum Creek, Ohio*, http://alumcreekoh.com (site inactive).
5. The historical marker is located at 3385 Marengo-Norton Rd. (Ohio Route 229), Marengo, Ohio.
6. Alum Creek Cemetery Records, Marengo, Ohio.
7. "Morrow County," *Ohio History Central*, http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Morrow_County.
8 . "About Us," *Delaware County, Ohio*, https://co.delaware.oh.us/aboutus/.
9. "What Do Quakers Believe?" *Quaker Information Center*, http://www.quakerinfo.org/quakerism/beliefs.
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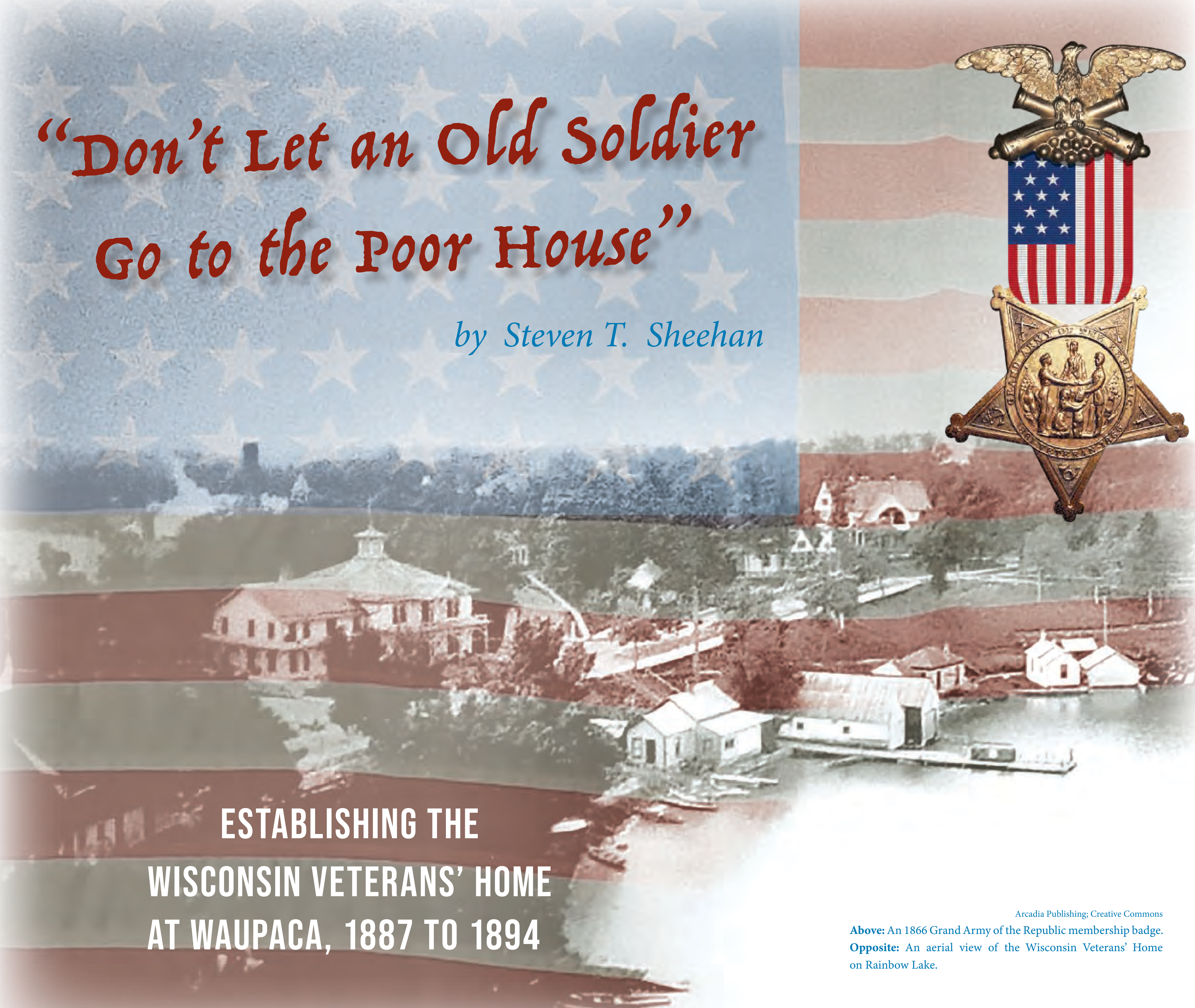
by Steven T. Sheehan

ESTABLISHING THE WISCONSIN VETERANS' HOME AT WAUPACA, 1887 TO 1894



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Above: An 1866 Grand Army of the Republic membership badge.
Opposite: An aerial view of the Wisconsin Veterans' Home on Rainbow Lake.

The Wisconsin Veterans' Home was established in 1887 to provide shelter for poor, infirm, and aging Civil War veterans and their wives and widows.[1] Members of the major Union veterans' organization, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), established the Home and managed it for the first thirty years of operations. Driven by a sense of obligation, they believed the Home could help repay Civil War soldiers and their wives for the sacrifices they had made for the nation. They also argued it would meet the needs of veterans who required such shelter due to financial difficulty and physical infirmity. Wisconsin's was the first veterans' home to admit women. Its founders sought to build an honorable and truly "home-like" alternative to the poorhouses and other undesirable institutions in which these men and women might otherwise reside. The Home's founders were motivated by a belief in what the historian Patrick J. Kelly calls "martial citizenship"—the idea that military service entitles veterans to certain unique welfare rights. In exchange, individual veterans are also expected to meet sometimes unreasonable standards of honorable behavior to maintain those rights.[2]

For several reasons, the Wisconsin Veterans' Home failed to achieve the lofty expectations of its founders. It was plagued by mismanagement. In addition, the rights and status of veterans were always a matter of political debate, and the Home became embroiled in political controversy. Finally, the founders held a fundamentally flawed, even delusional, sense of what their home could accomplish. They assumed a comfortable, efficiently run institution would make its residents feel honored and at home. Yet those who came to inhabit the Home were poor, often aged, and frequently suffered from physical and mental distress. Residents continued to live with the problems that brought them to the Veterans' Home and faced them to the best of their ability, but also with occasional bitterness. They never developed into the paragons of virtue that ideas about martial citizenship demanded they be.

The GAR and the Push for a State Veterans' Home

Wisconsin's Grand Army of the Republic established the Wisconsin Veterans' Home. In the late nineteenth century, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was the primary Union Civil War veterans' organization, claiming several hundred thousand veteran members nationally. The national organization was subdivided into individual state "departments" and local "posts." Membership in the Wisconsin Department peaked at 14,000—one-third of the state's veteran population—in the late 1880s. The organization advocated for veterans' interests and exercised substantial influence in local, state, and national politics through the 1880s and 1890s.[3]

When the Wisconsin GAR built the state home, they sought to create a more honorable alternative to the existing system of federally operated soldiers' homes. The mass mobilization of volunteer soldiers during the Civil War created a large cohort of veterans in the United States for the first time. In response, Congress established a national system of homes for disabled veterans in the 1860s, including a location in Milwaukee. Problems plagued the national system from its inception. The institutions were over-

crowded. Many residents suffered from alcohol and drug addiction and mental illness. Poorly trained, overworked staff members provided inadequate care for the hordes of residents packing the sites. Such troubles were apparent to civilians residing near the national home in Milwaukee. In early 1870, a reporter for the Milwaukee Sentinel described the daily routine of residents at the facility, stating, "In the morning we see them pass along the street in small squads, on their way to the liquor saloons, and at night they return stringing along, nine-tenths of them drunk."[4]

Residence at the national homes was initially restricted to veterans disabled as a direct result of war service. In 1884, Congress opened the system up to any veteran with a disability—whether incurred in the service or not. Notably, Congress allowed for age-related disabilities, thereby admitting hundreds of thousands of aging Civil War veterans and straining the national homes beyond capacity. Veterans in several states began to push for state-supported housing of disabled and indigent veterans. The Wisconsin Veterans Home was one of thirteen state homes constructed between 1879 and 1888.[5]

Frederick A. Marden, a Milwaukee GAR member, was an early advocate for a Wisconsin state veterans' home. Marden, a naval veteran and physician, moved to Milwaukee in 1879. He was appointed superintendent of the Milwaukee County Hospital, which provided care for indigent medical patients. At the time, the county hospital was under direct control of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, and according to a local newspaper, operated as "a sort of poor house for the personal friends and political patrons of the supervisors who managed it." Marden reformed the institution, remaking it from a flophouse for well-connected drunks into a legitimate medical facility for the county's poor population. In the process, he made political enemies on the Board of Supervisors, who resented their loss of control over the institution. In the mid-1880s he left the superintendent position for private medical practice.[6]

Marden and other members of the Wisconsin GAR began to push for a state home for veterans and widows in 1884. At the State Encampment, the annual meeting of the Wisconsin GAR, members passed a resolution lamenting that "a number of ex-soldiers were inmates of county poor houses" and asking for an official count to secure them admission into the national soldiers' home. Marden introduced another successful resolution asking that veterans' widows also receive some sort of subsidized old-age care because they too had "suffered in order that the life of the nation may be saved."[7]

Another GAR member, Alfred O. Wright, completed the search for veterans in county poor houses over the ensuing year. Wright was well-qualified for the job, serving as the secretary of the Wisconsin State Board of Charities and Reform, an administrative body responsible for providing oversight of the dozens of asylums, jails, and other institutions operated by localities around the state.[8] At the 1885 Encampment, Wright reported that over fifty soldiers, wives, and widows resided in the state's poorhouses and charity hospitals while another sixty relied on "outdoor relief"—aid for poor people living outside of asylums. Each case carried a tragic personal story, he argued. For instance, he described the plight of one "brave soldier of the 'Iron Brigade,' who went through all the battles in which that organization was engaged and came out without a scratch." Years later, Wright noted, the man "met with

Kim J. Heltemes

Marden Hall, named after Frederick A. Marden, a naval veteran and physician, an early advocate for a Wisconsin veterans' home.

Kim J. Heltemes

The hospital building at the Wisconsin Veterans' Home.

an accident on a raft which resulted in a running sore on his leg. The expenses of his sickness ate up the little property he had accumulated, and he was forced first to receive outside relief and then to go to the poor house."[9]

The specter of the poorhouse haunted much of the discussion of needy veterans during the push to build the Wisconsin soldiers' home. In the 1880s, the poorhouse was the most visible and most despised source of poor relief in the United States. Humanitarian reformers built America's poorhouses in the early nineteenth century in order to provide adequate shelter for the indigent, while also inculcating moral probity and a sound work ethic. By the late nineteenth century, alms houses had lost their humanitarian and reformist missions. They were generally derelict institutions that warehoused aged and disabled people, orphans, and temporarily unemployed working people. In 1873, a state inspector described a typical poorhouse operating in Jefferson County, Wisconsin: "The number of insane in this house is very large. Eleven of them have to be confined in their cells all the time." The facility housed nine children. One set of four brothers between the ages of three and eleven resided there with their mother. "They are all unhealthy," the visitor noted, "with rheumatism and all disease inherited from the parents. The father is dead."[10] For Wisconsin GAR members, it was a tragedy to resign soldiers and their wives to such a dishonorable institution, and the Wisconsin Veterans' Home promised a superior alternative.

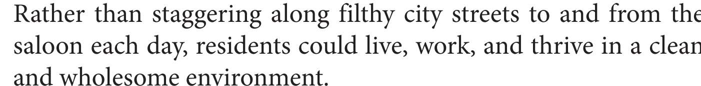
At the 1887 Encampment, Marden proposed that a committee be formed specifically to explore the feasibility of establishing a Wisconsin state home for veterans currently residing in poorhouses and "to provide also for the women who suffered perhaps more than some of the men did, when they were stealing chickens and playing poker." The committee formed, and the next day, presented a resolution calling for the establishment of such a home. Only the GAR could create an institution that would honor old soldiers and their wives with an actual "home" in which to live out their years. "We believe," they argued, "that it is possible to establish and manage such a Home ourselves, on a simpler scale and in a more home-like and economical manner than a state institution is apt to be managed with the aid of such an appropriation from the State as we would be likely to obtain if we ask for it." Notably, although recommending GAR authority over the home, they counted on state financial support. The resolution included the text of a bill, drafted by the committee and ready for introduction into the state legislature, which would appropriate three dollars per week per resident. The resolution passed, and the exploratory committee and its five members were remade into a Board of Incorporators charged with establishing the home.[11]

Selecting a Site

The incorporators solicited bids from localities around the state that wished to host the institution. Bids poured in, almost all of them offering what they claimed to be choice property at no cost. They argued that, if located in their community, the home would avoid the degrading conditions that characterized poorhouses and other asylums by placing its residents in a physically and morally healthy environment. A typical offer came from J. Boyd Jones, the Rock County superintendent of schools. Speaking as

the representative of his local GAR post, he proffered forty acres of his own land on which to build the Home. “We believe in it,” he stated of the proposed home, “rather than in a pile of granite to the memory of a dead comrade who, if he could speak would say, ‘Care for the living first. Don’t let an old soldier go to the poor house.’ ”[12] Knowledge of the national home in Milwaukee also shaped visions of what the state home should be and what it should seek to avoid. The state home, should not be in a city, New Lisbon’s bidders argued, because:

> [t]he inmates will be largely persons born and reared in the country places and whose very natures have become molded to that life. Their rest, health, comfort, and happiness will be better secured in the country, far from the city with its noise, vices, temptations, and allurements.[13]



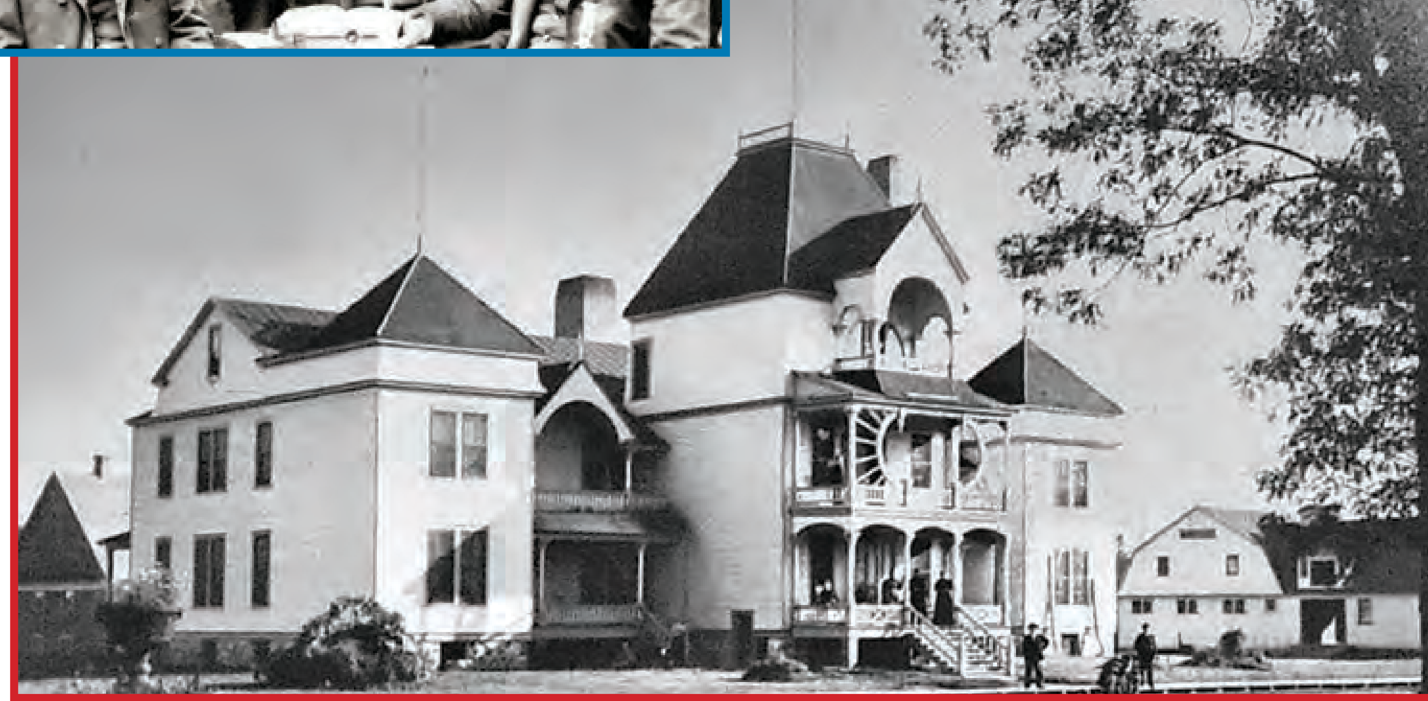
Rather than staggering along filthy city streets to and from the saloon each day, residents could live, work, and thrive in a clean and wholesome environment.

In July, the incorporators selected Waupaca from the pool of enthusiastic suitors. Waupaca’s citizens donated Greenwood Park, a failed vacation resort on the shore of Hick’s Lake.[14] The offer included seventy acres of land, a hotel, and six small cottages. The incorporators were charmed by the site. While accessible from the nearby town, it sat in a bucolic locale away from the vices of any city and in the invigorating air of the northern countryside. To avoid the prevalence of alcohol abuse that plagued the national homes, the GAR insisted that the city ban liquor sales within a mile and a half of the site. In early August, the GAR and the city reached on official agreement, and in October, the Home admitted its first resident, Emilia Berhnardt, a Milwaukee war widow.[15]

Enthusiasm for the New Veterans’ Home

As the home commenced operations, GAR members and the public expressed enormous enthusiasm about its potential. They believed that since the Home was privately operated, admitted women, and housed a number of its residents in single-unit cottages, it was superior to other soldiers’ homes. Much of that enthusiasm was reflected in the final report of the Board of Incorporators, authored by Wright and submitted at the annual encampment meeting in February 1888:

> We now have seventy-eight acres of land on the shores of a beautiful lake…This is now the property of the Department Encampment…We are not obliged merely to grumble at its management, as we do with the national homes, or as we should be likely to do with a State Home under the management of the State authorities. We can ourselves direct its management, and make it a practical example of what we believe a Soldiers’ Home should be. [16]



Kim J. Heltemes; Arcadia Publishing

Above: The five incorporators of the Wisconsin Veterans’ Home, wearing their GAR. badges, pose for a photo in 1897.

Below: Fairchild Hall, named after Lucius Fairchild, a Civil War veteran, secretary of state and three-term governor of Wisconsin, and minister to Spain.

Kim J. Heltemes; Arcadia Publishing

Above: One of the many cottages of the Veterans’ Home, which housed residents.

Right: Lucius Fairchild, circa 1865.

A list of names, birthplaces, and occupations of residents filed with the governor’s office in 1891 gives a sense of the Home’s demographics. The over 200 residents living in the home that year ranged in age from forty-one to seventy-nine (excluding one eighty-seven-year-old outlier), with the vast majority in the range from forty-eight to sixty-five. Each male resident noted his occupation. All of them came from poor and working-class backgrounds. A small number were skilled craftsmen—a painter, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a tailor. The overwhelming majority identified simply as “farmer” or “laborer.” One can speculate that most of those listed as “farmer” probably did not own land—thus the need for residence at the Home—and therefore worked as hired agricultural labor. Each resident listed some form of disability. A few suffered from traumatic wounds received in the war; however, the overwhelming majority of the disabilities were minor and had developed subsequent to military service, such as “piles,” “varicose veins,” or simply “old age.”[17] The residents were not simply battle-scarred soldiers and their wives; they were working-class people, unable to perform physical labor, because their bodies had deteriorated long after the war.

Those who built and advocated for the facility repeatedly stressed that it was a “true home.” In doing so, they drew from the nineteenth-century middle class ideal of the home as sanctuary. According to that idea, women, in their role as homemaker, fashioned a private haven from the cruel and amoral public world and offered the gentle moral guidance that men required. Thus, the presence of women was seen as a significant and necessary factor in helping the Veterans’ Home becoming a morally healthy sanctuary for old soldiers.[18]

Those who supported the Home took special pride in the “cottage system”—the policy of housing some residents as married couples in small cottages rather than in group quarters. The grounds held six cottages at the time of the Home’s founding, and the GAR constructed several dozen more over the ensuing years. The institution’s advocates saw the cottage system as the key mechanism for maintaining the feminine presence undergirding

Arcadia Publishing

Residents share a meal in the Bryant Hall dining room.

the moral sensibility of the Home. For example, in 1890, Andrew Elmore, the president of the State Board of Charities and Reform, wrote a letter to the governor celebrating the cottage system. Elmore toured other state soldiers' homes in Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois before conducting an official inspection of the Waupaca home. He particularly noted that Michigan and Iowa housed their residents in large barracks, and while Illinois had a few cottages, they housed small groups of men. Only Wisconsin had a "true cottage system" for old soldiers to live with their wives. That made Wisconsin's home unique and superior to those in other states.[19]

Women also played a role in funding and overseeing the veterans' home. Wisconsin's Women's Relief Corps (WRC)—the female auxiliary to the GAR—made substantial financial contributions to the home from the outset. In 1888 the state WRC donated over $2000 in cash and kind, and individual local corps paid for the construction of three cottages. Over the ensuing decade, as GAR men seemed content to allow government to assume full financial responsibility, members of the WRC continued to raise money for capital improvements.[20]

The state WRC also dispatched an annual inspection delegation to the Home. The purpose of these inspections seems to have been two-fold. First, given their financial investment in the project, WRC members had the right to confirm that those dollars were used appropriately. In addition, positive reports from the women's organization carried the added weight of feminine moral authority, thus affirming that the facility had achieved the status of a true "home." As the WRC argued in their 1890 report on their inspection visit to Waupaca, "Whatever else she may do or leave undone, woman should never abdicate her throne as the housekeeper and homemaker of the race; and it is in these directions that the Woman's Relief Corps can best supplement the thought and labor of their brethren in the Grand Army of the Republic." The inspection committee went on to note that "all seemed happy and contented" in Waupaca.[21]

Troubles at the Home

While most reporting on the home echoed the positive assessments of the 1890 WRC report, problems roiled beneath the surface. In particular, the Board of Trustees, a panel of six GAR members overseeing the Home, struggled with the fact that residents often failed to comport themselves as respectable old soldiers and widows. The minutes of Trustees' meetings include numerous petitions for readmission from residents who were discharged for unruly behavior. For example, in 1892, the Board re-admitted a veteran, but only on the condition that he apologize to the matron and pay for half of the damages he caused. The minutes did not record the specifics of his offense. In 1895, a Mr. Martin was caught selling liquor to other residents and ordered to desist. Female residents also appeared in disciplinary files. One widow was discharged for dozens of offenses, including threatening to slit the matron's throat. Sometimes news of such behavior leaked into the press. In 1891 the Eau Claire Free Press reported that the "cause of the increase in drunkenness among the inmates" was an illicit saloon operating from a barn near the Home.[22]

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-109492

The celebration of Lansing A. Wilcox's 105th birthday at the Grand Army of the Republic home in King, 1951. Wilcox was the last surviving Civil War veteran in Wisconsin.

In addition to conflict involving residents, charges of managerial graft also plagued the Home. The Home's incorporators sought to avoid the pitfalls of patronage and partisanship by making it a private institution, but the bulk of its funding came from the state, including a standard three dollars per week per resident and special appropriations totaling over $130,000 granted between 1887 and 1895.[23] Thus, the founders and Trustees worked through established political channels and became embroiled in partisan controversy.

The *Milwaukee Journal* newspaper levelled the harshest criticisms at the Home's Trustees and administrators. Many of the charges of corruption focused on a particular trustee: Joseph H. Woodnorth. Woodnorth owned a Waupaca pharmacy and general store. He was also active politically, having been the City Superintendent of Schools, the Register of Deeds, a member of the County board, and a State Senator.[24] Editors charged Woodnorth with enriching himself off the Home. For example, the paper reported that he persuaded an architect performing work on the Home in 1889 to stipulate in his contract a specific brand of paint carried exclusively by Woodnorth's Waupaca store. Other store owners in the region re-counted that when they attempted to purchase the contracted brand of paint from suppliers to sell it to the architect, they were stonewalled. Ultimately, the contractor purchased all the paint from Woodnorth's store.[25]

An Official Investigation, 1894

In 1894, the criticisms that had been mounting for seven years erupted into a full-blown scandal involving charges of abuse of residents and systematic financial corruption. While some charges may have been exaggerated or even fabricated by partisan opponents or disaffected residents, most were warranted, and pointed to genuine problems in the Home's operation.

The GAR created a special committee to investigate the complaints. Committee members made several unannounced visits to the Home to observe its operations and examine its financial records. In May they took testimony from residents and staff. The testimony received heavy coverage in the critical press. Some of the charges painted the asylum as a house of horrors. An inmate claimed that a nurse had deliberately poisoned her. Another reported that staff looted the belongings of deceased inmates.

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-35778

Exterior of Bryant Hall in 1936, named after Benjamin F. Bryant, Civil War veteran and commandant of the Veterans' Home from 1910 to 1914.

Most of these sensational charges were uncorroborated and not upheld in the committee's final report; however, they received press coverage in the meantime.[26]

The investigative committee submitted their final report in June. They first held the entire state GAR organization accountable for the Home's problems. Because members had such a vested in interest in the facility's success, they ignored any sign of trouble. "The comrades of the Grand Army," the report stated, "were enthusiastic over the new institution, and ready, even eager, to believe that it was all they hoped it to be." They accepted positive information uncritically and deliberately ignored negative information.[27]

The Home was not the torture chamber that its harshest critics made it out to be; however, the committee's most serious conclusions upheld some charges of mistreatment and abuse by staff. On one occasion, a nurse became drunk and got rough with patients in the hospital. One attendant verbally abused the Home's residents, particularly noting that he despised veterans. The most egregious allegation upheld by the committee involved the assault and death of a resident. The report noted that an attendant became angry at a resident named John Little who had "softening of the brain"—a common phrase that encompassed several different mental challenges and instabilities. To quiet Little, the attendant threw him into an ice bath. Little died several weeks later from a lung ailment—probably pneumonia—that the committee concluded may have stemmed from the assault.

Superintendent Columbus Caldwell was the ultimate on-site authority. Caldwell gained his position through political connections.[28] Regarding Caldwell, the report reluctantly determined, "Impartial consideration of his administration compels your committee to report that it cannot be regarded as successful or satisfactory." The investigators uncovered myriad examples of sloppy management. Although, the staff apparently did not embezzle the effects of deceased inmates, recordkeeping was haphazard enough to invite suspicion and to prevent a definitive statement of exoneration. Several buildings were poorly heated. In particular, residents claimed the dining hall was often frigid in the mornings. The report upheld the charge and blamed it on the fireman's "negligence, indolence, and inefficiency."

A thread of misogyny, rooted in the notion that the staff's women failed to live up to the feminine maternal ideal, ran through the report. The report argued the superintendent's greatest mistake was in turning administrative authority over the interiors of the buildings to the Home's matron, his wife, Ida Caldwell. Ida Caldwell was loaded down with technical and administrative responsibilities that prevented "her from performing the especial and far more important work that justly devolves upon a matron in a proper manner." Because she struggled with her job as de facto manager, she failed in "the more important and higher one of being a mother to the feeble and needy charges in her keeping." The report lamented that residents suffered from the lack of "frequent ministrations of counsel, encouragement and kindly companionship on the part of a good, patriotic, warm-hearted woman holding the exalted position of matron." The matron's institutional role was to offer a comforting feminine presence to the most difficult of the Home's inmates, even when they complained and misbehaved, but because of her administrative duties, Caldwell harshly rebuked them. The residents saw her not as a kindly matron, but as a formidable "overseer."

In addition to upholding charges of abuse and inadequate care, the committee also found that poor management and conflicts of interest among members of the Board of Trustees led to financial misdeeds. Joseph Woodnorth's store supplied the institution's pharmaceuticals and hardware. The Board of Trustees granted sales contracts to Woodnorth—himself a trustee—without inviting competitive bids. That practice, the report noted, would be illegal if the Trustees were public officials. Since the Home was technically a private institution, no-bid sales to the home by Trustees complied with the letter, but not the spirit, of the law.

The inspectors blamed the Home's administrative failures on incompetence rather than nefarious motives. "We do not wish to imply that the Board of Trustees lacked the high purpose or the earnest desire to execute the noble trust imposed upon them," they concluded, "But they labored under the disadvantage of having few precedents to guide them in their work; they were largely compelled to find their way." Albert Wright and Frederick Marden were the only individuals associated with the Home in its early years with any professional experience related charitable institutions (and Marden died just before it opened). Superintendent Caldwell and the remaining Incorporators and Trustees all came from backgrounds in small business and partisan politics.

Regardless of their good intentions, the managers and trustees were responsible for the home's failures, a point affirmed in the final investigative report:

> Your committee has become fully convinced that there is a grave reason for many of the most serious criticisms made against management of the home. And with profound regret we are compelled to declare that it has not attained that high realization of a happy domestic asylum, where the needy veteran and his wife or widow might pass their declining years, in serenity and without care, which was the conception of its projectors.

Superintendent Caldwell and the Trustees had many ardent defenders. Yet those defenders, because of the controversy surrounding the institution's operations and the vocal discontent of many of its residents, could not argue that it conformed to the vision of an idyllic home for contented old soldiers. Instead, they blamed the institution's shortcomings on malcontented inmates whose deluded gripes were given a public platform by newspapers and politicians. For example, in the summer of 1894, as the special committee investigated the Home, Willis P. Clarke visited the residence and recorded his observations. Clarke was a small business owner and a GAR member. In a private journal account of his visit, Clarke bared his ire at the Home's residents. The institution, he lamented, could be "a delightful home for the destitute;" however, the "indolent" among the residents, who knew "if they only kick a little they can have all they ask," had become its "ruling spirits." For Clarke, those inmates fit the classic description of the ungrateful, undeserving poor. "Those who never had so comfortable a home," he argued, "are the louder in their denunciations and clamoring for more." The couples residing in the cottages, usually held up as the pride of the institution, were the most despicable to Clarke. "Some are half crazy," he snarled, "and the other half ugly, making life a burden to all those who come in contact with them." Clarke identified a simple solution to the institution's problems: expel the "unworthy inmates." The "unworthy" were easily distinguished in his eyes:

> Unworthy because of having means of support but prefer to be cared for by the state—unworthy because they are there not from the effects of services rendered during the war but from disease brought upon themselves by this low beastly living unfitting them to mingle among decent people. I would not cut one rag or take one stitch to fix up a home for such ungrateful beings.[29]

Political wrangling, incompetent oversight, and basic human folly on the part of staff and residents alike helped to generate the sorts of conflict and dissatisfaction that characterize many asylums. Notwithstanding Clarke's assertion, no cabal of cantankerous, "unworthy" residents sabotaged the early Wisconsin Veterans' Home. Rather, the idea of a happy home, in which contented old soldiers, wives, and widows would spend their golden years in domestic tranquility, was nearly unattainable. Individuals admitted to the Home, entered under the weight of poverty, disability, old-age, and the lifetimes of passion and frustration, happiness and dissatisfaction that all human beings accumulate. If at times they complained and expressed discontent with their lives, the care they received, or the temperature of the dining hall, they behaved like normal human beings. They shared the same perceived failings as those who populated other asylums during the era, and to the great chagrin of GAR members, the Wisconsin Veterans' Home replicated the problems of those institutions.

Notes

1. In its early years, the Home was frequently referred to as the Wisconsin Veterans' Home at Waupaca in order to distinguish it from the soldiers' home in Milwaukee operated by the federal government. In 1941 the area around the Home was renamed the Village of King, and the Home is now known as the Wisconsin Veterans' Home at King. Hosea Rood and E. B. Earle, *History of the Wisconsin Veterans' Home, 1886-1926* (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company, 1926) offers a good narrative history of the founding and early years of the Home. It is largely a celebration of the Home's founders consisting of lengthy quotations from primary documents. This essay is indebted to the Rood and Earle narrative, while augmenting it with perspectives from more critical sources. Kim J. Heltemes, *Wisconsin Veterans' Home at King* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004) is an excellent pictorial history.
2. Patrick J. Kelly, *Creating a National Home: Building the Veterans Welfare State, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). *See* Theda Skocpol," *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992) for an examination of the development of the Civil War pension system.
3. Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 59, 125-6, 141-3. Thomas J. McCrory, *Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Wisconsin* (Black Earth, WI: Trail Books, 2005).
4. For development of the system of national homes see Kelly, *Creating a National Home*. For widespread alcohol abuse and mental illness at the national soldiers' homes see: James Marten, "Exempt from the Ordinary Rules of Life: Researching Postwar Adjustment Problems of Union Veterans," *Civil War History* 47 (March 2001): 57-70; James Marten, "Out at the Soldiers' Home: Union Veterans and Alcohol at the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers," *Prologue* (Winter 1998): 304-13; James Marten, *Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and their Unending Civil War* (New York: Norton, 2014). Quotation from *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) on p. 186.
5. Gustavas A. Weber and Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Veterans' Administration: Its History, Activities and Organization*. (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1934), 70-76. Kelly, *Creating a National Home*, Brian Edward Donovan, "Like 'Monkeys at the Zoo': Politics and the Performance of Disability at the Iowa Soldiers' Home, 1887-1910," *The Annals of Iowa* 71 (Fall 2012): 323-46, and Reinder Van Til, "Fulfilling a Sacred Trust: The Michigan Veterans Facility," *Michigan History* 79 (May/June 1986): 44-8 examine the history of two other state homes founded in the 1880s.
6. Frank A. Flower, *History of Milwaukee* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881), 408 contains biographical information on Marden. References to Marden's time as superintendent of Milwaukee County hospital can be found in *Milwaukee Weekly Wisconsin* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), January 5, 1881, p. 6, June 15, 1881, p. 4, and June 11, 1882, p. 4; *Janesville Daily-Gazette* (Janesville, Wisconsin), June 22, 1881, p.1 and February 15, 1882, p. 1; and *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), June 12, 1883, p. 1.
7. *Proceedings of the Annual Encampment of the Department of Wisconsin, Grand Army of the Republic* (hereafter cited Wisconsin GAR Proceedings) 18 (1884): 27-30.
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27. The *Milwaukee Journal* published the report in its entirety upon its release. All quotations from and reference to the report come from *Milwaukee Journal* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), June 23, 1894, p. 10.
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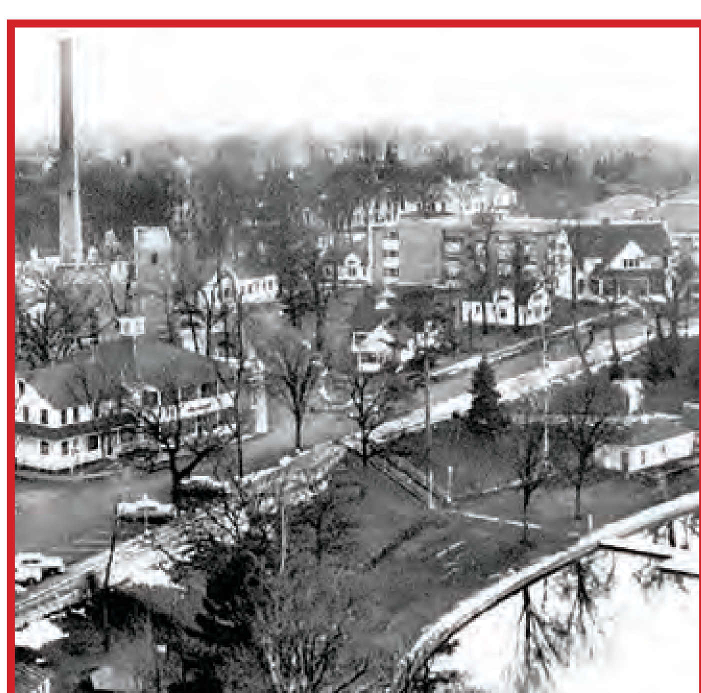

Arcadia Publishing

Aerial view of Wisconsin Veterans Home from the water tower, 1950s.

SHEBOYGAN'S FORGOTTEN ZOO

by Dustin Hoffmann

Sheboygan County Historical Research Center

Above: The Vollrath Zoo, whose river ran through Vollrath Park in Sheboygan, Wisconsin; a postcard of Vollrath Park and Zoo.
Opposite: This small zoo, which opened in 1931, was a popular place for families to walk and view the wildlife.

Nestled along the rocky shore of Lake Michigan lies a striking area known as Vollrath Park. Boasting anomalous terraced hills with a backdrop of the great lake, it is clear that this park is unlike any other in Sheboygan. Besides the occasional food truck gathering in summer and the few moments when sledding conditions are right in winter, this park is seldom used. While the tennis courts and playground seem to have occasional visitors, the only time when Vollrath Park is given substantial attention is the annual graduation ceremony for the local high schools. Hundreds of graduating students will spend a balmy June afternoon sitting in the park undoubtedly thinking about their future. What likely does not cross their minds is the fact that they are sitting on historic grounds. In fact, most of the ground beneath them was not ground at all but rather an ornamental pond that housed swans, ducks, and geese. As they watch the commencement speaker give their speech at the east end of the bowl, that have no idea that nearly fifty years ago there was a grizzly bear being fed old bakery goods and soda in that very park. While the Vollrath Park Zoo was a revered part of the Sheboygan community for decades, it garners little interest or sentiment from younger generations today due to the lack of acknowledgement of its very existence. The Vollrath Zoo may have closed in 1976, but its staunch supporters did not go down without a fight.

The campaign to save the Vollrath Park Zoo was met with adversity in many forms. What started as a grassroots campaign to solicit funds for the much-needed upgrades to the existing zoo at Vollrath Park turned into a highly active booster club with the ultimate goal of creating a brand new, state-of-the-art zoological park. This coalition, which eventually became known as the Sheboygan County Zoological Society, conducted a multifaceted campaign to raise funds and public support for a rejuvenated Vollrath Zoo. While it was not due to lack of effort, the campaign to restore, and later to relocate, the Vollrath Park Zoo was ultimately unsuccessful, and Sheboygan has not been home to a zoo since 1976. Even today, a warm sentiment still exists surrounding the once-treasured lakefront park amongst the Baby Boomers who grew up visiting it. The focus of this article is to understand why the Vollrath Zoo, with its ideal location, robust attendance, and taxpayer support, ceased operations in 1976.

The city of Sheboygan initially acquired the land in 1917 in the form of a generous donation from the heirs of Jacob Vollrath, a prominent industrialist native to Germany who later found prosperity in Sheboygan. Originally built as a place to spend a lovely afternoon, the twenty-six-acre Vollrath Park boasted a scenic lagoon adorned with impressive flower beds and terraced green spaces. When the first two animals, a pair of trumpeter swans, were introduced to the emerging park in 1928, there were no formal plans to make a zoo at Vollrath Park. The swans were placed in the creek in the valley of the park by the Board of Park Commission solely to increase the natural beauty of the attraction. Soon after, the swans became a popular feature for parkgoers, which ultimately led to additional donations of wild animals meant for exhibit. A pair of Indian peacocks were the next inhabitants followed by a gang of Rocky Mountain elk. On August 21,

Sheboygan County Historical Research Center; *The Sheboygan Press*

Above: The dedication ceremony of the park and zoo on August 23, 1931. **Opposite:** Coverage of the Vollrath Zoo in *The Sheboygan Press*.

1929, *The Sheboygan Press*, the city's newspaper, first mentioned the Board of Park Commissioners' intention to establish a miniature zoo on the grounds of Vollrath Park.

The following years saw the park blossom into the family destination that Sheboygan was to enjoy for decades to come. Along with the additions of family amenities, such as a playground and amphitheater, the park began to assume its identity as a bonafide zoo with the inclusion of cages to house small mammals. While the small mammal and bird exhibits became fixtures, the gang of Rocky Mountain elk proved to be too difficult to manage. After they had "developed a wild disposition" during the winter months, the Park Commission decided to release them in the nearby Evergreen Park.[1] The Park Commission's naïveté surrounding the initial acquisition and release due to inability to effectively manage and properly care for these elk was to serve as a foreshadowing of future issues of the Vollrath Zoo. Nevertheless, the formal dedication of the Vollrath Park Zoo took place on August 23, 1931, to a crowd of over 20,000 onlookers.[2] This gathering was a particularly impressive feat considering the 1930 population for the city of Sheboygan was 39,251, according to the U.S. decennial census.[3]

The man who took the helm of the Vollrath Zoo over the next forty years was Cornelius "Casey" Bayens. During Bayens' reign as zoo supervisor, the park's residents evolved from a humble assembly of birds and common mammals to an admirable collection that included grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, donkeys, boars, and even an African lion. The African lion, Sadie, arrived in 1941 from the Sterling Brothers' indoor circus and served as the crown jewel of the park's wildlife medley.[4] Other notable inhabitants were capuchin monkeys, bison, white-tailed deer, Canadian lynx, red fox, and a crow named Jo-Jo, who was reportedly known to say its name and imitate the vocalizations of the other animals.[5] The zoo became something of a predecessor to the Humane Society and was known to take in abandoned and stray animals. In this fashion, the zoo acquired and temporarily housed a kinkajou, a Central American relative of the raccoon, that mysteriously showed up in a Sheboygan neighborhood in the spring of 1971.[6]

Over the decades, the zoo's popularity rose and visiting the zoo became a key component in the upbringing of most Sheboygan residents. In the summer of 1953 alone, up to 6,000 visitors were reported to have visited the zoo.[7] While summers are typically the busier season for most zoos, Vollrath Park in contrast was almost as popular in winter months. Due to most of the animals having climate specific advantages to being native to the Midwest, the zoo remained open year-round. Animals like the bears, wolves, and bison had no issue with the harsh Wisconsin winters but other animals like the monkeys and guinea pigs were moved indoors to relieve them from an unforgiving climate. Bayens kept a layer of straw on top of the iced over lagoon to prevent the ducks, geese, and swan's feet from freezing to the ice.[8] He crafted this trick after years of having to use a shovel to gently peel them from the ice. This is just one of the animal husbandry strategies that Bayens mastered over his forty years of service to the Sheboygan Parks Department, most of which were served as the zoo supervisor.

Bayens finally concluded his long tenure as the first and only zoo supervisor in Vollrath Park's history on March 31, 1971. Over his time as supervisor, he was popular and respected in the community. *The Sheboygan Press*, recapping Bayens' tenure, honored him with a charming article profiling his career. In the article, Bayens mentioned that he would miss the job and he would stop in to check on the animals he came to know and love, specifically citing Sheila the Japanese macaque.[9]

What Bayens did not mention in this article was the rash of malice and vandalism from a few members of the community that had plagued the zoo in the years leading up to his retirement. When three monkeys were burned alive in a cage in 1969, Bayens and the rest of the community hoped it to be an isolated incident. The reality was, without proper security, Vollrath Park has been subject to regular occurrences of trespassing, car break-ins, graffiti, and petty vandalism over the years. This type of mischief usually surrounds public parks and attractions and was mostly dismissed as juvenile rascality by Sheboygan residents. The attitude towards these offenses took a much more somber tone on January 29, 1971, when a handsome ten-point buck was shot and killed by an arrow and removed from his enclosure overnight. Christ Yurk, the assistant zookeeper, was the first to notice the next morning. When a reporter asked him to estimate the dollar value of the damage, Yurk's reaction was, "No money could match the value of that animal giving pleasure to children who came to the zoo."[10]

Local authorities promptly investigated. Aided by an outraged community thirsty for justice and a coalition of local business owners putting up a cash reward of $150, the police quickly found the suspects of this crime. Three young Sheboygan men were charged and later convicted of slaying the defenseless deer.[11] Several Sheboygan citizens wrote letters to the editor with their own ideas of suitable sentences for the offenders, including making a public spectacle of the young men by forcing them to walk around the deer enclosure with shameful signs around their necks.[12] The presiding judge, the Honorable John G. Buchen, ultimately decided on a more conventional sentencing and opted to put the youths in jail for thirty days, fined them each $200, and ordered restitution.

The incident enraged much of the community, and not just because of the act itself; many Sheboyganites pointed at the zoo's unpreparedness to prevent such an event. What started as a discussion over security measures for the animals evolved into a general questioning of the zoo's continued existence. The "Letters to the Editor" page in *The Sheboygan Press* became a soundboard for vocal citizens who had lost confidence in the ability of Sheboygan to properly maintain a zoo. Citizens mainly pointed at degrading infrastructure, lack of parking areas, substandard animal husbandry and an inferior collection of animals compared to larger zoos, such as the Milwaukee Public Zoo, as being the source for loss of public support.

Police Probing Arson . . .

'Possums Perish In Zoo Vandalism

By KURT MUELLER
Press Staff Writer

A little boy cried when he looked into the opossum cage at Vollrath Park Zoo this morning and saw the burned bodies of two dead opossums.

Again, during the night, Sheboygan's zoo was paid a visit by its public enemy No. 1 — the sadistic mind.

Some person or persons threw matches into the opossum pen, a small, wooden structure about five feet long, three feet wide and four feet high.

The burning matches quickly set fire to the wood-chip shavings on the floor of the cage, and the opossums were the victims of the fiery execution. They were burned alive.

The body of one was found outstretched beneath their water dish where the animal had made a futile effort to escape the flames as fire raged through the pen.

When Christ Yurk, caretaker, came to work at 6:40 a.m. today, the ghastly sight sickened him.

Remembering too well the tragedy of a recent winter night, when a pet buck deer was slain and dragged from its pen by archers, Yurk said he just wanted to go home and forget there ever was a zoo.

(Three Sheboygan young men, caught for shooting the deer, were fined $200 each and would be needed to police the zoo at night.

The way it is now, police in squad cars go past the zoo on routine patrol, but there is no guard or security to protect the facility after the caretaker leaves at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Streater estimated the monetary loss of the animals and cage damage at about $70, "but that's not what's important," he added. "Think of what went on in there last night, two animals burned alive."

Streater said plans for the renovation of the zoo, a project being backed by the Sheboygan Junior Women's Club, are "very near completion," but money to make it a reality may be years away.

The project, it has been estimated by the women's club, could run as high as $200,000.

"I only hope we get enough money right away to put up a fence around the entire zoo," said Streater.

"But for the time being, if we only had lights, then at least police when they drive past could look in and see if kids are running through," he added.

A gang of about 30 or 40 youths, mostly teenagers, gathers at the west end of the Vollrath Bowl late in the afternoon and come through the zoo after dark, often intent on committing vandalism, Streater has observed.

City Told, Fix The Zoo Or Close It . . .

By JOE GULIG
Press Staff Writer

. . . And County Shie

Four Drinking Drivers

Young
Surrend

However proud Sheboygan once was of the Vollrath Zoo, there was no denying that it had seen better days by the early 1970s. The enclosures had already been criticized for their inadequate size and comfortless cement floors but now they also faced new issues with structural deterioration and sewage leaks. The renewed attention to the inadequacies of the Vollrath Zoo came on the heels of recent federal legislation that recently became law. The 1970 amendment to the Animal Welfare Act aimed to ensure humane and reasonable handling and housing of animals on exhibit.[13] This legislation called for high standards on shelter, sanitation, and veterinary care—all of which were lacking at the Vollrath Park Zoo.

The man who stepped in to take over from Bayens was James Streater, a professed zealot for the zoo. Streater concluded his career as an art teacher in order to attempt to bring the zoo back to its former glory. An ambitious idealist and a reformer when it came to the art of zoo keeping, Streater was excited to take on the challenge. The Vollrath Zoo would remain a small zoo in a small town so his approach to saving the zoo was to create a park to compliment instead of attempting to compete with larger zoos in the area. By establishing a theme of native-to-Wisconsin animals, he sought to save large sums of taxpayer money by eliminating the high costs of special climate-controlled housing required for exotic animals. Like most other zoos in the 1970s, a majority of Vollrath Park's enclosures were simple steel cage structures, many of which were in late stages of deterioration. To address the dilapidated steel fencing which caused so much uproar, Streater advocated for moats when possible. By replacing typical steel cages with non-traditional boundaries for exhibits, Streater was proposing very progressive ideas when it came to beautifying the zoo and creating closer to a natural setting for the animals. While Streater advocated eliminating fences around individual exhibits he lobbied to finally create a perimeter fence around the zoo to deter vandalism.[14]

When Streater presented his initial plan to an audience of twelve city alders, they all agreed that his vision was impressive. They also agreed that raising the funds was going to be the difficult part of saving the Vollrath Zoo. Since the city council had not allocated any funding in the 1971 city budget for renovations, several public groups joined forces in the common interest of saving the Vollrath Zoo. This coalition was mostly composed of the Junior Women's Association which was represented by Glenda Melzer and a citizen's group represented by Melvin O'Hare. After Melzer and O'Hare appeared before a County Board's Parks, Property, and Aviation Committee to plead for financial assistance in February 1971, they were met with opposition. When asking for assurance that the city or the county will maintain a future zoo, rather than offer support, Sheboygan Mayor Roger Schneider said, "We'd like to get rid of it completely."[15]

The group was faced with the fact that the local government could not be counted on for the initial stages of fundraising. Even with the zoo renovation being in the early stages of planning, the fundraising coalition took action to address immediate needs of the zoo such as security measures, improved winter housing, and an isolation unit for sick animals. Shortly after the meeting with the County Board, Sheboygan saw the beginnings of a persistent campaigning effort to raise donations for improvements. The citizen's coalition formalized as the Sheboygan County Zoological Society[16] and assigned roles to its members. They organized bake sales and car washes. Farmer Vic, a Milwaukee television personality threw his support behind the renovation campaign and helped student groups launch a "Kids for the Zoo club."[17] At this highly publicized event, the celebrity distributed about 600 rings to kids with the intention to sell and raise money for zoo improvements. Despite the new momentum, vandalism continued. In August 1971 alone three separate incidents were reported, including two opossums being burned alive in their cages.[18]

This ugly incident aside, the coalition for the zoo had reasons to celebrate after months of campaigning. On October 12, 1971, planning commissioners added their endorsement to a $300,000 renovation and conversion of the city's zoo to a Wisconsin oriented facility.[19] The zoo also added mercury vapor lights and hired night watchmen to quell the recent wave of killing animals.[20] Along with a positive and productive visit with George Seidel, director of the Milwaukee County Zoo and president of the Wisconsin Zoo Association, progress was being made to reinvest in the problematic Sheboygan landmark.[21]

Unfortunately, the scope of the renovation project increased exponentially. Following a federal pollution abatement order, the size and budget concerning the initial phase of the renovation plan increased to address sewage infrastructure that was deemed unacceptable by the United States Department of Agriculture.[22] It was becoming evident that the project would not be finished on time or on budget, at least not to the lofty standards of the idealistic Jim Streater. Even with the Vollrath facility in distress, the campaign marched on. Advocates expanded and diversified their fundraising in the following years to include carnivals, magic shows, door-to-door soliciting and even a rock and roll show at the Sheboygan Armory.[23] Streater took an active role in advocating for the zoo and conducted dozens of speaking engagements to interest groups.

While the Zoological Society and Streater remained ambitious, their message started to appear more ambiguous. With the recent growth of scale to the Vollrath renovation project, questions started to arise from within the movement as to whether Vollrath is the best location for the future of the zoo. Streater and key members of the Zoological Society had recently been scouting areas for an alternative location. A 255-acre site just west of the city, known as Schuchardt Farms, proved to be an attractive prospect. While this strategy may have started out as a "plan b" to consider if more serious infrastructure issues were found within the existing location, Streater appeared to eventually favor this option and the Zoological Society followed suit. Streater cited the need for larger areas for hooved animals to roam as well as better parking opportunities, two issues that were impossible to improve given the size of the current park. With the insurmountable issues of the current facility paired with the determined vision of Streater and the Zoological Society, it was clear that if Sheboygan was going to have a zoo in the future it would not be located at Vollrath Park. Despite raising $80,000 for improvements to the existing facility, Vollrath renovations were shelved and all efforts were focused on a new start.

Streater and the Zoological Society launched a revised campaign urging the city to acquire the 255-acre plot for development of a new zoo and recreation area.[24] Streater promoted the land as the perfect home for a recreation facility and noted that its location in a flood plain made the land basically useless for commercial or residential development. Additionally, Streater and the Zoological Society recommended that the city relieve itself of the burden of management and hand over operations to the Zoological Society. Plans to charge admission and eventually become financially self-sufficient was another appealing thought to the city council. With the current Vollrath Zoo operating under a temporary license, Streater expressed a sense of urgency in a 1975 *Sheboygan Press* article, claiming, "We feel like it's got to be done this year or it will probably be lost."[25]

The persistence of the Zoological Society paid off. 3,000 signatures were collected to petition the City Council to conduct a referendum gauging the public's opinion on building a naturalistic Wisconsin animal zoo.[26] The referendum would measure public support with the ultimate goal of securing funding for a future zoo. While the referendum was ultimately advisory, the Zoological Society hoped it would be received by the city council as a mandate from the people of Sheboygan.

Despite these efforts, the zoo ultimately failed to meet federal animal health and safety standards and the Vollrath Zoo officially ceased operations in the fall of 1976.[27] Animals were shipped off to different zoos and the city officially eliminated any allocations of funds to the Vollrath Zoo in the 1977 budget.[28] Following the closure of the Vollrath Park Zoo, Streater and the Zoo Society remained determined towards the goal of a zoo in Sheboygan.

Sheybogan County Historical Research Center

Above: This famous peacock was one of the many animals displayed at the Vollrath Zoo.
Opposite: A postcard of Vollrath Park and Zoo.

A strong-willed last push by the Zoological Society in the form of 18,000 mailed brochures aimed to sway voters to their cause leading up to the November referendum that asked for a city-wide vote to pursue the project further. They billed the massive $877,000 development as a better value than rebuilding the troubled Vollrath location based on both projects having a comparable cost. The Society claimed, "To build on the existing Vollrath Park site means less zoo for the same amount of money."[29]

Even with the excitement and allure surrounding the prospect of a brand-new zoo for the city to enjoy for years to come, the voters of Sheboygan voted in a fiscally conservative manner defeating the referendum 10,436 to 7,631.[30] The backers of the project refused to give up and publicly continued to campaign, but this was the fatal blow to the efforts of the Sheboygan Zoological Society. In the eyes of several Sheboygan aldermen, the blame for the failure was placed solely on Streater himself. Condemning his risky, aggressive advocacy for a new zoo in favor of rebuilding the historic zoo, Streater was seen as careless and irresponsible. Alderman Faulk went as far to say, "These people killed the present zoo and the responsibility should fall on their leader—the one who runs the zoo. They promoted the new zoo at the expense of the present one."[31]

Streater responded to criticisms in a series of letters to the editor in *The Sheboygan Press*. Responding to several individual attacks against his personal and professional character, he attempted to set the record straight about his role in preserving the former zoo while campaigning for a new site. He even responded to allegations of the sabotage of Vollrath to expedite progress on the new prospective site.[32]

Despite the defeat of the referendum, the rundown infrastructure and rusty steel cages of the Vollrath Park Zoo were not immediately torn down, a sign that Sheboygan was not completely ready to dismiss the possibility of the zoo's comeback. Perhaps to appease the public, the official stance around its closure was one of suspension rather than cessation. Many seemed hopeful that someday they would be able to reopen the zoo and provide a robust educational experience for generations to come. As the years passed and the cages were removed, most of Sheboygan realized that revival was futile and Vollrath has seen its last days as a gallery of captive wildlife.

Decades later, there is virtually no sign of the storied zoo on the grounds of Vollrath Park. Gone is the scenic lagoon that started it all and gone are the ramshackle cages that brought it infamy. Streater moved on to lead a substantial zoological career in his native Minnesota, while the Sheboygan County Zoological Society disbanded after having their registration revoked in 1977. The site of the would-be natural Wisconsin zoo was eventually purchased by the city and was developed to create Taylor Drive, a major road connecting the north and south sides of Sheboygan.

The Vollrath Park Zoo was not unique for the time in its existence as a city-run zoo. Municipal Zoos have been popular in Wisconsin since the early 1900s, with several remaining in operations today such as the Manitowoc Lincoln Park Zoo, Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary in Green Bay, Marshfield Wildwood Zoo, Oschner Park Zoo in Baraboo and Henry Vilas Zoo in Madison. Each of these tax-levied parks are aided by productive zoological societies filling the role as booster clubs. All the aforementioned zoos have taken strides in the last forty years to improve the zoo to include more natural settings and methods to enrich the lives of the exhibit animals. Streater's approach in the early 1970s was too novel and idealistic for the time and Sheboygan was not ready to invest in such a radical change with such a towering price point. Ultimately, Streater's zeal and ambition to create a new zoo did, in fact, come at the expense of the Vollrath Park Zoo. Had the Zoological Society efforts remained focused on frugal—yet passable—improvements, Sheboygan might still have a modest zoo today.

Every year, an annual celebration occurs on the grounds of the former Vollrath Zoo. Hundreds of young adults from Sheboygan area high schools take part in an elaborate graduation ceremony while thousands of spectators watch from the terraced hillsides. Now former Vollrath Zoo visitors have the pleasure to watch their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews start their adult lives in the place where they collected some of their earliest cherished memories—at their local zoo. Without so much as a plaque to honor the treasured park, it is now up to them to pass their memories down to future generations.

Notes

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29. "Zoo Drive Launched," *The Sheboygan Press*, October 21, 1976.
30. "57.8% Oppose Zoo Project," *The Sheboygan Press*, November 3, 1976.
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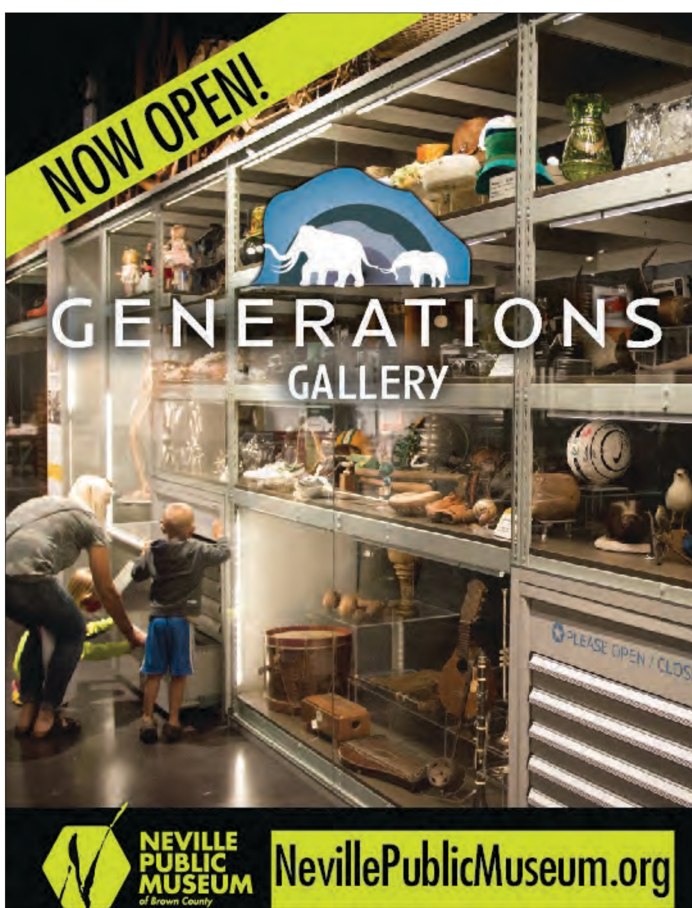

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Pictured is one of four paintings by Howard Pyle in the "Travels of the Soul" allegory published in 1902, and part of our extensive Pyle collection housed at the Neville Public Museum. Visit our growing online collection or at local museums, schools, and financial institutions.

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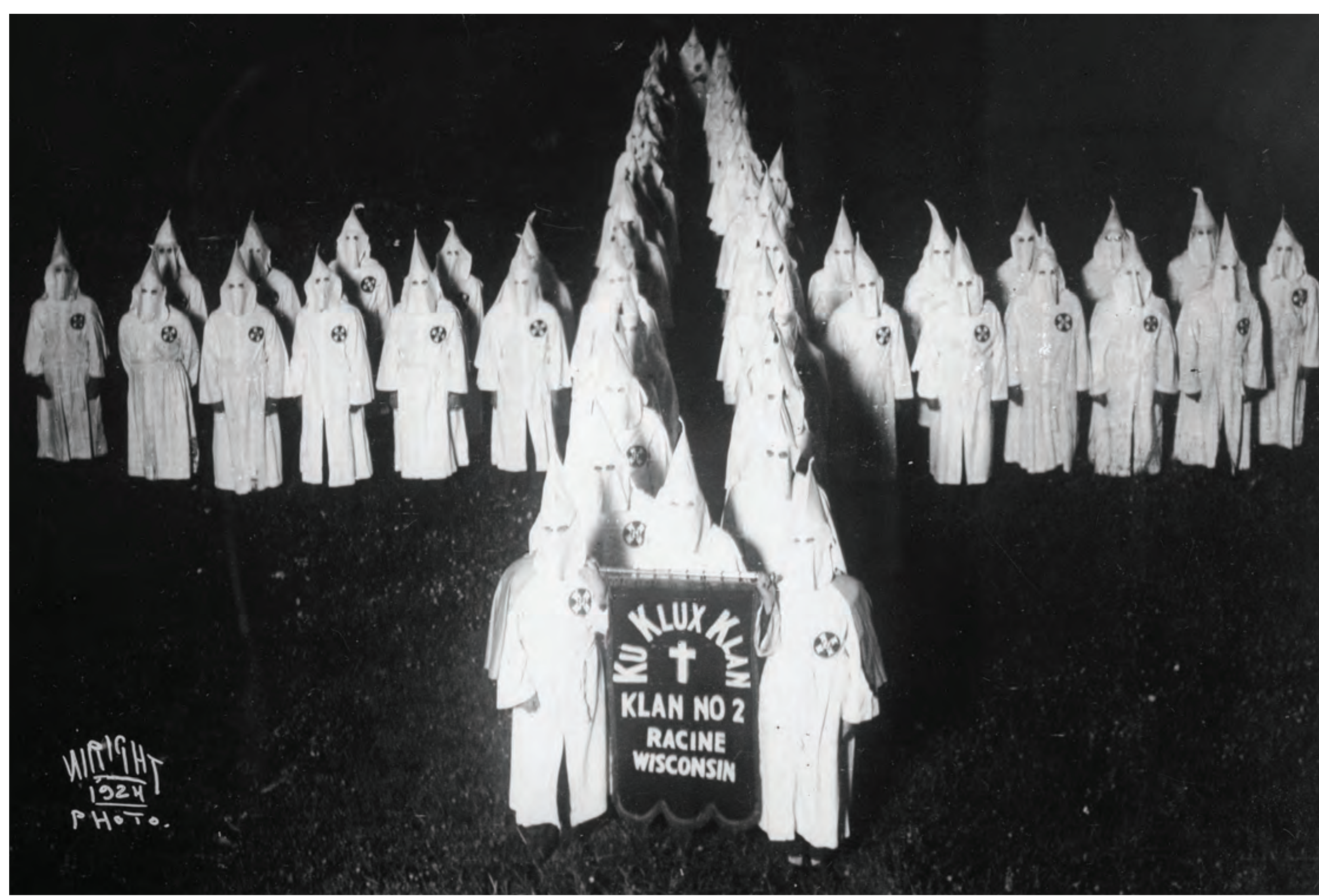
Ku Klux Klan Recruiting Methods in the Fox Cities

by Mike Jacobs

If one decided to take a stroll down East College Avenue in Appleton on Thanksgiving evening, 1924, they probably witnessed a peculiar spectacle: three flaming crosses in the business district. Perhaps not so peculiar, the occasion scarcely made the local news, meriting page nine in the *Appleton Post-Crescent*. Klansmen across the country set crosses ablaze marking Thanksgiving Day as the anniversary of the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan. For well over one hundred years white supremacists have lit crosses with the purpose of intimidating African Americans. But why in the Fox Cities? Wisconsin's tiny African American population was concentrated in southern Wisconsin and posed no threat to the (outdated) social norms and race expectations in the Lower Fox River Valley. How did the Ku Klux Klan hoodwink thousands of local citizens into attending their demonstrations, rallies, initiations, and joining America's most notorious domestic terrorist organization?[1]

They may have hidden their identities, but they did not hide their presence. They met in municipal parks, civic buildings, Protestant churches, and fraternal halls. They often invited the public to witness and ultimately join their organization. In the Fox Cities the Ku Klux Klan lured lawyers, preachers, and Masons among others into their fold. And not just a few. As many as 500 Klansmen from Neenah and Menasha gathered to plan their role in the giant 1925 Independence Day celebration hosted by Winnebago County Klansmen. Without apparent fear of criminal reprimand, on public streets they painted the word "welcome" with arrows pointing in the direction of their well-publicized celebration. They burned crosses more for publicity than intimidation. In a letter to the editor of the *Appleton Post-Crescent*, scholar and congregationalist Rollin C. Mullenix warned of Klan recruiting in the vicinity: "It augers ill for the peace and harmony of our community if we allow this 'orger' to achieve his purpose." But achieve he did—America's most infamous white supremacist organization gained a foothold in the Fox Cities. Mullenix likely did not know that these professional "orgers" possessed years of experience establishing "klaverns" (a local Ku Klux Klan unit) in cities just like those in Wisconsin's Fox River Valley.[2]

When and how Kleagles (Klan recruiters) found their first recruits in the Fox Cities remains unknown. Klansmen conducted reconnaissance in Appleton as early as fall 1922 but failed



Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-38517

Members of Ku Klux Klan No. 2 from Racine, Wisconsin pose in the formation of a cross.

Klan Basic Organization

Empire: U.S.
Grand Wizard: Chairman
Imperial Wizard: CEO
15-member Imperial Kloncilium (cabinet) composed of Genii:
Klaliff (first vp), Klazik (second vp), Klokard (lecturer), Kludd (chaplain), Kligrapp (secretary), Klabee (treasurer), Kladd ("Conductor"), Klarogo (Inner-guard), Klexter (Outer-guard), Klonsel (Attorney), Night Hawk (Courier), and the four Klokann (auditors)

Realm | **Realm: State** | Realm
Grand Dragon: Head of Realm
Imperial Wizard: CEO
15 Hydras: Same positions as Kloncilium, except at state level.

District | **Congressional District** | District
Grand Titan: Head of electoral operations in each district
Furies: Aides to the Grand Titan

Klavern | **Klavern: Local Organizations** | Klavern
Exalted Cyclopes: Head of Klavern
Several local officers, depending on Klavern, almost always including Kligrapp (secretary), Klabee (treasurer), and Kludd (chaplain)

Ghouls
Rank-and-file Klansen who mostly attended Klavern meetings

to make any inroads. In a December 1922 interview, King Kleagle (a contraction of "Klan eagle") William Wieseman boasted that the Wisconsin Klan consisted of 15,000 men with 14,500 living in just twelve cities, none of them Fox Cities. By September 1923, a Kleagle started his work in the Fox Cities. In October two Klan periodicals announced that Kleagles operated secretly in Appleton. This suggests they made their first contacts through fraternal orders which would not require publicity. Kleagles preferred to obtain a body of recruits before going public—designed to inspire mystery, awe, and suggest they existed as part of the accepted social landscape. Before handing the reigns over to a local convert, an experienced Klan organizer from Indiana inducted a reported 175 candidates from Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha, and Neenah in February 1924. In the summer of 1924, a national Klan newspaper described the growth in Appleton as "rapid and continued." Strangely, the Wisconsin Klan magazine noted no such growth in the area. In fact, the Wisconsin Klan's growth proved slow thus far according to Grand Dragon Charles Lewis. Kleagles increased membership in 1925 and made plans to establish a women's auxiliary to further supplement their incomes.[3]

Beyond the acknowledged shared racism, the Ku Klux Klan of 2022 has little in common with the Ku Klux Klan of the Jazz Age. In fact, the general (and appropriate) low opinion most Americans have of the KKK discourages any respect for its organizational acumen of a century ago. During the 1920s, the KKK employed two separate institutional arms—recruiting and operational. The recruiting branch employed and deployed professional salesmen, habitual fraternalists, and World War I veterans whenever possible. They applied sophisticated recruiting methods with the purpose of garnering as many new members as quickly as possible. However, once the men ordered their robes, they became the concern of the operational branch and the sales force sought new recruits often in new locales.[4]

Contemporary pluralist philosopher Horace Kallen believed that rapid changes in society spawned the new Ku Klux Klan. "Old things dying began to feel themselves die and to struggle against death," Kallen commented. "It is this that flames the fiery cross of the Ku Klux Klan." Historians debate the nature and purpose of the Jazz Age Klan—as an organization seeking to limit the freedoms of undesirable and undeserved Americans (namely African Americans, Jews, Catholics, most immigrants, and Volstead Act resisters among others) or as a fraternal organization that just happened to view non-White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) with contempt. The difficulty comes with judging the organization by its actions—actions which varied by locale and leadership. A nuanced assessment includes room for both interpretations. Whatever the actions of any given klavern, their composition included men (and in many places women) who might have joined for either reason. The professional Klan recruiters did not concern themselves with this difference, except when determining which attitude would best convince a prospect to join. As former member P. J. Orn observed, "It has been comparatively easy to mobilize hundreds of thousands of 'white, male, Gentile persons, native-born citizens of the United States.' Preaching the need of men (with ten) for the country's sake." The propaganda and agenda did not concern Klan leadership argued critic Reverend James M. Gillis, "[Imperial Wizard] Simmons knows which side of his bread is buttered. And he knows how to get the bread and butter."[5]

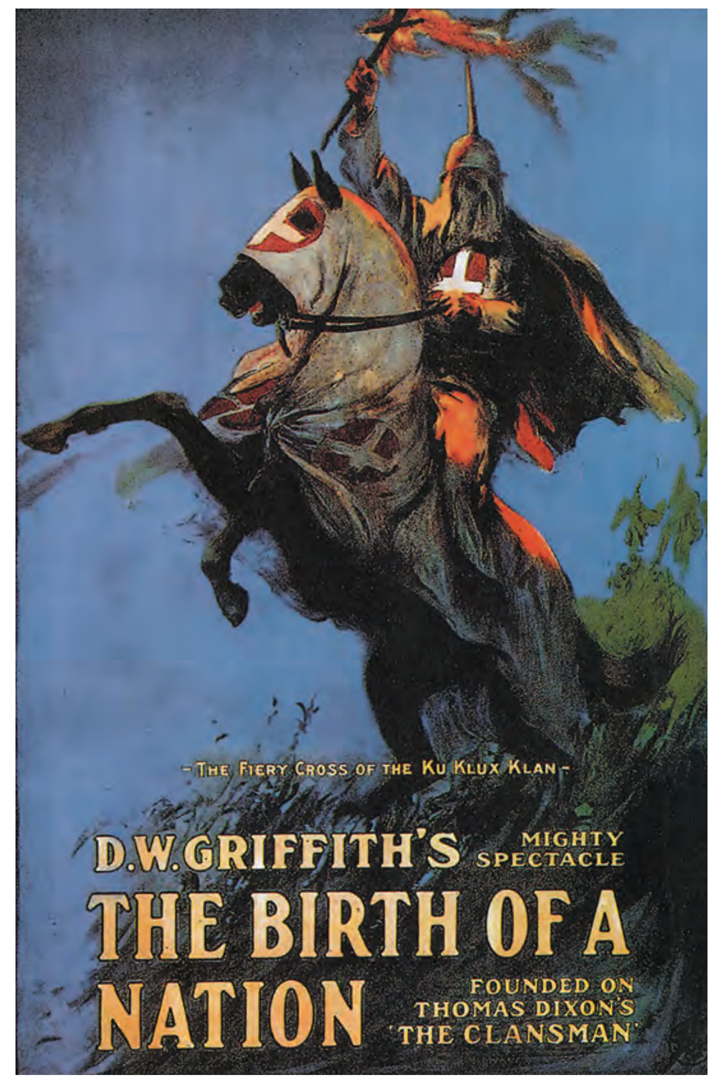
Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-96565

A scene from the 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, featuring members of the Ku Klux Klan on horseback fighting black U.S. Army soldiers.

Twenty-first century scholars Roland Fryer and Steven Levitt described the Klan's recruitment operation as a "highly incentivized sales force responsible for recruiting new members to the Klan." This assessment does not deviate from contemporary journalist Stanley Frost's view that "the Ku Klux Klan has brought recruiting to a point of efficiency which is almost scientifically perfect and far beyond any similar system." During the Klan's decline, former members published articles divulging their efforts to increase the Klan. These sources reveal the devices and varied approaches employed to reach their target audience. And the target audience need not hold any particular prejudice—just be a WASP willing to pay to hate somebody.[6]

Years before the Klan made a deliberate effort to recruit in the Fox Cities, a series of articles exposing their drafting tactics syndicated nationally including in the Milwaukee Journal. Kleagles utilized and/or manufactured media, such as the now infamous 1915 silent film sensation, *The Birth of a Nation*, and faked reports of race troubles. They sought to mine members of other fraternal organizations. And, according to Elizabeth Tyler, the chief architect of their amazing recruiting success, they emphasized the potential economic benefit to businessmen: "The Klan teaches the wisdom of spending American money with American men." The lucrative nature of the enterprise did not escape notice, "Not the least surprising aspect of the activities of the incorporated Ku Kluxism uncovered by the investigation is the fact that all this has been undertaken and managed as a revenue-producing business enterprise and has manifestly paid well."[7]

In a tell-all interview near the end of the decade, a former Kleagle classified the men who joined into three categories: those who supported "Klancraft", those for political gain, and those rabid "anti" people. The "craft" in Klancraft referred to the similarity of Klan activities with other fraternal organizations of the era, particularly Craft Freemasonry. Political gain referred to the business, social, and civic connections obtained through this association. Finally, the "rabid 'anti' people" consisted of those wishing to join the like-minded in blaming the woes of the world on any number of out-groups.[8]



Dorling Kindersley

D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* theatrical release poster.

Many researchers cite the Klan's effort to enlist Masons as both recruiters and members. Wisconsin fits this pattern. When the Klan solicited recruiters in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, the advertisement emphasized "Masons preferred." At the national level, Masonic leadership distanced itself from the Klan. In Wisconsin, the Klan issue divided Masons. For example, the anti-Klan editor of the Muscoda Progressive served as a Grandmaster in the Masons. That a Masonic lodge challenged the editor on his unfavorable position demonstrates that Klan recruiters in Wisconsin successfully penetrated that fraternal body. F. Ryan Duffy, Wisconsin Commander of the American Legion, wrecked hopes of Kleagles who sought to recruit from that prominent respected organization. Speaking at Appleton's Elk Hall to the Oney Johnston Post of the American Legion, Duffy warned, "The greatest menace to our country today is the invisible empire, the Ku Klux Klan. I have appealed to the former service men to use their influence to check the development of such an organization that eats at the vitals of the country."[9]

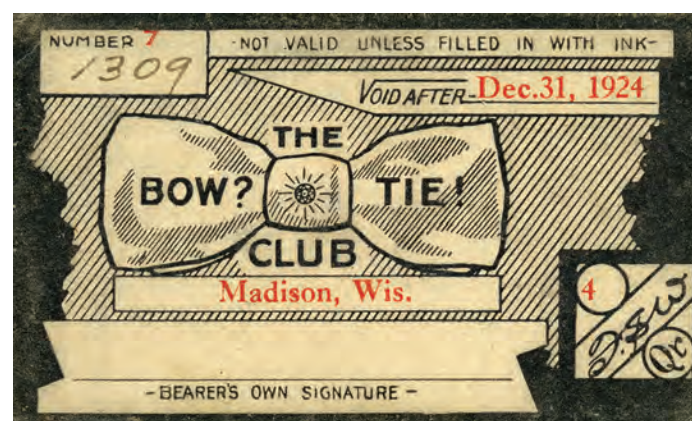
A Klan prospect might see the organization as a political instrument or an instrument for personal political gain. The Klan

Milwaukee Public Library Digital Collection

The Joseph B. Kalvelage residence was purchased by the Ku Klux Klan and often used as a meeting place for members.

hosted private and semi-public (invitation only) political rallies throughout the United States and the Fox Cities proved no different. The existence of such rallies offered Kleagles the opportunity to peddle the Klan to prospective members as a means to achieve a common political goal such as immigration limitation, disenfranchisement of undesired voters, ousting questionable incumbents, or, in the case of the Fox Cities, Prohibition enforcement. Reverend Daniel Woodward, minister of the First Congregational Church in Kaukauna, tried to harness the political power of the Klan in Wisconsin in a run for the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Robert LaFollette's death. Woodward, a Great Titan (regional director within the state) in the Klan, performed well on the ballot in areas of Klan strength including the surrounding areas of the Fox Cities. Kaukauna's "klandidate" finished third in the Republican primary and quit the Klan the following year.[10]

The Ku Klux Klan is best known for its disposition and activities against African Americans. However, when the KKK tried to establish klaverns in the Fox Cities, the area counted so few African Americans that recruiters could hardly depict them as an imminent danger. The reputation of the Reconstruction era Klan and its depiction in D. W. Griffith's wildly popular film, *The Birth of a Nation*, cemented in the public's mind the idea that the Klan derived its purpose in keeping African Americans in a subservient socio-economic position in society. Klansmen and their confederates used no such sophisticated and undemocratic terms; they instead insisted that, as Klansmen, they aimed to maintain the appropriate status quo. But, again, the modest African American population in Wisconsin did not excite such fears and passions.



Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-75755

The Bow Tie Club member cards could be used to secretly identify fellow Ku Klux Klan members in public.

No matter; despite the public's perception, the Klan exercised no such single-minded emphasis. Klansmen saw themselves as problem-solvers. If African Americans did not pose a perceived problem, they would be left alone. This would not preclude the Klan's existence, Klansmen needed to identify what threatened the status quo and promise to work against it. To think of the Klan as simply anti-African American limits the understanding of the organization and its appeal in the 1920s, particularly in Wisconsin.[11]

Without the "African American menace," the Klan turned to their other perceived threats to "traditional America"—immigrants, Catholics, and, in the 1920s, Prohibition violators. This list of enemies guaranteed that the Klan could not thrive in Wisconsin as it had in other midwestern states. Wisconsin's social fabric included these entities and their traditions for generations, an accepted part of Wisconsin's culture. The Klan's success necessitated fearing those who you did not know, not your next-door neighbor.

Wisconsin prides itself on its poly-ethnic past. Yankees came to Wisconsin for sure, but central Europeans quickly overtook them in population and to some degree, power. As of the census of 2010, still more than fifty percent of Wisconsinites claim German heritage. As of 1920, Milwaukee ranked in the top five of American cities of foreign-born and foreign-born parentage. In rural northern Wisconsin, latecomers to immigration, especially Scandinavians and Poles, played significant roles in populating the state. The threat of immigrants in this state held little appeal because the migration proved so large and the duration so long that virtually everyone knew multiple relatively recent arrivals who they loved, trusted, and/or respected. Still, it would work for some but could not serve as a basis for substantial growth.

While national Klan propagandists called "the reign of Catholicism in America" the real fight, the old Catholic bugaboo proved unusable too—distributing the fake Knights of Columbus oath and like materials failed. Regionally known Catholic defenders and detractors alike disparaged the Klan. Predictably, Rev. Paul Peter Rhode, Bishop of Green Bay, scored Klansmen, "We differ with him when he attempts to divide our citizenship into classes or to discriminate against any one because of racial or religious differences." Likewise, William Brandon, an infamous anti-Catholic lecturer and cause of an earlier Appleton riot, now a Klan apostate, spoke against the order before it could successfully launch in the Fox Cities, "Beyond a doubt that organization is the most dangerous of organizations in existence, this hellish soul enslaving thing called the Invisible Empire." True, theoretical anti-Catholicism existed among Protestant religious and the intelligentsia, but the social reality kept it in check. So many Catholics lived in Wisconsin that Catholics and Catholic life proved inescapable for the rest of the Badgers. Non-Catholics knew Catholics, worked with Catholics, befriended Catholics, and married their children to Catholics. The ominous stories of sinister Catholic machinations to subvert America just could not work for most Badgers. The extent of Catholic political subversion probably culminated in the decision of some school cafeterias to offer meatless meals to students on Fridays. Some aspects of Catholics' culture came to dominate Wisconsin, the Friday fish fry and beer gardens, for example.[12]

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, WHS-58859

A State Klonvocation program for the Ku Klux Klan.

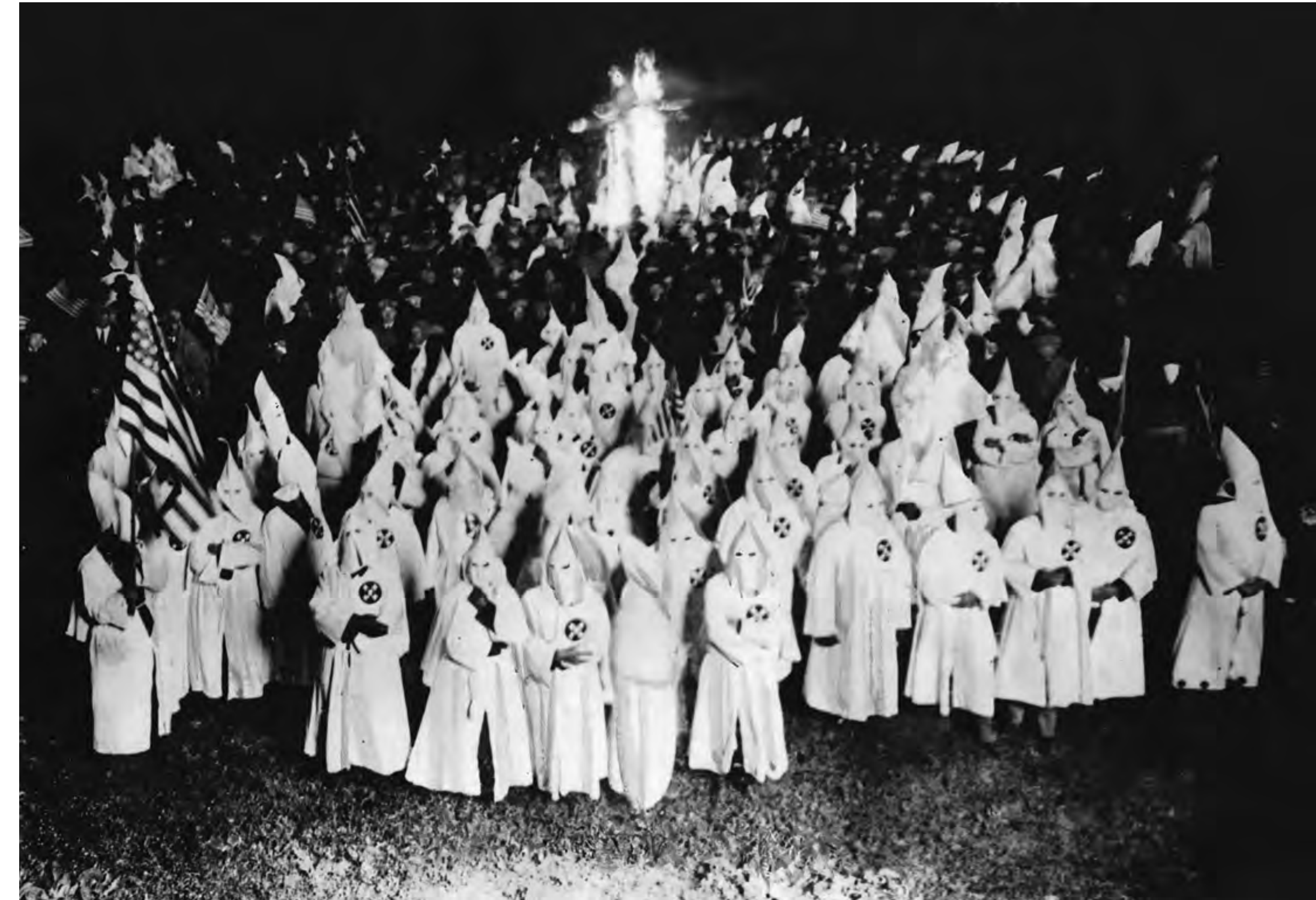
The widespread use of alcohol among immigrant families, Catholics, and others made Prohibition a doubtful wedge tool for the Klan in Wisconsin. However, it may constitute the one most frequently deployed. At least in this venture, the Klan could focus attention not on the utility of the law, but the public's respect for law and its even enforcement. Everyone needed to abide by the law, however unpopular, Wisconsin Klansmen argued. With this the Klan sought traction in Northeast Wisconsin. Kleagles decided to make this the cause célèbre for the Fox Cities, frequently bemoaning the lack of local law enforcement especially when it came to the Volstead Act. John Kline, the decidedly anti-Klan editor of both the *Appleton Post-Crescent* and *Green Bay Gazette*, could not help but agree with the hooded organization on this issue. Kleagles dispatched his otherwise unflattering editorials for reprint in Klan propaganda pieces. Appleton attained notoriety in the Klan press; as far away as Ohio and Indiana, Klan periodicals noted that "Appleton needs some cleaning up." Speakers at Fox Cities Klan rallies frequently hit this topic.[13]

Adversaries of the Klan conceded its appeal, Kline opined, "Many of its [the Klan] ideas and principles, and even its specific purposes, are highly laudable. It is for this reason that it has

made an appeal to so many honest-minded persons, who have, nevertheless, been misled." Wisconsin's Methodist magazine, the *Wisconsin Christian Advocate*, welcomed the Klan because of its outspoken opposition to Roman Catholicism: "Hurrah for the Ku Klux! We wish it might cloud up and rain that kind of people for a week all over Wisconsin." The Methodist stamp of approval and fear of Catholic conspiracy drew many adherents, no doubt, but anyone who joined the organization understood from its own propaganda its racist disposition, according to the Fiery Cross, "The whole civilized structure is being threatened by the mixing of white and black races. It is God's purpose that the white man should preserve purity of blood and white supremacy in this country." And the Wisconsin Christian Advocate plugged for Kleagles, "Will any one longer contend that there is no need of a Ku Klux Klan?"[14]

With invitations and endorsements of purpose, Kleagles scoured Wisconsin to reap the rewards that awaited. King Kleagles typically set the initiation fee at $10 but it might range as high as $20. The conventional disbursement granted forty percent of that fee to the Kleagle responsible for securing the new recruit. In a letter to Republican State Representative August E. Smith, Major Kleagle Sara Bellows (Wisconsin Women's Ku Klux Klan auxiliary) confirmed that female recruiters received the same proportionate compensation. Kleagles also shared a portion of the profits of any regalia purchased by the new member. This highly incentivized formula prompted recruiters, especially from out of state, to accept whoever met the minimum requirements and had the initiation money.[15]

Until they secured a local recruiter, out-of-town Kleagles often began their engagement efforts by securing a local P.O. box and mailing Klan applications, pamphlets, and other relevant materials to members of business associations, fraternal groups, and Protestant church membership rolls. A well-timed letter to the editor from a local confederate whose apology almost always included the insistence that they themselves did not belong to the hooded order and thought the community should remain openminded. If Kleagles found any interest, they employed newsboys to sell Klan newspapers on the street. In the Fox Cities, these activities began with a P.O. box and mailers in October 1923. The friendly letter to the editor came the following May from Mrs. F. Holt of Kaukauna who protested, "Why is it that we never see anything but evil printed in the *Appleton Post-Crescent* or any other daily, in regard to the Ku Klux Klan." Her apology continued, "This organization is composed of strictly patriotic, temperate, law-abiding citizens whom we have mingled with all our lives and I cannot believe that they are going to run this nation or city to



Encyclopedia Britannica

A Ku Klux Klan initiation ceremony takes place near Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

rack and ruin just because they have become Klansman." And her final predictable protest, "Do not think I am a Klansman. I am not. I am an outsider." The following month, Kleagles took out three separate ads in the Post-Crescent classifieds seeking to hire a boy to hawk The Fiery Cross and pro-Klan Fellowship Forum on the streets of Appleton.[16]

Ingratiating themselves with a local Christian minister proved useful for Kleagles. These relationships bestowed a level of respectability on the Klan and a pool of potential recruits for the Kleagle. Kleagles flattered ministers with free membership, financial donations, and agreeable audiences. In many locales throughout the nation, Kleagles found Methodists and Congregationalists receptive to their appeals of reform. In Appleton, however, the pastors of the First Methodist and First Congregational churches denounced Klan activity. These condemnations failed to deter Kleagles as they did not need the blessing of all the local Protestant ministers to find recruits. In Appleton, the pastors of both the German Methodist-Episcopal and First Baptist churches provided the Klan with both legitimacy and recruits. They invited Klansmen and their fraternal prospects to their church, held special services for them, spoke at Klan events, and preached on the Klan's official favorite biblical chapter, Romans 12.[17]

Rollin Mullenix, Lawrence University dean of freshmen, revealed one method used by the Klan "orger" operating in Appleton. To the surprise and dismay of the professor, the organizer attended a church supper to recruit and spread his propaganda. Mullenix did not disclose the Klansman's verbiage but revealed the recruiter's suggested targets by observing that Appleton lacked a single African American family and proceeded to defend the local Chinese, Jewish, and Catholic communities. Mullenix lamented that Klan recruiters elsewhere had duped "many good and well-meaning people" into joining thus securing "for themselves a degree of financial prosperity of which they would not dare to dream if they were to rely upon the tedious methods by which most of us gain a livelihood." Their motivation, Mullenix concluded, "Koin is Koin."[18]

The Klan tried, without success, to recruit on the local Methodist university campus. Unlike the University of Wisconsin-Madison where the Klan enjoyed some success, Lawrence students showed no interest in the Klan beyond academic, forensic, and oratorical consideration. In fact, when someone anonymously sent a copy of the Wisconsin Klan's newspaper to *The Lawrentian*, the student newspaper editor insisted that future correspondence would need to be accompanied by a name. The Lawrentian received no further correspondence. A favorable column about Colorado's anti-Klan Judge Ben Lindsey followed. Later that month Cornell Classics Professor (and Lawrence alumnus) Albert A. Trever denounced the intolerance of the KKK speaking at a Lawrence Phi Beta Kappa event.[19]

Kleagles found Methodists receptive to the Klan's message of reform and hoped to capitalize on this by associating the organization with the local Methodist university. Lawrence President, Dr. Samuel Plantz, wanted no part of the Klan on campus and refused their request to use Memorial Chapel for a large meeting. Two weeks after the rejection, the Klan's weekly newspaper, which relied on dispatches from klaverns, falsely reported that students burned a cross on the campus to celebrate a large cohort of Lawrence students joining the KKK. This falsehood led Plantz to write a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Appleton Post-Crescent* denouncing the hooded organization. Plantz died four months later but not before making Lawrence untenable for Klan recruiters.[20]

Kerosene-soaked burlap sacks or rags tied to homemade wooden crosses and set aflame remained the most infamous attention-grabbing tool employed by Klansmen. The Klan burned crosses for a variety of purposes including announcing their arrival in a new locale, attaining a membership goal, provide illumination during an evening meeting, mark a holiday, or highlight a perceived wrong in the community. Whatever the specific function, the true purpose brought attention to the hooded order. In fact, sometimes a tip to the local press, fireworks, a gunshot, or dynamite preceded the lighting to garner greater attention.[21]

While witnesses spotted Klansmen in the Fox Cities as early as November 1922, the Klan did not burn their first cross in the vicinity until the spring of 1924. And they did so in a flurry, lighting crosses on four different occasions during the last week of April. For more than a year, Klansmen burned crosses in or near Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha, and Neenah. Most often Klansmen staged crosses outside city limits so that the agents might escape undetected. Riverview Golf Course proved a favorite but Klansmen also burned crosses on the Red Hills outside Kaukauna, near Bergstrom Paper, and on the water adjacent to Neenah Paper. They did not always retreat to the outskirts, however. To highlight Volstead violators, for example, one night in Appleton Klansmen burned crosses in the business district including in front of W. C. Fish grocery, the J. F. Voight drug store, and a vacant lot near the police station presumably as a protest against purposeful non-enforcement.[22]

Klan meetings served organizational as well as operational purposes. The idea of staging an advertised Klan meeting in the open to garner attention and possibly harvest recruits reached it heights in July 1924. A meeting of 150 robed Klansmen on Lake Road just outside of Appleton attracted 1,500 people many of whom came by formal invitation from the local Kleagle, attorney James Hicks. That membership drive kick-off resulted in attracting 300 potential initiates to an outdoor meeting on Charles Rogers' farm on Brickyard Road later that month. Thousands of gawkers attended too. Klansmen unsuccessfully tried to direct traffic and it took county motorcycle police more than an hour to untangle the automobiles. After this debacle, Kleagles found it more difficult to function in Appleton without interference. They advertised an open meeting in Pierce Park and the day before the meeting the park board denied the Klan permits and Mayor John Goodland, Jr. stationed police to prevent them from congregating there. Thereafter, the Klan retreated to Neenah and Menasha where they faced less formal opposition holding public meetings at the S. A. Cook Armory and closed meetings at Gillingham's Corners, for example. Klansmen continued to meet in all three cities for the next two years occasionally burning crosses at their meetings ranging from ten to sixty feet tall. After only a few years, meetings tended to draw less press, fewer onlookers, and even fewer recruits.[23]

Some of the recruits engaged in public acts of charity. Charitable acts on the part of the Klan served multiple functions: to fulfill a

claimed purpose of the Klan; to associate themselves with other service organizations; and to attract positive publicity, of course. Thanksgiving 1924 demonstrated these objectives. The Winnebago County Klan distributed food baskets to needy families in Neenah and Menasha. Leadership checked with other local fraternal orders to prevent overlap…or vaunt their own efforts. While Klan women did most of the work, Klan men took the credit by arriving at homes in their robes and informing the local presses of their efforts in advance. The *Appleton Post-Crescent* supported the Good Fellows Club's annual welfare drive by promoting the effort and publicizing the names of the contributors—the Women of the Ku Klux Klan joined the cause early successfully getting positive coverage due benefactors. Kleagles understood the necessity of such measures to counter the negative publicity usually associated with the KKK—charitable organizations attract more dues-paying members than white supremacist organizations with a sullied reputation.[24]

With its illiberal policies and harmful national press coverage, the Klan frequently bled membership. This meant the organization always needed to compensate for its losses with new members to remain viable. Beginning in 1925, the state organization pressured its professional Kleagles to accept an unlikely quota of twelve new members a week. By the end of the summer, Wisconsin Klan leadership devised an incentive program to coax, guilt, and reward regular Klansmen into recruiting new members. They, too, had an unrealistic goal of signing up "ten new full pay members." With their momentum gone, the Klan accepted partial payments and installment payments from prospective members while encouraging them to "bring a candidate" to meetings.[25]

In the spring of 1928, the *Milwaukee Journal* published a series of post-mortem articles on the KKK in Wisconsin. The presidential candidacy of New York's wet Catholic governor, Al Smith, afforded the national KKK one last opportunity to try to revive the failing order. This effort manifested in the Fox Cities in September when longtime anti-Catholic pro-Klan speakers L. J. King and Helen Jackson rented the S. A. Cook Armory in Neenah to host rallies. Once the armory board members learned the nature of their purpose, they cancelled the contract. King and Jackson refused to leave the facility, so staff disconnected the lights making efforts to continue futile. The night of Al Smith's election loss, Klan remnants burned crosses in nearby De Pere and Green Bay, but these activities failed to return life to the collapsed organization. The attempted revival of Klan fortunes found no new interest and met with active disapproval. The Klan continued to exist in a feeble form for years in the Fox Cities but the Kleagles had long since exited the area knowing that their remaining financial prospects resembled the charred remnants of a fiery cross.[26]

Notes

1. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 28, 1924, 9; *Wisconsin Kourier* (Washington, DC) December 19, 1924, 1; *Wright's Appleton City Directory 1925* (Milwaukee, Wright Directory Co., 1925), 550.
2. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, February 11, 1924, 4; July 1, 1925, 10. Mullenix shortened "organizer" into the slang "orger."
3. *Beloit Daily News*, December 8,1922, 1; *LaCrosse Tribune and Leader-Press*, December 9, 1922, 1; *Appleton Post-Crescent*. November 24, 1922, 9; December 14, 1922, 3; September 5, 1923, 9; September 19, 1923, 4; *Daily News* (Neenah, Wisconsin), December 19, 1922, 4; *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), October 1923, 6; June 1924, 6; *Call of the North* (St. Paul, Minnesota), October 31, 1923, 1; *Minnesota Fiery Cross* (St. Paul, Minnesota), February 22, 1924, 6; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), July 18, 1924, 5; February 20, 1925, 5. Wieseman served as "King Kleagle" (the recruiting manager of a state still in the provisional stage of development) and next as "Grand Dragon" (state leader of a chartered realm) until fiscal scandals and charges of authoritarianism from Wisconsin Klansmen led to his reassignment outside the state. The Klan national office replaced Wieseman with Michigan troubleshooter Lewis.
4. For an explanation of the sophisticated pyramid structure of the Klan's recruitment practices, see Roland G. Fryer, Jr. and Steven D. Levitt "Hatred and Profits: Under the Hood of the Ku Klux Klan," *Quarterly Journal of Economics 124*, no. 4 (November 2012): 1883-1925.
5. Horace M. Kallen. *Culture and Democracy in the United States: Studies in the Group Psychology of the American Peoples* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 33; P. J. Orn. *The Nightshirt in Politics: Americanism Abused* (Minneapolis, MN: Ajax Publishing Co., 1926), 5, 9; James M. Gillis, *The Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Paulist Press, 1922), 6-7. For a secondary consideration of the Klan's recruitment methods, see Charles C. Alexander "Kleagles and Cash: The Ku Klux Klan as a Business Organization, 1915-1930," *Business History Review 39*, no. 3 (Autumn 1965), 348-367. For general background on the 1920s Klan, see Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago, Ivan R. Dee, 2011). For a consideration of the Midwest Klan in particular, see James H. Madison, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).
6. For a testimony of a Klan insider, see William G. Shepherd, "How I Put Over the Klan," *Collier's*, July 14, 1928, 34. Klan critics exposed the Klan recruiter's penchant for preying on people's prejudices. For example, see Robert L. Duffus's two articles: "Salesmen of Hate: The Ku Klux Klan," *The World's Work*, 46 (May 1923), 31-38 and "How the Ku Klux Klan Sells Hate," The *World's Work*, 46 (June 1923), 174-183.
7. *Milwaukee Journal*, September 21, 1921, 10; September 22, 1921, 2; September 24, 1921, 1; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, October 11, 1921, 1.
8. *Milwaukee Journal*, April 8, 1928, 1, 4; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, September 23, 1921, 11; "Why They Join the Klan" *New Republic*, November 21, 1923, 321; For more on the appeal of fraternalism in the 1920s, see Miguel Hernande, *The Ku Klux Klan and Freemasonry in 1920s America: Fighting Fraternities* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2020).
9. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, February 6, 1923, 7; *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, Wisconsin), August 26, 1921, 14; *Muscoda Progressive*, September 11, 1924, 8; For more on the connection between the Klan and Masons, see Kristofer Mark Allerfeldt, "Masons, Klansmen and Kansas in the 1920s: What Can They Tell Us About Fraternity?" *Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism 2*, no. 1 (2011), 109-122.
10. *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), May 2, 1924, 2; *Kaukauna Times*, February 5, 1925, 4; February 19, 1925, 4; *Beloit Daily News*, June 30, 1924, 1; July 23, 1924, 1; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 18, 1924, 4; May 26, 1924, 4; July 22, 1924, 10; September 23, 1924, 3; September 16, 1925, 1; December 4, 1926, 1.
11. Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics On Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For Large Cities And Other Urban Places In The United States," Working Paper no. 76, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2005, 113. According to 1920 census data, the three cities in Wisconsin with the highest concentration of African Americans (Milwaukee, Racine, Madison) totaled only 2,782; United States Bureau of Census, *Negro Statistics* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935), 362. Wisconsin's African American population totaled only 5,201 ranking it thirty-seventh out of forty-eight states in African American population.
12. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, October 31, 1923, 11; August 9, 1924, 5; *Catholic Herald* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), June 4, 1925, 10; *Our Sunday Visitor* (Huntington, Indiana), December 28, 1924, 4.
13. *Ohio Fiery Cross* (Dayton, Ohio), June 6, 1924, 1; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), March 14, 1924, 5; *Appleton Post-Crescent*), January 4, 1923, 4; January 25, 1923, 4; September 23, 1924, 3; May 18, 1926, 4; *Iron County News* (Hurley, Wisconsin), June 5, 1926, 3; *Leader-Telegram* (Eau Claire, Wisconsin), May 5, 1926, 7; *Menasha Record*, July 20, 1926, 1; *Beloit Daily News*, July 19, 1926, 1; July 20, 1926, 3.
14. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, October 15, 1926, 6; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), March 14, 1924, 7; *Wisconsin Christian Advocate* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), June 1922, 2; August 1924, 1.
15. *Milwaukee Journal*, September 24, 1921, 1; April 8, 1928, 4; April 13, 1928, 3; *Madison Capital Times*, January 16, 1928, 1, 2.
16. *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), November 1923, 7; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, October 22, 1923, 7; February 11, 1924, 4; May 29, 1924, 4; July 22, 1924, 11; July 23, 1924, 15; July 24, 1924, 15.
17. William Jenkins, *Steel Valley Klan: The Ku Klux Klan in Ohio's Mahoning Valley* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), 86-7; Norman Frederick Weaver, *The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1954), 13; *Wisconsin Kourier* (Madison, Wisconsin), February 13, 1925, 1; *Wisconsin Christian Advocate* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), December 1923, 5-6; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 7, 1923, 3; March 19, 1923, 5; March 20, 1923, 5; September 28, 1923, 11; September 29, 1923, 5; October 1, 1923, 7; January 31, 1925, 10; February 21, 1925, 7.
18. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, February 11, 1924, 4; *Texas American* (Dallas, Texas), March 21, 1924, 6; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), March 14, 1924, 1, 5; *Minnesota Fiery Cross* (St. Paul, Minnesota), April 4, 1924, 3: The Klan press tried to dismiss Mullenix as a Protestant tool of Rome, "Aliens have a way of picking out the weak-kneed ones and getting them to sign their names to almost any kind of communication, so long as it bristles with misrepresentation of the Klan." Of those "misrepresentations" written about the Klan, the Minnesota Fiery Cross protested, "Not one of which has been proved."
19. *The Lawrentian* (Appleton, Wisconsin), November 3, 1923, 1; December 6, 1923, 1; December 10, 1923, 1; January 8, 1925, 8; February 5, 1925, 2; February 26, 1925, 1; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 26, 1924, 9; Charles Breunig "'A Great and Good Work": A History of Lawrence University (1874-1964), unabridged and unrevised' *Selections from the Archives* (Lawrence University, 1994) 412: Like many Protestant denominational colleges founded in the 19th century, the religious culture of the university witnessed a dilution during the 1920s. Still, Lawrence remained America's largest Methodist college.
20. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, June 11, 1924, 5; July 12, 1924, 16; *Fiery Cross* (Ohio edition), June 6, 1924, 1; June 13, 1924, 1; July 18, 1924, 5; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), May 2, 1924, 2; *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), July 1924, 6; *Imperial Night-Hawk* (Atlanta, Georgia), June 25, 1924, 5. Klan periodicals claimed that students burned a cross on the campus but no other source corroborates this claim. A conspiracy of silence would need to exist that would include the police, the university, and all local press and reporters. No such reference exists in the correspondence or records of the Lawrence University archives.
21. For examples of crosses burned in the Fox Cities, see *Appleton Post-Crescent*, April 28, 1924, 3; September 24, 1924, 2; October 17, 1924, 7; October 30, 1924, 3; November 28, 1924, 9; December 26, 1925, 10; *Beloit Daily News*, April 25, 1924, 1; July 15, 1924, 1; July 21, 1924, 1; February 12, 1925, 2; *Menasha Record*, July 7, 1924, 1; July 21, 1924, 1; April 30, 1925, 1; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), April 18, 1924, 3; *Wisconsin Kourier* (Madison, Wisconsin), February 13, 1925, 7; February 27, 1925, 1; *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), June 1924, 6.
22. *Daily News-Times* (Neenah, Wisconsin), July 14, 1924, 1; July 15, 1924, 1; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 24, 1922, 9; May 1, 1924, 16; May 6, 1924, 6; *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), May 1924, 6; June 1924, 6; July 1924, 7; *Fiery Cross* (Ohio edition), May 23, 1924, 7; *National Kourier* (Southwestern edition), March 13, 1925, 2; *Wisconsin Kourier* (Madison, Wisconsin), December 19, 1924, 1; *Menasha Record*, July 14, 1924, 1; February 12, 1925, 1.
23. *Daily News-Times* (Neenah, Wisconsin), July 21, 1924, 1; August 29, 1924, 3; October 11, 1924, 1; October 13, 1924, 1; November 26, 1924, 1; May 17, 1927, 1; *Menasha Record*, July 21, 1924, 1; July 25, 1924, 7; September 23, 1924, 1; May 4, 1925, 1; June 9, 1925, 1; September 17, 1925, 1; *Wisconsin Kourier* (Madison, Wisconsin), February 20, 1925, 1; *Badger American* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), July 1924, 7; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, July 7, 1924, 2; July 22, 1924, 10; July 25, 1924, 1; September 15, 1924, 1; September 22, 1924, 1; September 23, 1924, 3; October 14, 1924, 7; June 10, 1925, 10; May 26, 1926, 10; *Wright's Appleton City Directory 1925* (Milwaukee, WI: Wright Directory Company, 1925), 207.
24. *Appleton Post-Crescent*, November 26, 1924, 8; December 18, 1925, 9; December 24, 1925, 3; May 13, 1927, 4; *Daily News-Times* (Neenah, Wisconsin), November 26, 1924, 1; *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), November 28, 1924, 4; *Fiery Cross* (Indiana edition), February 20, 1925, 5.
25. *Madison Capital Times*, January 16, 1928, 2; "60,000 Strong", Undated correspondence, in author's possession; Rusk County Historical Society Museum: letter from County Klan office, 6 April 1925.
26. *New World* (Chicago, Illinois), October 5, 1928, 1; *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, November 8, 1924, 1; *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, November 7, 1924, 3; *Catholic Herald* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), November 15, 1928, 3; *Appleton Post-Crescent*, September 21, 1928, 5, 13; September 27, 1928, 4.

Ku Klux Klan Recruiting Methods in the Fox Cities

An Author Talk by Michael D. Jacobs

Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 6 p.m.
The History Museum at the Castle
330 East College Ave., Appleton

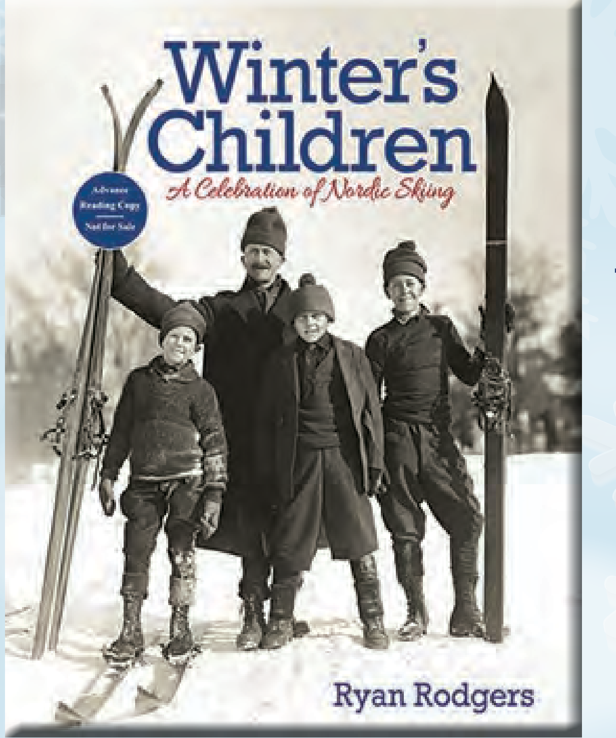
SAVE THE DATE
MAY 15 - 21, 2023

YUMP, OLE, YUMP!

A Celebration of Nordic Skiing, 1890s to 1910s

by Ryan Rodgers

Superior View Photography
A jumper soars over the crowd at Union Park in Negaunee, Michigan in 1907.



The following is an abridged excerpt from *Winter's Children: A Celebration of Nordic Skiing* by Ryan Rodgers, published in 2021 by the University of Minnesota Press.

Although the Panic of 1893 derailed the young Central Ski Association, the economic depression that followed paradoxically spurred the rise of the world's first mass producer of skis. For a half century, the Twin Cities area would be home to a flourishing ski industry, prompted when, in 1896, a Norwegian named Martin Strand left Superior, Wisconsin, and moved back to Minneapolis after his land surveying business went under. He was thirty-three years old and hustling for work. One winter's day, Strand watched a dozen boys skiing down a hill on crude skis fashioned from barrel staves. Later Strand recalled, "It made me realize the United States really didn't know the sport of skiing. There were skis, but they had been made by Norwegians living here for their own use. No one ever had tried to make them popular with Americans and no one, of course, had a ski factory." The first ski boom years and the Excelsior Ski Company had already been forgotten, making space for a new crop of boosters to step up.

Strand had left his family farm in central Norway in 1883, where he hunted rabbits on skis, cut grass with a scythe, and harvested grain with a cradle. Like many Norwegian immigrants, he left a life of the land with thin margins. Later described as "a slight man and rather under medium height," Strand arrived in New York City as a twenty-year-old who knew no English and carried in his pockets a dollar and a half and a train ticket to Minneapolis. Decades later, in an unfinished autobiography, Strand would write with characteristic grandiosity: "I began life in this country with empty hands."

Yet, his first years as an American went smoothly. He moved in with his brother and two uncles in Minneapolis, joining an immigrant community of twenty other Norwegian families. He quipped in a newspaper interview, "I had no feeling of being in a strange country except that I couldn't speak English." Strand enrolled at the University of Minnesota and studied civil engineering. His uncle ran a surveying crew and gave Strand a job as a rodman. One of his first summers in America he worked on a crew laying tracks for the new Soo Line through the virgin woodlands of northern Wisconsin. "That country was so wild then that the partridges did not know enough to be afraid of a man," he wrote.

In 1888, Strand moved north to take a post as a draftsman in the city engineer's office in Superior. Located next to Duluth at the western end of Lake Superior, Superior had tripled its population in just a few years, creating much need for surveying. Giddy speculators claimed the city would surpass Chicago as the Great Lakes' metropolis. Strand started his own surveying business. He traveled again into the surrounding old growth forests, marking section lines for the loggers. The loss of these forests would haunt him in his old age. In 1892, though, the future was luminous, and Strand's success enabled him to travel for pleasure to Norway, England, and Scotland.

Then the bottom fell out. The shaky nature of Superior's speculative-based economy became evident with the Panic of 1893. "Things got tough," Strand remembered. "All I could find was some work running out section lines for lumberjacks, but even that gave out in 1896 and I went back to Minneapolis to work for a railroad at the magnificent sum of fifty dollars a month. "The new job lasted only a few months before Strand was laid off in the fall. This was especially troublesome considering he had just married a woman named Rinda Titterud in June. Titterud was born in Minneapolis though, based on her name, was obviously not far removed from Norway. She and Strand had likely known each other for years in the city's tight-knit Norwegian community.

"There was no such thing as county relief in those days," Strand said. "Either you worked or you didn't eat. When the first snow fell I was desperate, but the snow gave me an idea." That idea came from the boys skiing on barrel staves, a notion he may have devel-

oped from the cumulative effect of seeing boys on shoddy skis over the course of years.

He bought two and a half dollars' worth of tools and hired a carpenter for fifteen cents an hour to plane and carve boards in his basement. Strand used Rinda's tea kettle to steam and bend skis in their kitchen. He made seventy-two pairs of skis with this method and carried samples about Minneapolis while looking for buyers, finding his first client in a downtown department store with a rather lackluster pitch.

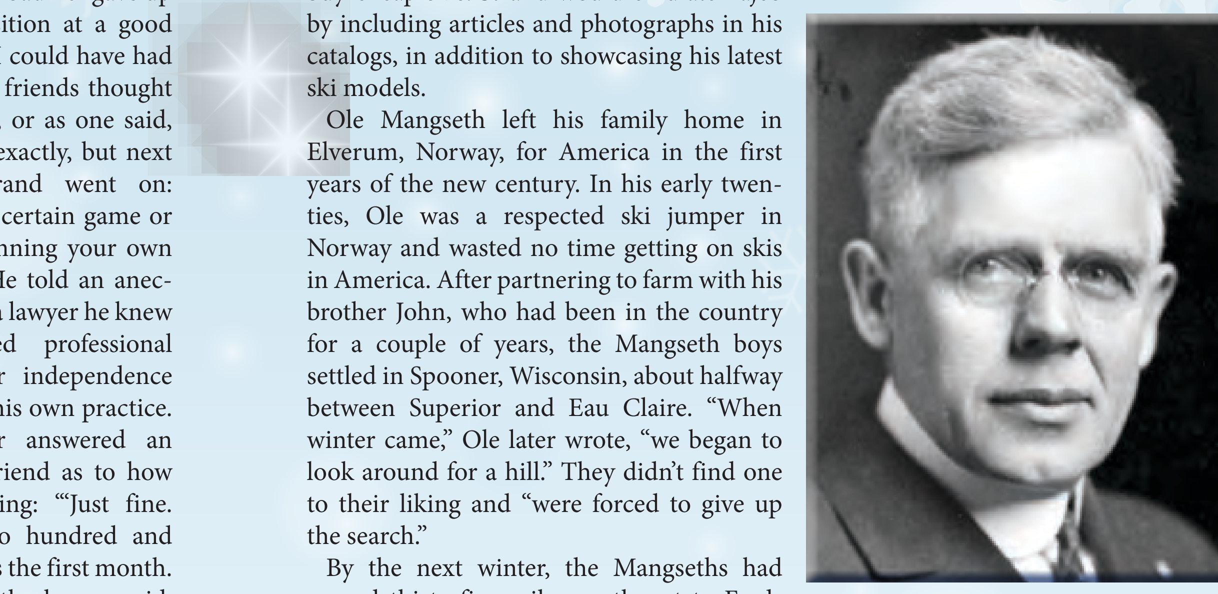
"What have you there?" the store buyer asked Strand. "Skis," Strand said.

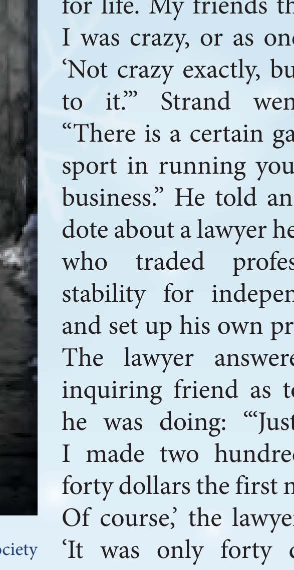
"What do you do with them?"

"Slide on them," Strand said, and that deft answer was apparently enough to close his first ski sale.

At some point in the late 1880s or 1890s, Strand became acquainted with another of the century's most important ski boosters, Aksel Holter. Holter would be best known for his vocallater years in Ashland, Wisconsin, where he became the nation's most vocal proselytizer of the *idraet* Called Ak (rhymes with hack) by friends and family, Holt was ten years younger than Strand. During his first years in America, he worked in a livery stable and as a hack driver, private coachman, and house painter.

As a boy in Christiania, Holter had attended the capital's annual ski competitions, watching in awe as Sondre Norheim and his fellow Telemarkings demonstrated their skill. He begged his father for a pair of genuine Telemark skis made of pine, but he had to settle for a cheap regular pair made from spruce. Eventually, his father gave him Telemark skis, and Holter won a youth ski race on his sweet new boards. Like Strand, though, Holter's contributions to skiing came not from his competitive ability but in his earnest promotion of the sport. Upon arrival in the United States, Holter lived for several years in St. Paul, and this is likely when he and Strand formed a relationship that would influence the style of millions of skis that poured out of the Twin Cities.





Minnesota Historical Society

At the turn of the century, a pair of staves from an old barrel was all one needed to fashion a pair of skis. In this photograph, circa 1903, the Ellestad children of Lannesboro, Minnesota, use barrel stave skis in their backyard.

Strand's fortunes improved for a while, though after a few good years he would hit a rough decade. He continued making skis on the side after landing a stable job in 1897 with the Great Northern Railway. During the last full winter of the century, in which sixty-three inches of snow fell, doubtlessly a good season for selling skis, Strand was the only ski maker listed in the Minneapolis city directory. In 1904, the Strands lost a baby. The next year, the Minneapolis directory indicated that Strand was selling insurance for New York Life, as well as running the Strand-Youngquist Manufacturing Company, which he had started with a friend. He and Frederick Youngquist were still the only ski makers in Minneapolis. Their business was at 2646 Twelfth Avenue South, which is today a playground in the Phillips neighborhood. In 1905, Strand was the first to display skis at the Minnesota State Fair. His skis were made from Norway pine, Georgia pine, and southern white ash. Opposing what most people believed throughout the era of wooden skis-being a contrarian fit right into Strand's character profile-he favored southern white ash over hickory. He told fairgoers that hickory was good but too heavy for most skiers. By 1907, Strand and Youngquist had parted ways. Two years later, Youngquist and his wife died from tuberculosis, leaving four orphans. Martin and Rinda lost another baby.

Strand glossed over this era in his memoir, neatly compartmentalizing the grief he had endured and blithely boasting that by quitting the railroad he "gave up a good position at a good salary that I could have had for life. My friends thought I was crazy, or as one said, 'Not crazy exactly, but next to it.'" Strand went on: "There is a certain game or sport in running your own business." He told an anecdote about a lawyer he knew who traded professional stability for independence and set up his own practice. The lawyer answered an inquiring friend as to how he was doing: "'Just fine. I made two hundred and forty dollars the first month. Of course,' the lawyer said. 'It was only forty dollars in cash, but it is worth two hundred dollars more to be your own boss!'" Strand's view was an intriguing mix of American entrepreneurial spirit coupled with the stubbornly independent nature of the Norwegian peasant.

Meanwhile, Aksel Holter had started his own ski company in Ashland, basing his skis on the design of an esteemed Norwegian manufacturer. Holter imported seven pairs of hickory skis in 1900 from the L. H. Hagen Company in Christiania. Legendary arctic explorers over the years, such as Fridtjof Nansen, Roald Amundson, and Admiral Richard Byrd, used Hagen skis. The Hagens would serve as the template for the millions of skis churned out of the Midwest in the coming decades, made not only by Holter but also by Strand and the companies that sprang up in Strand's wake.

In 1905, the Tajco Company of Portland, Maine, set the paradigm of how skis would be sold in the United States when it both published a book on skiing that doubled as a catalog and opened the country's first ski shop. Tajco's catalog was the first book published about skiing in the United States and only the second book published on skiing in the English language. The prior year the first ski book in English, *The Ski-Runner*, by E. C. Richardson, was published in London. Tajco's catalog, *The Winter Sport of Skeeing,* not only marketed its wares but featured articles on how to ski and showcased studio-shot photographs of live models on skis in front of painted backdrops, some of which were lifted directly from Richardson's book. The pictures featured both men and women, including one whose caption stated "Women Find Skeeing Is the Ideal Sport."

Tajco skis were top-notch and expensive: prices ranged from $3.50 to $18 a pair. In 1905, the average American worker made ten dollars a week. Tajco's less expensive skis sold well, but high-end models didn't, and the company went out of business within a couple of years. Martin Strand professed respect for the quality of Tajcos but remarked that he himself made only "skis that people will buy-cheap skis." Strand would emulate Tajco by including articles and photographs in his catalogs, in addition to showcasing his latest ski models.

Archives of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame

Aksel Holter, circa the 1920s.

Ole Mangseth left his family home in Elverum, Norway, for America in the first years of the new century. In his early twenties, Ole was a respected ski jumper in Norway and wasted no time getting on skis in America. After partnering to farm with his brother John, who had been in the country for a couple of years, the Mangseth boys settled in Spooner, Wisconsin, about halfway between Superior and Eau Claire. "When winter came," Ole later wrote, "we began to look around for a hill." They didn't find one to their liking and "were forced to give up the search."

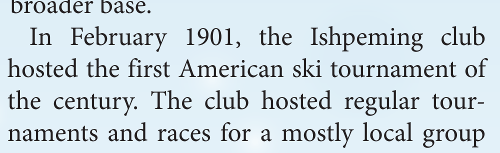
By the next winter, the Mangseths had moved thirty-five miles southwest to Frederic and the neighboring rural area of Seven Pines, where they found several splendid ski hills. "John got busy and made skis," Ole recalled. "After a little work on a hill, we were ready for action." Neighboring farmers came out to see what on earth the Norwegians were up to. The farmers had never seen skis before and queried the Mangseths until the brothers tired of trying to explain themselves, telling the farmers to wait and see. The Mangseths itched to jump again, not having felt the rush of flying through the air for years.

John jumped first and landed smoothly. Ole recalled that his brother flew ninety feet, though this was probably an exaggeration brought on by a space of four decades. The jumpers in the Midwest ski league that was about to spring up wouldn't soar much farther aided by tall jumps constructed of wooden scaffolding. Ole didn't elaborate on what "work" he and his brother had done to prepare the hill, whether that included tree removal or the construction of a snow or wooden ramp. Considering they were on a neighbor's property, it is doubtful they built any sort of scaffolding. More likely, they augmented a steep natural slope by building a snow ramp.

Ole's first jump didn't go well. He took "an awful spill, and nothing could be seen at the bottom but a flurry of snow and a jumble of legs, arms and ski tips." The farmer who owned the hill was displeased by the reckless behavior occurring on his property. He threatened to put a stop to the foolishness but was placated when he saw Ole "crawl out of the snow with skis and bones in good condition," as Ole explained in his own words, "and he decided to let us try again. The next Sunday, we had a large crowd of spectators, who had come to see the 'two crazy Norwegians from Seven Pines.' " Mangseths would be soaring from American ski jumps for the next fifty years.

The erstwhile Northwest hadn't seen a major ski tournament since 1893, though this would change with the dawning twentieth century. The economy was slowly recovering, and a wave of inventions began to tilt everyday life toward the modern. Indoor plumbing, the internal combustion engine, electrification, and telephone service became increasingly available. Optimism and a sense of empowerment were high.

Aksel Holter moved to Ishpeming in 1900 (later relocating to Ashland in 1905). He became close friends with another great adherent of the skiing *idraet,* Carl Tellefsen. Tellefsen had founded the Trondheim Ski Club years before in his native Norway, and he had been in Ishpeming since 1888, working as a banker. Holter's and Tellefsen's individual passions for skiing were remarkable and overbearing. Paired up, the effect was a tempest of *idraet* fever-to them, skiing was more religion than hobby. The duo revived the Norden Ski Club, which they rebranded as the Ishpeming Ski Club, removing the foreign word to appeal to a broader base.



In February 1901, the Ishpeming club hosted the first American ski tournament of the century. The club hosted regular tournaments and races for a mostly local group of competitors over the next few years. In 1904, Holter invited the Mangseth brothers to compete. The Mangseths were eager to reconnect with other skiers and, lugging their skis, caught the train from Wisconsin to Ishpeming. How exactly Holter and the Mangseths knew each other is unclear. The brothers were too young to have known Holter in Norway. Perhaps they'd met in the United States, or maybe Holter knew of them only by reputation.

"We had quite a time boarding our train in Frederick," Ole Mangseth wrote. "Everybody looked at us, wondering what our purpose was in carrying boards with us. The brakeman told us that this was not a lumber train." As they had done with the suspicious farmers, the Mangseths assuaged the wary brakeman and then spent much of the long train ride to Ishpeming fielding questions from fellow passengers about their curious boards.

The Ishpeming tournament featured a cross-country ski race. In Norway, cross-country races, or "distance runs," were fifteen to twenty miles. Organizers shortened the Ishpeming race to eleven miles because it was "not thought best to follow the old

custom here." Race organizers were well aware of the disinterest in cross-country racing. Fostering enthusiasm would be better served by starting with a short race and hoping to attract adherents. Only five of the eight skiers who started the race even finished. A recent Norwegian immigrant named Matt Johnson won easily, with his shirt collar "not even damp" at the finish line. His competition didn't fare as well: the "other riders were almost done up." The Mining Journal noted that "the boys would rather jump than participate in distance contests." As followers to the idraet, which demanded skiers be skilled in all facets of the sport, Holter and Tellefsen were obligated to convince the region's skiers to embrace cross-country as much as they did jumping. Cross-country racing continued in Ishpeming through the coming years, including divisions for women and children, but remained limited in appeal. Tellefsen's ambition was to shift from hosting frequent home region tournaments to executing a big northwestern contest reminiscent of the prior decade.

Interest in organized competition continued to grow. The follwing winter, Ishpeming hosted a jumping tournament with thirty men and nine boys from around the region (this was the same tournament the Mangseths competed in after schlepping their skis on the train from Frederic). Ishpeming native Conrad Thompson won the overall, and fellow local Leonard Olson made the longest standing jump with a leap of seventy-seven feet. This contest would come to be regarded as the first American national jumping championship. At a meeting in the afterglow of the successful tournament, the Ishpeming club decided to make the contest an annual affair, to be held on Washington's birthday and called the National Ski Tournament of America.

Carl Tellefsen gave a rousing speech, praising the "splendid comradeship" of the club and the "great aggregation of ambitious ski veterans" before expressing his adherence to the *idraet*. Tellefsen expounded on "the purity of this gallant sport" and, in a tack similar to one that Aksel Holter would pick up after Tellefsen's early death, railed against the morally inferior sports—a"football, baseball, or a 100-yard dash"—which were tawdry by comparison and marred by conflict. Skiing was not merely a sport; skiing was a course that one could follow through life, on which the skier would make like-minded friends, revel humbly in God's creation, and keep one's community strong through individual health and the positive influence of tournaments.

"Remember that we are all Americans and not Englishmen, Swedes, or Norwegians, and that there is no discrimination shown and no favors. The best man gets there," Tellefsen said in a valiant attempt at building an egalitarian meritocracy, at least for able-bodied men of northern European extraction. That Tellefsen bothered to mention "Englishmen" in the Scandinavian crowd was likely a reference to one of the club's members, John Greenway, a young mining bigshot from a venerable eastern family. Greenway would soon start an important ski club in Minnesota. Tellefsen's dream was that skiing would sweep across the northern United States and become a national obsession in America, as it was becoming in Norway. "We may not see the effect of our effort on the growing generation at once," he predicted, "but we will before long when every kid will demand a pair of skis as a household necessity. That is the way to develop a healthy mind in a healthy body."

Tellefsen had been trying for years to revive a governing ski body to fill the void left by the dereliction of the Central Ski Association. By 1905, enough interest had coalesced for him to shepherd the few existing ski clubs into an umbrella organization called the National Ski Association (NSA), and on February 21 five clubs voted to approve the organization's bylaws. The NSA established specific rules for jumping to determine style points during competition. To Holter and Tellefsen, mastery of form exhibited through style was as important as distance. This was a tenet of the idraet, with its emphasis on craft over the individual. Decades later, the NSA would become the United States Ski and Snowboard Association, which is today the governing body for skiing in the country. Of the original five clubs of the NSA—the St. Paul Ski Club; the Stoughton Ski Club near Madison, Wisconsin; the Grand Rapids Ski Club in Michigan; and, of course, the Ishpeming Ski Club and Aurora Ski Club—the St. Paul and Ishpeming clubs have survived the ensuing 116 years.

The Englishman whom Tellefsen mentioned, John Greenway, was an employee of the Oliver Iron Mining Company, a subsidiary of U.S. Steel. Greenway had been a captain for Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Roosevelt described Greenway as "a strapping fellow, entirely fearless, modest and quiet…ready to respond with eagerness to the slightest suggestion of doing something." In the NSA's first year, Oliver Iron transferred Greenway from Ishpeming to northern Minnesota, where he was to run a new mining operation called the Canisteo District and commence massive iron ore removal from the small boomtown of Bovey, a short distance northeast of Grand Rapids.

Greenway's go-get-it-ness that impressed Roosevelt became evident. Instead of basing his mining operation from Bovey, Greenway carved a new town from the neighboring forest less than a mile away. Only a year old, Bovey was already known "for its rowdy bars and many gamblers and prostitutes…its unfinished look, grubby streets and a high incidence of typhoid fever." Unlike Bovey, the new town was carefully planned by Greenway, and he named it Coleraine after the president of the Oliver Iron Mining Company, Thomas Cole.

Ryan Rodgers

A beautiful example of the careful craftsmanship in early ski design, this antique ski from the collection of Duluth skier Adrian Watt may have been made by a Finnish family on Minnesota's North Shore in the late 1800's or early 1900's.

Although not a skier himself, Greenway quickly started a ski club to entertain his miners. Called the Itasca Ski and Outing Club, it would produce some of the nation's top jumpers and remains today one of the few ski jumping clubs left in Minnesota. With typical gusto, Greenway had a ski jump built of old railroad ties by the end of 1905. The jump was located on the shores of Trout Lake, and the first local skier to run it, Sigurd Peterson, crashed and broke his shoulder. This inauspicious start notwithstanding, Greenway invited NSA club skiers for a meet in February 1906. His friend G. G. Hartley (a Duluth businessman whose myriad interests ranged from mining to celery farming), who had platted the rough town of Bovey, provided a silver trophy made by Tiffany's of New York.

By this time, the Aurora club had recruited Ole Mangseth to Red Wing. Mangseth won the Itasca club's inaugural tournament and then defended his title the following two years. In what would remain a standard practice at tournament venues, if a jumper won a tournament three years in a row he could keep the trophy permanently rather than temporarily for one year, so the Tiffany's cup became Mangseth's. In 1907, at Ishpeming, Mangseth set a new American distance record by jumping 114 feet. Greenway lured Mangseth away from Red Wing with a job as a painter for the Oliver company, and Mangseth moved to Coleraine with his wife, Constance, and son, Rolf.

By the end of the decade, ski jumping was becoming a mainstream sport throughout the snowy reaches of the country. NSA membership quickly grew to twenty-two clubs and more than one thousand jumpers. The era's favorite jumper came from Coleraine and first made waves in 1909. At the national tournament in Eau Claire, an eighteen-year-old named Barney Riley won the Class C, or Boy's Class, division. At five foot five, Riley was the only notable Irish jumper in the tournament, and his success enthused Eau Claire's sizable Irish population. The city's chief of police, named O'Brien, claimed he was going to hang a picture of Riley in the police station; the Reverend Father Connolly said Riley's victory made him feel ten years younger. Onlookers hoisted Riley on their shoulders and carried him about while singing songs in his honor. The Norwegians tried to claim him as one of their own by dubbing him Rileyson, and later Scandinavians gave him the nickname Irish Swenska, or Irish Swede. Riley's most descriptive and lasting nickname was the Wild Irish Rose. He won the national Class B championship both of the next two years. His toothy grin and increasingly bowlegged stance frequently showed up in newspapers in the coming years.

Despite cross-country skiing's lack of popular appeal and organization compared to jumping, many Midwesterners skied in the early twentieth century, particularly those in communities where Scandinavians had settled. Most Americans still lived in rural areas, and in the snowy northland skis were a tool of casual sport and practical locomotion. The best-selling novelist Walter O'Meara was born in the northern Minnesota town of Cloquet in 1897. He wrote in a memoir in 1974 that as a boy "skiing was not only a sport but a natural way of getting around in winter. We skied everywhere, up and down the snow-paved roads, across the open fields around town, into the woods and swamps in search of Christmas trees or rabbits." O'Meara and his classmates skied to school and leaned their skis against the schoolhouse exterior while they were in class. People in Cloquet made their own skis, bending their boards with the help of a steam pipe at the local sawmill. O'Meara "longed for a pair of Finnish skis. They were lovely—long and narrow, with a high crown of polished wood on which was often burned an intricate design."

Iron Ore (Ishpeming)

In 1906, the National Ski Association promoted its second tournament in a boisterous advertisement, calling it the "Greatest Exhibition of Skiing Ever Witnessed in America."

Ishpeming held regular cross-country races into the 1920s. Cross-country "races were a customary part of the ski season," an NSA publication reported. However, "interest waned in the 1920s," which was an indulgent way of saying that interest in organized cross-country racing went from little to near none. Ishpeming's Finnish community tried to keep things going by sponsoring cross-country races and offering gold and silver medals as prizes. One of these races in 1906 attracted only nine entrants. As ski historian John B. Allen wrote: "[The NSA] tried to promote cross-country races, but that was work and sweat, as unheroic to perform as it was unspectacular to watch."

Purists kept pushing, however, and added a cross-country race to the roster of national championship events. The fourth annual national championship in 1907 left Ishpeming and began its peripatetic tour around the country, landing for the first and only

time in Ashland, Wisconsin. Aksel Holter had moved to Ashland in 1905 and brought home the tournament.

Holter ensured the *idraet* was being followed by organizing and adding to the roster of jumping events the first national cross-country championship, an event that continues to this day. During its first running, the cross-country course covered nine miles of "somewhat broken territory, up, down, through ravines covered with heavy underbrush, over level fields with fences to be climbed," and concluded with five miles across a frozen lake. Red, white, and blue streamers marked the racecourse, which was officiated by members of Chicago's Norge Ski Club. A Finn from Ely named Asario Autio won easily, finishing more than two minutes ahead of his nearest competitor. Dubbed the Iron Man, Autio declared himself the "Champion of the World" and put out a standing bet of one hundred dollars that no one could beat him. Whether anyone took him up on the offer is doubtful. Autio's colorful persona flashed brightly and then disappeared from America's young world of skiing.

Two weeks before the Ashland nationals, Ole Mangseth, jumping with the Aurora, broke the American distance record when he jumped 114 feet in Red Wing on January 23, 1907. The previous record had been set only three days earlier by Ole Feiring of the new Duluth Ski Club when he had jumped 112 feet. Feiring was the defending national champion going into the Ashland tournament, though Olaf Jonnum from Coleraine outjumped him to become the new champion. The name Olaf is a form of Ole, both meaning "ancestor's descendant." The top three skiers of the time were named Ole in one form or another.

Things got stickier on February 12 when Red Wing hosted a tournament. Ole Feiring won, Ole Mangseth took second, and Olaf Jonnum finished third, followed by Ole Larson of Duluth and Ole Westgaard of Ishpeming in fourth and fifth places. Cries of "Yump, Ole, yump!" cut through the cold air of tournaments. Ole wasn't necessarily the most popular chap out there, but there were a lot of Oles running the slide. *Yump*, of course, meant "jump," shouted by Norwegians who pronounced j as y, as was done in the home country. Norway's influence in the American jumping scene was clear.

The NSA always held its annual meeting during the festivities surrounding the national tournament. At the 1907 meeting in Ashland, a contentious issue arose that would divide the ski jumping community for many years. Ever since ski jumping competitions started in America twenty years earlier, top jumpers had collected lucrative cash prizes. Purists like Aksel Holter felt that money sullied the motives of the skiers, who should be focused on perfecting technique and not on breaking records. Money also gave an unfair advantage to ski clubs in larger cities with more cash to throw around. Holter suggested that top finishers receive patches and medals instead of cash. His suggestion was not well received. Three-quarters of the competitive skiers at the meeting opposed this attempt to "bar out professionals." They did not want to maintain amateur status for the purity of the sport; they wanted to get paid. Unlike Holter, who by this time owned his own business, and the banker Carl Tellefsen (who would die suddenly the next year), the vast majority of the competitive skiers were of the working class, many with families to support. Ski jumping took time and money, and the jumpers took umbrage with the prospect of losing the carrot of cash prizes. Under such opposition, Holter and the NSA caved, but the skiers likely didn't grasp Holter's conviction: he was not about to give up his mission of purifying the sport.

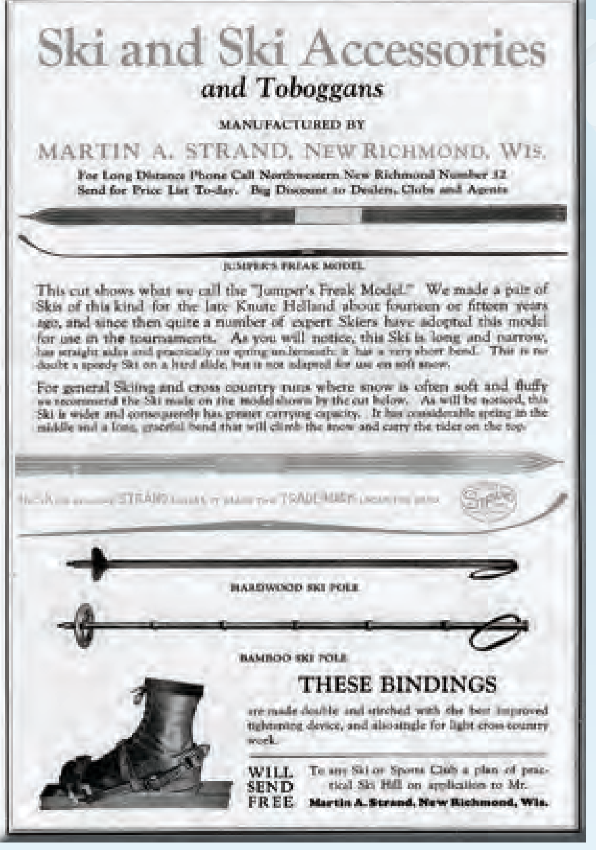
Aksel Holter's ski factory, located at West Fourteenth Street between the Omaha and Northern Pacific train lines, was up and running in Ashland by the time of the 1907 national championships. The year of the big tournament, Holter sold ten thousand pairs of skis. Some of these he contracted for Alfred Andresen and Company, a Minneapolis business that slapped its name on skis and other household goods like waffle irons and frying pans and sold them to the region's Scandinavian population.

Adrian Watt Collection

Ole Mangseth high above the Chester Bowl ski hill in Duluth, 1910.

A few years later, Holter sold his company to the Minneapolis ski maker Martin Strand. The reasons that prompted Holter to unload his (by all appearances) successful ski company are murky. Holter's granddaughter, Patra, who grew up in the house next door (and was yelled at by Holter for climbing in his apple tree), understood that there had been friction between Holter and the town of Ashland: he wanted to expand his business, but the town was not supportive. Perhaps turning his beloved *idraet* into a business had sullied the purity of the sport for Holter. In 1911, Strand presented Holter with a handsome silver teapot, now on display in the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame in Ishpeming, with the engraving: "Presented to Aksel H. Holter by Martin A. Strand, SKI MFR." Patra Holter, who donated the cup to the museum, suspected the teapot commemorated Strand's acquisition of Holter Skis.

Strand had just come off a beater of a year. In a shop he occupied at 2427 University Avenue Southeast in Minneapolis, near the University of Minnesota, Strand and his foreman, Ole Ellevold, made toboggans and oars in addition to skis. Business was good, and in the spring of 1910 Strand ordered more machinery in advance of what he hoped would be a good snow year. On May 28, a dry and windy day, Strand asked a neighboring business owner to stop burning refuse. The neighbor declined, and soon the fire spread, engulfing Strand's shop. Athletes from the nearby university ran over to help, but wind fueled the fire's spread, and they were unable to stop it from devouring the business. All of Strand's lumber, skis, and machinery were destroyed.



Itasca Ski and Outing Club

Catering to the ski-jumping craze of the 1920s and 1920s, Martin Strand began advertisingthe "Jumper's Freak Mode" alongside his other skis, poles, and bindings.

Strand hurriedly leased a building less than two miles away at 2306 Hampden Avenue in St. Paul. This industrial niche of the St. Anthony Park neighborhood would become the heart of the Twin Cities ski industry. Strand's time here, though, would be extremely limited. Just after he and Ellevold had the business back up and running, in December another fire destroyed Strand's new factory. For the second time in a year, all of Strand's materials and equipment were lost. Unbeknownst to Strand, the lease of the Hampden Avenue property stipulated that a fire would void his rental agreement. As Strand recalled, Ellevold "knew the second fire almost broke me and he knew it automatically cancelled my lease on the building. I didn't know that, but he did and he bid up on the lease so I was forced out." Ellevold met with the property owner of the burned-out factory behind Strand's back and took over his former boss's lease, leaving Strand's ski company homeless.

Martin Strand again found a new factory home, this time forty miles to the east. In April 1911, Strand entered into an agreement with the city of New Richmond, Wisconsin, which was sorely in need of an economic boost. The Willow River Lumber Company, a major employer in town, was slowly going out of business. New Richmond ponied up six thousand dollars to build Strand a factory and would charge him no rent for five years. Strand took out a bond with the city for fifteen hundred dollars and pledged to keep at least twenty employees on his payroll. Construction began immediately.

The factory boasted city water, steam heat, electric lights, and a location alongside the Omaha line railroad tracks. By the time Strand moved into the finished facility on June 15, he had orders for fifteen thousand pairs of skis. The first skis rolled off the line in mid-July, and the factory hummed to fill orders for the coming winter. It seems likely Strand would have purchased Holter's business during the second half of 1911 or after he'd secured his new factory and increased his means of production.

Strand's wife and two surviving sons moved from Minneapolis to join him in New Richmond. They rented a house nearby and then built their own the following year at 325 East Second Street. With the aid of an architect, Strand designed the house himself in a style called the "construction effect," a grasp at early modernism in which some of the framing timber was left exposed. The house resembled a European chalet and featured a second-story summer sleeping porch for Strand. The house was less than a mile from the ski factory, and it's easy to imagine trim Strand walking briskly to work early each morning in his trademark winged-collared shirts, crisply starched. At the age of forty-seven, Strand had finally found his permanent home.

Strand skis cost as little as one dollar and as much as eight dollars, which was still less than half of what high-end Tajcos cost a decade earlier. In 1916, each Strand ski was handled twenty-two times during production. Every board was planed, steamed, put in a bending rack, and cured for forty-eight hours. The now recognizable ski was sanded to "satin-smoothness." A "sharp little steel chain" neatly bored in the mortise slot for mounting the bindings. All that was left in the production process was varnishing and mounting the binding, for which Strand used "an effective fastening of his own patenting." In 1922, Strand received a patent for an automated ski-shaping machine. His automatic wood shaper used a mess of belts, cogs, and blades to cut up to six skis at a time from roughly shaped boards.

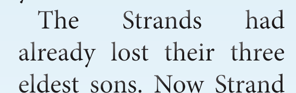
Strand sold a number of other products made of steam-bent wood. In addition to skis, he produced oars, paddles, and toboggans and even tried his hand at children's potty chairs (which bore the moniker Restwood Nursery Seat and featured a Fire King glass pot insert). He produced paddles and sleds for years, but by all appearances the potty chairs never caught on with consumers. With thirty employees in 1916, he was the biggest employer in New Richmond, and the ranks of his employees would more than double in the next fifteen years. Over two months that winter, Strand shipped five hundred orders of skis to places like Boston, New York, Arizona, and California. He identified himself as the

biggest producer of skis in the world. This was likely true. He had no comparable competitor in the United States, while the ski industry in Norway consisted of dozens of small producers.

Strand nursed his ties to the *idraet* and believed his product bettered people. “The best part of the sport,” Strand said in 1916, “comes in these cross country hikes, and in this the whole family can participate, young and old, men and women, boys and girls, and it will take folks out into the open when they most need it—when most of them are too closely housed up in overheated and illy ventilated houses, stores, and offices.” His eventual successor as the world’s biggest ski maker, however, would suffer no similar moral obligations.

Meanwhile, in St. Paul, Strand’s erstwhile foreman, Ole Ellevold, incorporated the Northland Ski Manufacturing Company in 1912. Ellevold was a carpenter by trade, and this was likely his first foray into business ownership. His naivete would make him a mark to a new associate. Ellevold founded Northland with two others-a draftsman, Hugo Kjolstad, and an accountant, John Fryer. Just across the street from the new Northland factory, a young Norwegian named Christian A. Lund ran the Gold Coin Chemical Works.

The 1913 *Bulletin of the National Association of Credit Men* listed Lund as selling “Veterinary Remedies and Disinfectants.” At least some of Lund’s remedies, however, were garbage. Later in the decade, Lund got caught selling cans of inaccurately labeled “Gold Coin Lice Killer.” The ingredients listed on these cans boasted formidable-sounding substances such as “Meta-Cresol” and “Para-Cresol,” but the content of the cans was actually kerosene. Minnesota’s U.S. attorney brought charges against Lund for “adulteration and misbranding of ‘Gold Coin Lice Killer.’ ” Lund pled guilty and paid a ten-dollar fine. It would not be his last run-in with the law.



Minnesota Historical Society

Skis are stacked and ready for finishing at the Strand ski factory in New Richmond, Wisconsin, circa 1925.

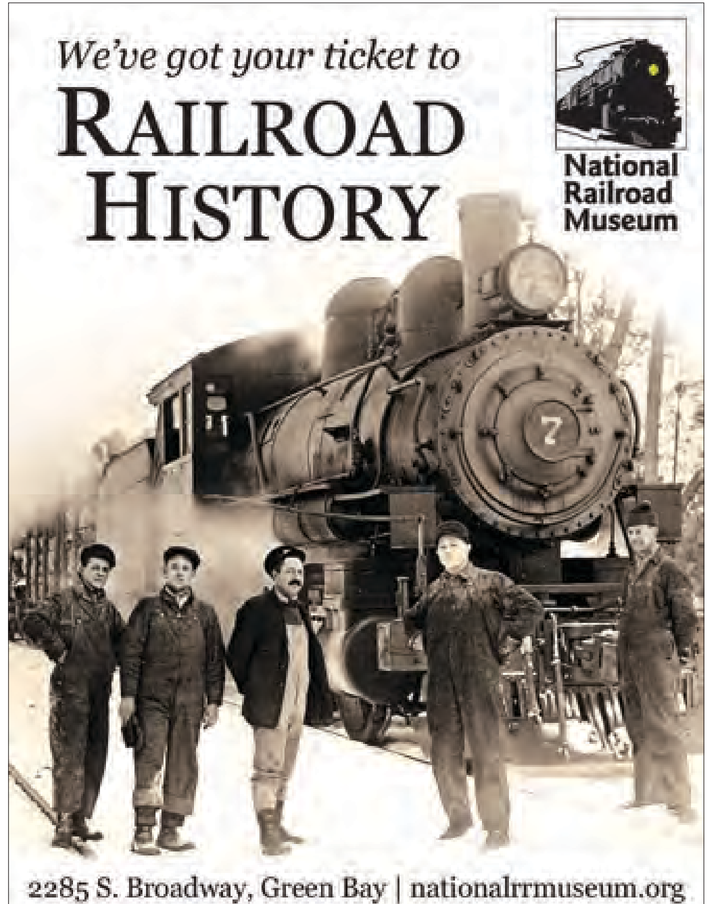
Minnesotan ski historian Greg Fangel conducted extensive research on the Midwestern ski industry and found that one of the chemicals Lund sold from his Hampden Avenue factory was a wood-preserving oil. Fangel hypothesized that Lund made his in with Northland by selling Ellevold this wood oil for use on Northland skis.

When Northland first offered sale of company stock in July 1913, Christian Lund bought shares. By 1916, Lund was Northland’s majority shareholder, and he promptly sent Ole Ellevold packing. Ellevold moved to western North Dakota, where he knew people-people with the surname Strand. But Strand was a common name, so this could be marked as a coincidence: the Strands whom Ellevold ran to when he was betrayed evidently were not related to the former employer he had betrayed. By 1918, C. A. Lund was the president of Northland, a position he would hold for the next forty-nine years.

Lund was publicly reticent. Northland catalogs eventually ran a generic biography on him that was obviously designed to sound exactly as a ski company owner should, emphasizing his youthful skiing in Norway and making the dubious claim that Lund had been a competitive ski jumper. “He has carefully studied the different Norwegian methods of ski manufacture in Norway where the science of ski manufacture has long since reached perfection,” claimed a Northland catalog of the early 1920s. Lund hadn’t been back to Norway since he emigrated. He lied again and took credit for personally founding the Northland company. Like Strand, Lund would groom his sons to run his company, presumably to avoid the maneuverings of outsider upstarts like himself.

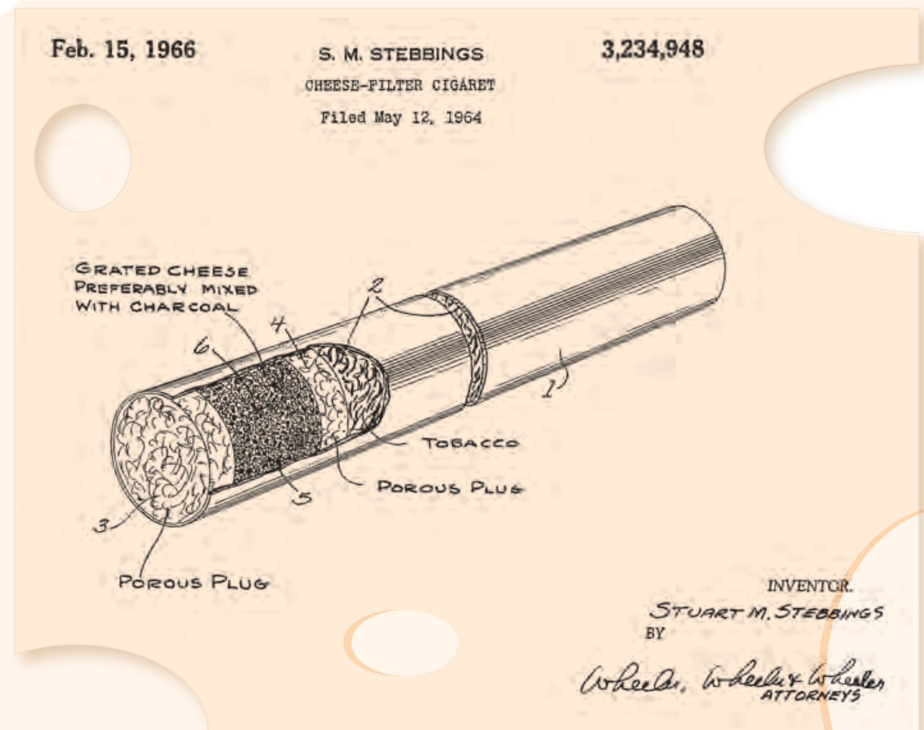
On a Thursday during the spring of 1920, Rinda Titterud Strand underwent what was to be a “slight operation” at Minneapolis’s Asbury Hospital. The surgery proved more intensive than expected, but over the next few days she appeared to recuperate. Her husband stayed with her during this time, until Tuesday evening, when Martin Strand returned to New Richmond. The next morning, Strand received urgent word from the hospital that Rinda had taken a turn for the worse. Strand hurried to the city, but when he arrived Rinda had died. She was fifty years old.

The Strands had already lost their three eldest sons. Now Strand was a widower with his two surviving young school-age sons, Paul and Martin Jr. Rinda’s death headlined Saturday’s *New Richmond News and Republican Voice*. In the list of out-of-town relatives present for the funeral were two couples, Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Ellevold and Hjalmer Ellevold with his “Misses.” Martin Strand still had a long run ahead of him, but when his time would come, one of his pallbearers was Magnus Ellevold. Despite the business wrangling between Martin Strand and Ole Ellevold, they evidently were indeed related, through marriage or blood, and the families stayed in contact until the end.



Stuart Stebbings: The Cheese Whiz Who Reinvented Cigarettes

by Mat Hoffman



Mat Hoffman

Above: A model of the cheese cigarette with details of the ingredients and segments.
Opposite: Stuart Stebbings, the inventor of the cheese-filtered cigarette and a vintage advertisement promoting Gift Candy Cheesesweet.

Each year inventors flood the United States Patent and Trademark Office with over half a million applications.[1] There are those who believe their invention might change the world, while others attempt to ease the troubles of day-to-day living. Among the many intriguing and impactful creations awarded a patent, there are numerous odd ideas that hardly gain traction beyond their blueprints. Were these ideas ahead of their time or simply impractical? Either way, these patents now serve as emblematic of an earlier era. These unusual achievements of yesterday offer us a peek into the technological past.

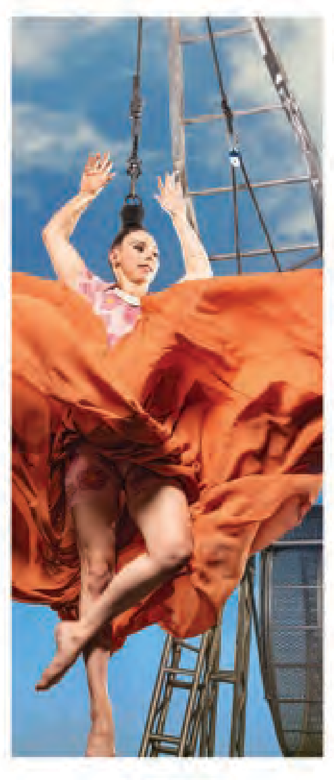
Curiously, one of these quirky eureka moments occurred in De Pere, Wisconsin. In the late-1950s, Stuart Stebbings, a lumberman by trade but an inventor at heart, was serving as campaign manager for U.S Senator Alexander Wiley.[2] Wiley, a long-time champion of Wisconsin cheesemakers, tasked Stebbings with engineering a way to increase demand for dairy products.[3] Stebbings was the ideal individual for this undertaking. He had previously gained notoriety for his CheeSweet Candy, a chocolate and cheese mix, that with forty percent less sugar than typical candy was safer for diabetics.[4] Not only was CheeSweet low in sugar, but it added protein to the treat. The candies came in various flavors: cheese caramel, cheese pecan, cheese cransweets, cheese opera creams, and, you guessed it, cheese chocolate bars.[5] On Valentine's Day, heart-shaped boxes were presented to the White House. First Ladies Mamie Eisenhower and Lady Bird Johnson, as well as future First Lady Pat Nixon, all received the confection.[6] John Steinbeck even mentioned "swiss cheese candy" in his 1962 travelogue, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*.[7]

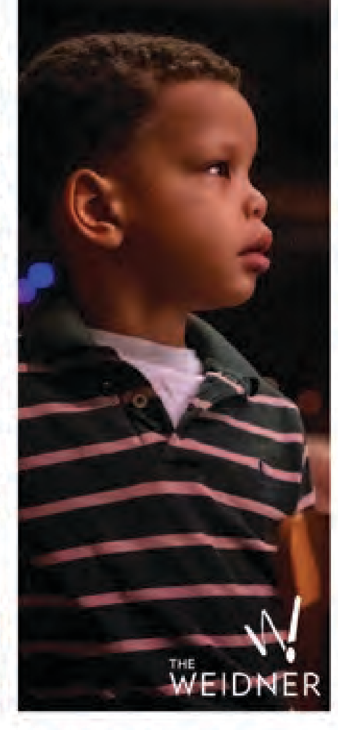
But for this experiment, Stuart Stebbings' head was filled with even cheesier notions. In 1958, he filed his patent for the cheese-filter cigarette. Stebbings claimed this new filter would remove ninety-five percent of the tar in cigarette smoke. The filter was a blend of grated cheese (either parmesan, romano, or swiss) paired with charcoal.[8] The charcoal was present to absorb the cheese oils and prevented the cheese from spoiling. As a result, the presence of the cheese was entirely undetectable by the cigarette smoker. On Capitol Hill, Senator Wiley introduced a bill requiring all cigarettes to be labeled, listing their tar and nicotine content. The label would have shown the ineffectiveness of the filters being used and presumably steered Big Tobacco to embrace the cheese-filter.[9]

Senator Wiley's bill failed and the unconventional filter fizzled. These days, the infamous cheese-filter cigarette is remembered only in isolated corners of the internet, finding itself ranked among other bizarre inventions.[10] For this author, though, Stebbings is the one we should remember. He was an idea-man who was always trying to build a better mousetrap, with ideas so crazy that they just might have worked. And who knows, the cigarette filter could have been the biggest invention to happen to cheese since the wheel.

Notes

1. "U.S. Patent Activity Calendar Years 1790 to the Present," *United States Patent and Trademark Office*, https://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/h_counts.htm.
2. "Stebbings Supporting Democratic Candidates," *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, September 1, 1960.
3. A. Wenzel. "People's Forum," *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, September 30, 1962; Willard Edwards. "Senator Who 'Hiya-ed' Queen Is Silenced," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1962; "You Smoking Roquefort," *The Austin American* (Austin, Texas), October 26, 1958.
4. Advertisement, *The Sheboygan Press*, December 13, 1957; "Latest in Sweet Shops – Candy Made of Cheese," *Kenosha News*, December 28, 1956.
5. "Curio," *Wisconsin Magazine of History 100*, no. 1 (Autumn 2017): 56; "Latest in Sweet Shops – Candy Made of Cheese," *Kenosha News*.
6. "A Valentine Gift for Mamie," *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, June 19, 1958; "Candy from Wisconsin," *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, February 28, 1968.
7. John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York: Viking, 1962), 114.
8. Stebbings, S. M. 1966. Cheese-Filter Cigarette. US Patent 3,234,948, filed May 12, 1964, and issued February 15, 1966. The first paragraph says it is a continuation-in-part of abandoned application Serial No. 734,659 filed June 23, 1958; "A cheese filter tip cigarette," *De Pere Journal-Democrat* (De Pere, Wisconsin), October 30, 1958.
9. Senator Wiley, speaking on S. 3366, 87th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record 108* (June 1, 1962): S 9584; "Report De Pere Man Has Developed Filter," *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, June 2, 1962.
10. "Cheese Filtered Cigarette," *Totally Absurd Inventions*, http://totallyabsurd.com/cheesefiltercigarette.htm.





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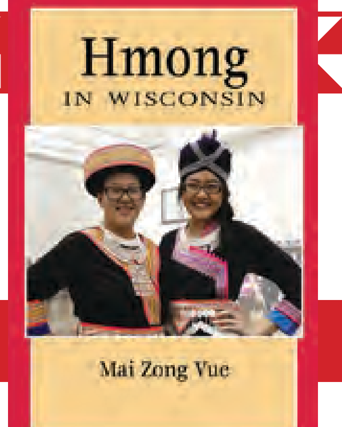
Hmong in Wisconsin by Mai Zong Vue

Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2020. 112 pages, $12.95, paperback.



Wisconsin is home to the third-largest Hmong population in the United States, as Mai Zong Vue reminds her readers in *Hmong in Wisconsin*. The Hmong communities throughout Wisconsin are comprised of multiple generations, including the first and "1.5" generations (the latter refers to those who were born in Southeast Asia and came to the United States as children), as well as later generations born in the United States. The Hmong refugee population also consists of people that came at different times. The first group arrived in the mid-1970s, and others resettled in later years from the 1980s to the 2000s.

The Hmong were resettled as refugees in Wisconsin and across the United States as a consequence of their supporting American efforts in the Vietnam War and the United States' covert operations in Laos. Simultaneously, the Hmong defended their homeland against communist encroachment. Vue begins her narrative by distinguishing the Hmong as political refugees rather than immigrants who left their home country for economic opportunities. After Pathet Lao, a communist political movement, gained control of Laos in 1975, the Laotian government began the process of imprisoning and eliminating the Hmong who served in alliance with the United States. Vue explains, "because of U.S. involvement in recruiting and leading the Hmong fighters against the Communists in Laos and the aid of the Hmong people in the U.S. Vietnam War effort, the U.S. ended up accepting the vast majority of [Hmong] refugees" (p. 6). Vue discusses the impact of the war on the livelihoods of the Hmong throughout the book. Further, she situates the war experience within the larger history of Hmong displacement, chronicling their migration from China into Southeast Asia and eventual resettlement as refugees.

Using her family experience as an example, Vue argues that upon resettlement in Wisconsin, Hmong refugee families experienced a "honeymoon stage" followed by rising racial tensions, exclusion, and cultural accommodation. "During our honeymoon stage, most of us were welcomed, sheltered, and protected in our sponsors' homes," she recalls. "The arrival to Wisconsin was a breath of fresh air for many of us despite our fear, homesickness, cultural and language barriers, and varied resettlement experiences" (p. 16). Wisconsin became a desirable state for refugee resettlement because of its educational and economic opportunities, as well as the willingness of faith-based organizations to sponsor and assist Hmong refugees in their transition.

Vue discusses the challenges and successes experienced by the Hmong in Wisconsin through personal narratives and interviews. She offers new perspectives on changes in gender roles; community shifts in leadership and activism; and poverty and economic mobility. She situates changes in gender roles within the context of war trauma, the mental health of Hmong men, and changes in family formation. Life in Wisconsin provided Hmong women with new access to educational and economic opportunities. Despite some criticisms and skepticism, women began to obtain college degrees and assume leadership roles, increasing men's income dependency on them. As gender roles changed, Vue argues, Hmong activism grew, particularly within the 1.5 generation. They pushed for legislative and institutional changes locally and nationally. They mobilized to call for social justice and became civically engaged through voting and running for public offices. However, while some were making economic and political strides, there were others who worked menial or entry-level jobs.

Undeterred by poverty and discrimination, Hmong-owned businesses and community-based organizations emerged to meet the social, cultural, and economic needs of Hmong communities. Vue highlights four Hmong business owners in Wisconsin. Their stories are unique, yet their common experiences are rooted in perseverance and the hardship of being political refugees. She argues that Hmong entrepreneurship and contributions to Wisconsin's state and local economies are not unique in Hmong history. Looking to earlier eras, she notes that the Hmong traded with French colonists in the 1890s, participated in the Laotian economy in the 1960s during the American war period, and undertook commercial ventures in refugee camps in Thailand.

Hmong in Wisconsin is both a personal project for Vue and a book that enriches and deepens our understanding of the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia. Vue reminds us that American involvement in Southeast Asia resulted in an international humanitarian crisis that displaced hundreds of thousands of refugees to the United States. At the same time, Vue expresses hope in future American-born generations to learn about and maintain their ethnic heritage, to continue the work that has been accomplished by first- and 1.5-generation Hmong Americans, and to advocate and support each other collectively.

MaiGer Moua
MA in Asian/Hmong American and U.S. History
University of Wisconsin-Madison

REVIEWS

Proxmire
Bulldog of the Senate by Jonathan Kasparek

Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2019. 416 pages, $28.95, hardcover.

In his thorough study, *Proxmire: Bulldog of the Senate*, historian Jonathan Kasparek painstakingly charts the controversial career of Wisconsin's longest-serving United States senator. Focusing primarily on his legislative activities rather than the broader national context within which William Proxmire's political work took place, Kasparek's monograph clearly demonstrates Proxmire's commitment to represent the interests of his diverse electorate during his more than thirty years in the Senate (1957 to 1989). Ultimately, Kasparek convinces his readers that Proxmire was much less concerned with establishing popularity among his colleagues in Washington DC than encouraging his version of fair-minded ethics in Congress.

Despite his privileged childhood and personal connections to the Rockefeller family, Kasparek describes Proxmire as an old-school retail politician, shaking hands at factory gates and coffee shops, while visiting county fairs and local parades on a regular basis. A lifelong athlete, Proxmire was obsessed with personal fitness and his physical appearance. His exercise regimen was legendary as was his somewhat exotic diet, and he famously engaged in pushup contests with his Wisconsin colleague Senator Gaylord Nelson. (Proxmire was piqued that Nelson could do one-armed pushups). Above all, he was stubborn, demanding that fellow legislators take seriously the voices of Midwesterners. Indeed, Proxmire was a bulldog, and Kasparek provides a clear chronology of the senator's dedication to his legislative career.

Although he may not have been a noble warrior of a struggling American working-class, Proxmire's hardworking professionalism and vitriolic resistance to corruption in U.S. politics reveals how he held a societal (perhaps even a moral) compass. As Kasparek suggests, despite several upsets early on during his tenure in the Senate, Proxmire espoused the same core positions throughout his thirty years on the national political stage, and he became an effective legislator by the end of his long stint in political office. He may not have been glamorous or eloquent, but he steadfastly represented what he understood to be the interests of Wisconsinites, especially for his rural constituents. Specifically, Kasparek's discussion of Proxmire's intense focus on agricultural policy in general, and the need for federal subsidization of dairy in particular, demonstrates to readers how truly devoted the senator was to ensuring the livelihoods of "ordinary" Americans. Unlike any other politician since perhaps the Progressive Era, Proxmire's legislative decisions reflected the interests of Wisconsin residents. Indeed, his vacillation between social liberalism and economic conservatism suggests that he strove to embody the complex political realities of the state he represented. Kasparek fails to fully emphasize the implications that Proxmire's voting record had for matters of race and gender in Wisconsin. Further research into the specifics of the senator's platform might have revealed how his political decisions reflected the inequities embedded in both the social landscape and cultural atmosphere of the region that he represented.

Kasparek's focus is overwhelmingly on Proxmire's committee-level work in the Senate. The politician was a "budget hawk" who struggled to control spending. This fiscal conservatism provides a through-line for his voting record from the second Eisenhower administration to his retirement. Proxmire abruptly decided not to seek re-election in 1988, after he had vociferously supported the Anti-Genocide Act under President Ronald Reagan. Famously, he publicized his antipathy to excessive federal spending through his Golden Fleece Awards, which he handed out for what he viewed as the most egregious misuse of government funds. In doing so, he gained a reputation as an arbiter of justice for taxpayers who struggled to trust politicians.

In the end, *Proxmire* is emphatically not a "life and times" biography. Rather, it is more chronicle than narrative, and the bulk of the text takes us from one committee and one budget to the next. The lack of context is disappointing, even surprising at times. For example, Kasparek provides few sentences on the changes that occurred among administrations. Most notably, he barely mentions the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson's subsequent accession to the presidency. Overall, however, Kasparek has impressively researched the political career of the longest-serving U.S. senator from Wisconsin, and he undoubtedly persuades his readers that Proxmire was an ardent fiscal conservative who devoted his time to ensuring that federal investments went to his constituents. He cared about the American people—not only those from mid-sized industrial cities, but also those who resided in communities that dotted the countryside of the rural Midwest. Proxmire's career sheds light on the diversity of Wisconsin residents and offers insight on the challenges and possibilities of legislative success for U.S. politicians.

Jillian Marie Jacklin, PhD
Lecturer, Democracy and Justice Studies and History
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

Thomas C. M. Truesdell, PhD
Visiting Professor of English and Director,
Collaborative Learning Center
Ripon College (Retired)

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In the photo, UW-Green Bay interns and their internship supervisors, help prepare a new exhibit for the National Railroad Museum.

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