

ARTIFACTS

Volume 2002.2

Late Summer

From the Director...we are enjoying our last days of fall and preparations are underway for the changeover that occurs as the student work staff returns to college. Volunteers are answering the call to man the remaining hours of operation, keeping the **museum open until Tuesday, October 22, 2002.** This time period coincides with the Cranberry Highway and hopefully we will see some increased traffic during a normally slower time of our year.

The summer has been quiet with the elimination of outdoor programming. The staff did work on several collaborative initiatives with other local non-profits, of significant note is the indexing project that has been a priority of the *Heart of Wisconsin Genealogical Society*. Staff members were involved in data entry work to assist in creating a searchable database of information for the Wood County Clerk. With more than 20 volumes of documents to record, our team completed 3 entire volumes working at the Courthouse and the Museum. This venture provides a collaboration of talent to address accessibility and preservation of original documents utilized by genealogists.

Within our building, we had an array of gardening that was provided in part by the Wood County Master Gardeners. I'd especially like to thank them for their perseverance in making our grounds look so lovely. Museum staff members were responsible for pressure washing the outside of the building and painting the white trim above the porte cochere. With the anticipated arrival of the porch railing this fall we will return some elegance to the front of the building.



Beginning Sunday, September 1, 2002, the Museum will return to a Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday schedule of operation.

After a few years of tracking our visitor habits, the cycles of highest attendance tend to continue on these three days each week. The staff hours will also be reduced during the traditional winter shutdown period as only a few key projects are outlined for completion. These accommodations should not impact telephone calls or e-mail requests for information.

Consider a fall walkabout in the museum neighborhood as Betty Zimmerman leads a history adventure to coincide with the downtown events scheduled for October 13. A stop at the museum could be your final destination. Treats await the curious!



Cranberry Highway® 2002 Taste Tour

September 23 - October 25, 2002



www.cranberryhighway.com

New this Fall: Tasty treats join the line up for the Cranberry Highway. This year several vendors will offer special menu items that feature the cranberry. Check the Visitors and Convention Bureau for more details, or log on to their website listed at left.

As a suggested stop on the highway, South Wood County museum will offer samples of flavored sweetened dried cranberries. Available at local grocery stores for purchase, we thought it would be fun to have a little sampling in celebration of the fall harvest. Come in a for a visit and see if you have a favorite flavor!

ARTIFACTS

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MR. AND MRS. MEAD ENTERTAIN THE YOUNG PEOPLE AT DANCING

(Contributed)

Friday evening, at their "Island Home," Mr. and Mrs. George W. Mead entertained at dancing about eighty-five young people in honor of the university students at home for the holidays. The gymnasium, on the first floor, was the center of festivity. Here the orchestra, screened behind a row of low Christmas trees, rendered the enticing music that summoned to the dance. Elsewhere, as in the ball-room, the decorations were suggestive of the festive season; a large superbly adorned Christmas tree in the living room, brilliantly illuminated by small electric bulbs of varied colors; a very small but no less resplendent tree ornamenting the dining room table; and archways embellished with rich-red Yule-tide bells and sprigs of green.

Toward the latter part of the evening the guests assembled in the sun parlor, where tempting delicacies were relished by the delighted throng. Dancing was resumed, and the strains of sweet music mingling with the murmur of voices, lent an air of gaiety to the scene.

The guests, departing after an evening replete with joyousness, were deeply appreciative of the cordiality and hospitality for which the host and hostess are noted. This function will long be remembered by the college and residential young people as one of the most delightful events in any vacation season.



TWO MODERN BATH HOUSES

A. F. Billmeyer, the architect and builder, has been awarded the contract of building two bath houses—one for the ladies and one for the gentlemen—each to be 12x92½ feet, one story high. They are to be modern in construction and equipment with cement floors, shower baths, toilet, etc. Each building will contain forty-eight lockers. The buildings will be placed in V shape towards the swimming pool. Cement sidewalks will lead from the street to both houses. The grounds have been leveled and graded. They have also been seeded and "Keep Off the Grass" signs put up. The committee are pushing things and hope to have them in readiness soon.



Mr. Geo. F. Witter, Jr. has completed his course of studies at the Madison State University and returned home. He has accepted the position of principal of the schools at Merrill and will depart for that city on Monday next. We congratulate Mr. Witter as well as the good people of Merrill on their choice for the position, and predict that Mr. Witter will be found the right man in the right place.

Where in the World is Charlotte Witter?

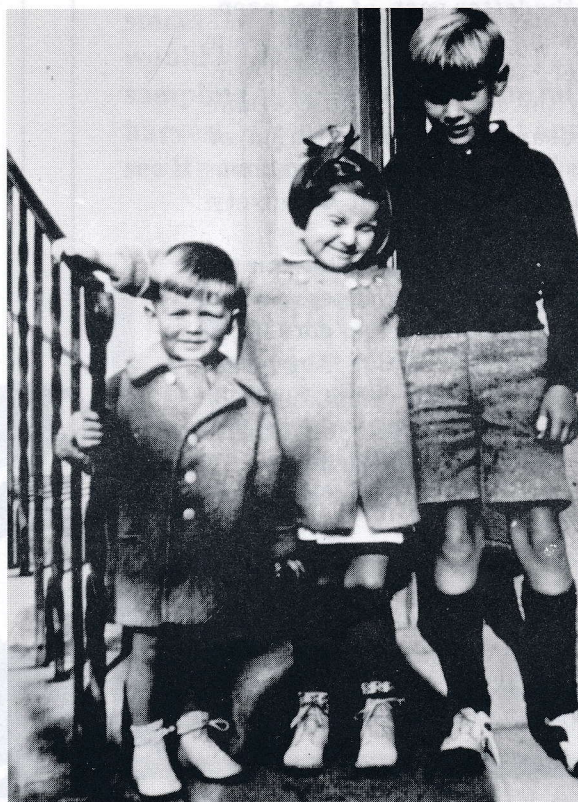
We are presently updating our family genealogy of Isaac and Charlotte Witter, the original residents of the building that houses the Museum. Working with a living relative we have been able to capture information on two additional generations. However, the dilemma is in trying to find pictures of family members, specifically Charlotte.

If anyone has a photo that depicts Charlotte, we would greatly appreciate a copy to complete this area of research. Contact the office at 423-1580 or e-mail: museum@wctc.net.



Left: Isaac Phelps Witter (born 5-11-1873)
married Charlotte Livingston Gibson

Below: Grandchildren from left Phelps Dean,
Priscilla and Jere Delos III representing
the 11th generation of Witter descendants.

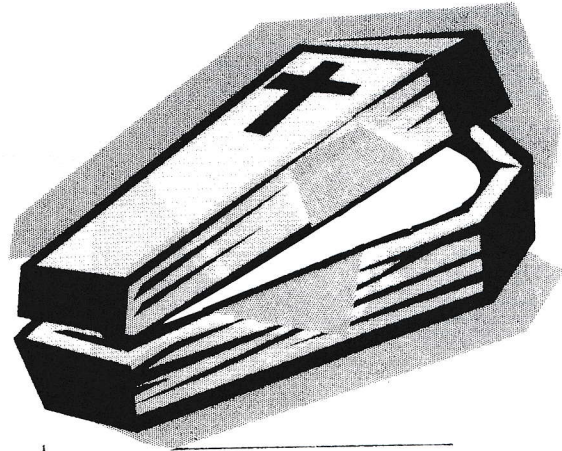
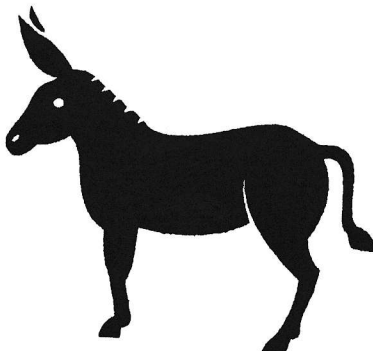


A Prospecting Donkey.

This morning Wells, Fargo & Co., received per Northern Pacific from Wardner, Idaho, a crate containing a small, white donkey consigned to Mrs. J. B. Ward, of Forest Grove. To the side of the plate was attached the placard:

"This donkey, owed by N. S. Kellogg, of Wardner, Idaho, shares with his master the distinction of the discovery of the richest mineral lode of the west—the 'Bunker Hill,' on Milo Gulch, near Wardner. After years of toil in prospecting 'John Kellogg' (as the donkey is named) will at his master's expense, retire on his laurels to the classic shades of Forest Grove and enjoy the fruits of his discovery."

A very curious anecdote is related in connection with the animal that will be so well cared for during the rest of his life, and if true the animal is entitled to recline on velvet cushions till it passes to the donkey heaven. The story goes that Mr. Kellogg had employed the aid of that animal some years in his prospecting tours. The day the mine was discovered Mr. Kellogg was sitting on a pile of boulders, and the jack was near him pawing the earth, when it kicked a piece of quartz into its owner's face. Mr. Kellogg intuitively picked it up and found it rich with gold. He located the ground and soon began prospecting it. The result of that work is known to all in the Northwest interested in mining—the ground turned out to be the richest yet found in Idaho, and has placed Mr. Kellogg beyond all earthly want, so far as wealth is concerned. No wonder, then, that he takes great interest in the welfare of that donkey.



Alive in its Coffin.

A Louisville, Ky., dispatch of January 22 to the Cincinnati Enquirer says: Mr. and Mrs. William Sperin-fogle, living on Fetter Avenue, were taking their 2-year old infant to the St. Louis cemetery for interment this morning, when they were startled by peculiar noises issuing from the coffin. At first the parents were dumbfounded, but the father, placing his ear against the coffin-lid, heard the baby cries of what he thought to be his dead child. He tried to force open the lid but in vain. Placing the coffin on his shoulders he hurried to a neighboring grocery, and with a hatchet burst the lid. The child, with outstretched arms and with the faintest cries, held its tiny hands out to him. The baby was taken back home, and, though very

low, is not beyond the hope of recovery.

The strangest feature of the case is that the child was supposed to have died early yesterday morning. A physician pronounced it dead. Since the moment of its supposed demise the body had been closely watched by the grief stricken parents, and no sign of life was evident. It got icy cold and was as stiff as a corpse. There were no signs of breathing and the eyes were set as if in death. Several doctors, who have been attracted to the case by its peculiarity, seem to think that the child was in a trance. The funeral procession was near the cemetery, and if the cries of the infant had not been heard it would have in a few minutes been buried. The attending friends gathered around the now joyous parents and the funeral cortege was turned back.

Among the artifacts accumulated by Estella Farrish was the page at right, taken from the 1898 Howe High School catalog and including T.W. Brazeau, one of the founders of the South Wood County Historical Corp.



Farrish files chronicle SWCHC origins

By Dave Engel, Municipal Historian

August 12, 1952: it happened to be my seventh birthday.

The *Daily Tribune* story that day, fifty years ago, carried the byline "A. 'Sidewalk' Soup." Possibly a *nom d' plume* for Mark Scarborough?

Mr. Soup said that workers were digging out the muck under East Grand Avenue, so the street would have a solid foundation. In the process, some interesting history turned up looking like hollowed logs.

Local historian Mrs. Estella Farrish told Soup that the logs dated back before 1880 when houses along 3rd Street, also known as "Quality Row," had their own private wells "up on the hill." "Well-heeled" citizens, said Soup, imported cypress logs, bored 3-inch holes through the centers and joined them with iron couplings to form pipelines from the wells to the homes.

The old 19-room John Farrish home, which was located across from the post office on Grand Avenue, had such a pipeline running into the basement. The water was

collected in a big barrel and pumped by hand into a storage tank in the attic. This tank in turn fed water to the whole house.

Farrish

The water main story above was found while researching for the monthly "Fifties" series in the *Daily Tribune*, sponsored by this South Wood County Historical Corp. It introduces a figure who, while not a native, is identified with a family integral to River City since the early logging days.

The founding Farrish here was William, who came in 1857 from New Brunswick, Canada, to Wood County. His son, John, became a lumberman who also owned a grocery-and-hardware store in Grand Rapids with his brother, Robert.

John Farrish's 1874 marriage to Ellen McKay of New Brunswick resulted in eight children. After Ellen's 1896 death, John remarried, in 1908, to Estella M. Haley, of Marley, Ill. He was 61; she was 31.

John and Estella had two children: Donald Haley Farrish and Margaret Ada Farrish.

Donald Farrish and his wife, Marion, named their son John. A classmate of mine, John instigated a plan to achieve lasting notoriety that Lincoln's head and was ultimately successful. See *River City Memoirs III* for more on this.

History Stuff

A packet of historical materials from Don and Marion Farrish, 1010 Baker Drive, includes a newspaper photo of Estella Farrish, then age 88, the subject of a Wood County Historical Corp. surprise party.

Also within are copies of letters from Roy Farrish, Asotin, Washington, written in 1954 to his sister, Catherine Farrish. Both were older half-siblings of Don Farrish.

Roy relates a tale that was told about Lon Hathaway, manager of the old Witter House in Grand Rapids.

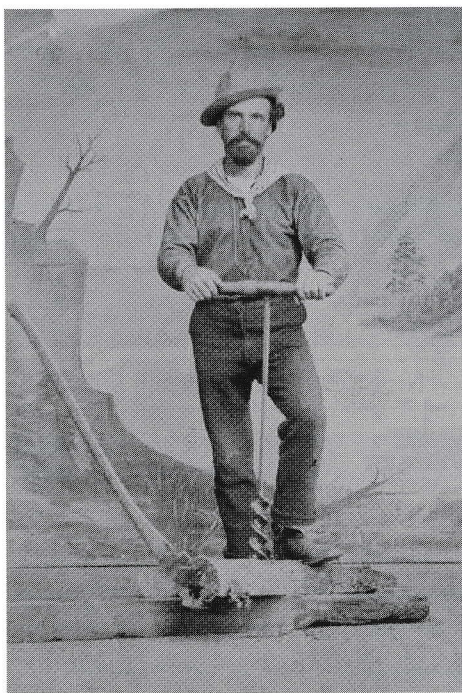
One winter day a salesman left a wake-up call for a train. The nearby Green Bay railroad departed about six a.m.; but morning brought a blizzard and the traveler went back to bed. When the man didn't show up, Lon called through the door and was answered that he had changed his mind. "So Lon got a long cane fish pole and something to stand on, used the pole to poke the man out of bed and informed him that when anyone left a call for that train they were going to take it."

Running Lines

Roy also sent a surveyor's compass he said was a hundred years old.

"I have had it about sixty years and "Bill" Scott must have been older than I am now (77) when I got it, and I guess he was a timber cruiser all his life.

"I remember him saying, 'Always buy the corner forty in any township, then run your lines with this compass and it will run a ring around any pine tree in all four townships.'"



Henry Rablin, an employee of the John Farrish Lumber Co. *Estella Farrish*

Major Daly

Also contained: a 1962 letter to Mrs. Farrish, 1251 Oak Street, from Major Mary E. Daly, Lackland Military Training Center, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

"Please forgive me for having taken so long to answer your letter and to thank Catherine for her wonderful job in copying the article about Grandfather Daly ... I have enclosed a write up and picture about me that might tell you a little of my job here."

"There are only about 600 WAF here as against

17 or 18,000 male trainees. Of course the air force is much more selective and the girls must meet a great deal higher standards than the men."

The enclosed article said the native of Wisconsin Rapids was the new commanding officer of the WAF squadron after 15 years of active duty. She had entered service in 1942 during the second World War.

The same Mary Ellen "Mel" Daly was in Rapids a couple years ago with her niece, Tyne Daly, television actress. Mary Ellen's brother and the father of Tyne, was actor James Daly. An enclosed clipping said that one of the best things that ever happened to him was his selection six years previous as television spokesman for a cigarette company Mel identified as Camel.

James, who was at that time in the title role of "Give Us Barabbas," an NBC re-run of a Biblical drama, had starred in two Broadway hit shows in recent seasons, was "currently" in a movie and working on a show for Broadway the following year. "It takes care of things so that I can afford to work in the theater and to take chances."

See *The Fat Memoirs* for more about Mel and James Daly.

The Rotarians were impressed and their president appointed a committee to meet with other groups to investigate whether such a group could be organized.

T.W. Brazeau and W.J. Taylor, Rapids; Warren Beadle, Biron; and Clarence Jasperson, Port Edwards; represented the Tri-City Area. They met in Brazeau's office with Dr. Glenn Bennett and Frank Fey from the Kiwanis;



"Nick Kaudy and children." *Estella Farrish*

Our Historical Society

Mrs. Farrish's handwritten account, "Our Historical Society," noted that Wisconsin long had a state historical society and that several southern counties got an early start. "Northern Wood County had a Historical Society for several years before So. Wood County realized that she was lagging behind."

If the historical society had been started even ten years previous, she wrote, much material would have been preserved that was lost. "But we are thankful for the families who have saved some of their old possessions and are ready to contribute to the collections that have been started by our local group."

SAWYER

On March 21, 1955, according to Mrs. Farrish, a speaker addressed the local Rotary club and told of the advantages to a community that came through having a local history society that preserved the records and artifacts that belong to each generation.

Clarence Reiland from the Lions; and Mrs. Farrish, manager of the Mead-Witter business blocks, who represented the women of the community.

"Just why I was chosen I do not know. Mr. Taylor was asked to write to other cities and ask them to tell their experiences and Mr. Brazeau was to write in for a model constitution."

A field worker from the state society at Madison was invited to advise the locals at a meeting in July of that year. One of the suggestions was to incorporate through the state department at Madison.

"The papers for our signatures did not come back until the day before Xmas. Imagine our scramble in getting the necessary people together to sign and getting the papers back into the mail before Jan. 1," wrote Mrs. Farrish.

The next order of business was to set up a program that would appeal to the public - made difficult, said Estella, with part of the board taking winter vacations and others on trips around the world.

It was decided to canvass the history of the various communities that made up South Wood County. "We have not touched on the towns of

Remington, Rudolph, Sigel, Sherry, Pittsville, Babcock, etc. All of these are very interesting."

Tape recordings were begun in 1957 in the town of Saratoga where county land deeds were first recorded. Mrs. Farrish called for each member to be "a committee of one" whose responsibility was to make a tape recording or write a history to be placed on file in what was now called the South Wood County Historical Corp.

"This is your job. Please do not wait for some one to do it for you. Our workers are too few in number to cover all this work. *It is later than you think* and each should do his part and do not complain if it does not get done by some one other than yourself."

The society also began work on state-authorized historical markers. "The text for our Cranberry Marker was submitted. They neither added nor subtracted one word which I thought was a fine compliment to Dr. Peltier, the author." Two more prospective markers had been submitted: the sites of the first sawmill and the first pulp mill on the Wisconsin.

"If we should want to place a marker where the first or second ferry was run or some other point of local interest we would have to devise some design not in use by the state," she wrote.

Artifacts

Mrs. Farrish listed some of the collections that were catalogued and stored in the vault of the Court House or in Dr. Leland Pomainville's basement:

Agricultural and lumbering tools; a sample of the first pulp from the Nekoosa mill; family Bibles; photo albums; postcards; land records; maps; account books; Centralia records; Howe school board minutes; scrapbooks; telephone books; city directories; catalogs; newspapers; Civil War relics; quilts; a barber chair; clothing; furniture; pitchers; kitchen utensils; lodge and organization histories; school books.

"What we need most is a place to display our goods. A good museum has 40% of its floor space for displaying exhibits, another 40% of the floor space to be used for storage and where students may study and 20% for office and a work room where displays and dioramas are made up."

Said Estella Farrish: We are what we are, because we stand on the shoulders of those who have preceded us. "May we so live that those who follow us may stand on our shoulders."

Below: Memorial Day at "old" cemetery back of Frank Wood Residence." *Estella Farrish*



Annual Meeting
of the
South Wood County Historical
Corporation

will be held on
Monday, September 23 at 4:00 p.m.

Agenda to include:

- *financial presentation by Wood Trust Asset
Management
- *review of 2002 The Museum season
- *election of new board members

R. FARRISH & BRO.,

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Carpenters' Tools,

FARMING IMPLEMENTS

Shelf Hardware,

Atkins' Celebrated

Silver Steel Diamond Cross-cut Saw

Ira Snyder's Celebrated Axes,

Paints, Oils,

Glass, Putty,

Sash, Doors, Blinds,

Groceries, Provisions

Flour, Feed,

Pork and Beef

Highest Cash Price paid for

Hides, Furs, and all kinds

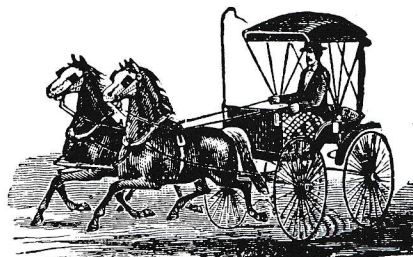
of Farm Produce.

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GRAND RAPIDS, - - WIS.

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