



McFarland Historical Society

5814 MAIN STREET MCFARLAND, WISCONSIN 53558 PH: 608-838-3992
Issue NO. 35 Feb 28, 2007

Annual meeting at the E.D. Locke Public Library

**Featured Speaker: Louis E. Armentano: "Wisconsin-Still America's Dairyland"
Sunday, March 18, 1-4 P.M.**

Annual Meeting at the Library

Our program starts at 1 P.M. with a short annual meeting and our speaker, Louis Armentano with a bit of history of the development of the dairy industry, both industry wide statistics and snippets of individual experiences, and a glimpse of what the current industry means in proportion to the economy of Wisconsin.

A question and answer period follows. Refreshments include cookies and milk, coffee, tea and a deli platter.

We had a historic year with the sesquicentennial last year. The town was decorated with banners inside and out. We had pictures from the past paired with pictures from the present, and if we looked good we could learn where some pretty important things happened many years ago to form our town. On July 2nd, we all had train rides and a taste of McFarland past and present and celebrated with proclamations from the Governor and the county as descendants of William McFarland rolled into town.

With the dedication of the E.D. Locke Library on Main Street, we also opened the Adelaide Adams Local History room in the new library. Adelaide Adams was born in McFarland, the daughter of John M. Anderson, a lumber merchant, and Caroline Orphia Thompson Anderson. She went to the University of Wisconsin and taught school in California, Illinois and Markesan, Wisconsin. She was the Markesan school librarian and after retirement was a member of the Markesan Historical Society among many other things. Upon her death she directed that a portion be given to McFarland Historical Society, whereupon the society board decided that a local history room be provided in the library in her name.

Life Membership Plaque

by David Houghton

A new plaque has been created by the McFarland Historical Society to honor its many members who have committed to a "Life Membership" with the society. The new plaque replaces the two that have been on display in the museum for many years.

The new plaque improves the historical record by show-

ing first and last names for all life members. This replaced the "Mr. and Mrs." format that had been used before for couples. The existing plaques listed 96 names. Those names were all transferred to a single, larger plaque, and 15 new individuals/couples were added based on examination of the records. The names are listed roughly in the order of becoming "Life Members".

The plaque currently hangs in the Historical Society "Adelaide A. Adams" Room in McFarland's E. David Locke Library. It will be transferred to the Historical Society Museum during the summer season. Look for it on your next visit to the library or the museum.

Be a "Friend of the McFarland Museum"

This year we are looking to see where we can engage the citizenry of McFarland in preserving the past. The "Friends of the McFarland Museum" will provide a source of willing volunteers who we can call on to help with museum projects and activities.

"Many hands make for light work" becomes meaningful when one contributes to a community resource such as our museum. As a "Friend of the McFarland Museum" we are inviting you to become involved not only in preserving our museum but in making it even better.

Would you be willing to spend an hour or two with us occasionally to accomplish a project? Whatever you can do to help us will be time well spent. And it may even be fun! Perhaps like us, you will enjoy working together with others on one of McFarland's most valuable assets.

Please accept our invitation to be a friend of the museum by filling out the enclosed McFarland Historical Society membership application form and letting us know what you would be willing to help with at the museum.

Thank you.

Dale Marsden, President

Obituaries

Carol L. Abernathy - age 71

Carol graduated from Missouri Baptist Nursing School in 1955. She worked at Jefferson Memorial Hospital in Festus, obstetrics and nursing administration for 25 years. Carol then spent three years at a hospital in Saudi Arabia. For 20 years she worked at Orange Coast Memorial Hospital in Fountain Valley, Calif. Carol was the McFarland Historical Society treasurer at the time of her death. She very seldom missed our monthly meetings despite her health problems.

Harold O. Muenkel - age 90

Harold was born in a log cabin in Caledonia, Minn., on Dec. 28, 1915. He attended Madison East High school and graduated from Madison Business College. After running a filling station in Madison, he joined the Madison Fire Dept. in 1940; later becoming acting chief. During World War II, Harold served in the 21st Chemical Co. of the U.S. Army in North Africa and Western Europe. After retiring in 1974, Harold and Winnie moved to McFarland. Harold was active in the McFarland Historical Society, serving terms as president and helping prepare museum exhibits. He was on the board of the McFarland Senior Citizens and named McFarland Citizen of the Year in 1997.

Walter Landerud - Age 89

Walter born on Dec. 7, 1917 and Walter graduated from McFarland High School in 1935. He worked on the family farm and for Sun Electric. He founded the 'Southern Wisconsin Old Time Fiddlers' and had more than 75 years

of involvement in many different organizations in his hometown including the historical society, public schools and founding the Norwegian Spelemannslag.

Farming Days of the Past

In 1849 the 32 farms in the Town of Dunn, including the future McFarland, produced lots of wheat with smaller amounts of oats, corn and barley. The village began with the coming of the railroad during the "wheat boom of 1855" and the construction of the depot connected the Norwegian farmers to the outside world. Wheat farming gave way to dairying, the raising of livestock and the production of tobacco. Farming became a commercial venture with the connection to big city markets.

The history of local farming will be the main theme at the historical museum this year. You can help us by sharing related stories, artifacts and interesting photos of any kind of farming activities.

Please call Wes at 838-8178 if you can help to make the record of farming around McFarland more complete.

McFarland Historical Society
5814 Main Street
P.O.Box 94
McFarland, Wis 53558

Place
Stamp
here

Museum Hosts Third Graders

by Crystal Lokken

The McFarland Historical Museum played host to 165 students last week. As a part of their study of the village of McFarland, eight classes of third graders at Waubesa School came to the museum last Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, to get an idea of what the village of McFarland was like many years ago. Board members Earl Anderson, David Houghton, Wes Licht, Crystal Lokken and Gini Nichols told the story of McFarland's past by pointing out to the students some of the literally hundreds of articles on display.

As each class arrived Wes Licht gave them a brief introduction to McFarland's history, with emphasis on William McFarland, who built the railroad depot, established the village on 80 acres of land, and of course, named the town after himself. The children were told about the importance of the railroad. They were shown books listing the kinds of things that came to McFarland by train, and what was sent out of the village, as well as the old books which listed by name the passengers who took the train day by day. As a part of his introduction, Mr. Licht impressed on them the fact that museum artifacts are considered truly priceless because they are impossible to replace.

Acting as docents in the main part of the museum, Earl Anderson, David Houghton, Gini Nichols and Crystal Lokken introduced the students to the many exhibits there, such as the general store, lake activities, kitchens from different eras, artifacts of the Norwegian immigrants who settled here, displays of handmade wood articles and the tools used to make them. They saw the blacksmith shop, Pete Nelson's shoe-making shop, a panorama of McFarland's Main Street stores at the turn of the century, Dr. MacLachlan's medical instruments, toys of another time and much, much more!

Out in the Skare log cabin on the museum grounds, Wes Licht took them back in their imagination to the late 1800s when Albert Skare lived as a child with his parents and his siblings in the cabin originally located on the Hidden Farm east of McFarland. (Skare was a local Norwegian farmer who saved many objects used by the early settlers. His gift of them forms the basis of the museum's collection.)

Licht showed the students what life in a log cabin was like back then. Children were bathed in a tub using handmade soap made from lye and pig fat. The ironing board was simply a board resting over two chairs, and the



iron was heated on the cast iron cook stove! The mattress on the bed was stuffed with straw and rested on rope springs. Most of the Skare children, except the babies in the cradles downstairs, slept upstairs in the loft. The third graders were accordingly instructed to go quietly up the stairs to take a look, so as not to awaken them!

There were lots of questions, much curiosity and not surprisingly, an urge to touch the priceless objects! But when reminded of the word "priceless" hands went into pockets! It was rewarding to see the enthusiasm, and the interest and understanding the young students displayed, and to respond to their many questions.

Third grade teachers at Waubesa School are: Ms Feix, Ms Case, Ms Waddell, Ms Dahl, Mr. Webber, Mr. Scharf, Mr. Buhalog and Mr. Krueger.

Obituaries:

Harold O. Muenkel-90yrs.

Harold was a past McFarland Historical Society president and the museum curator for many years.

Harold Otto Muenkel, age 90, died on Sunday, July 30, 2006, at the Don and Marilyn Anderson HospiceCare Center. Harold was born in a log cabin in Caledonia, Minn., on Dec. 28, 1915, son of Fred and Lillie (Kohlmeyer) Muenkel. The family moved to Madison and he graduated from both East High School and Madison Business College, where he met his wife, Winifred Berndt. After running a filling station in Madison for several years, he joined the Madison Fire Dept. in 1940; rising through the ranks to become acting chief. His family has memories of many evening rides to locate new streets and hydrants. During World War II, Harold served in the 21st Chemical Co. of the U.S. Army in North Africa and Western Europe, where he helped set protective smokescreens and dispose of unexploded bombs and captured ammunition dumps. Winnie wrote to him during these years, and they married on Oct. 26, 1946.

Harold was an involved member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Madison, and was a trustee during construction at its present site. He was a Boy Scout leader for his sons, and also organized blood donor clubs for the Red Cross both at church and at work. After retiring from the Fire Dept. in 1974, Harold and Winnie moved to McFarland. Harold was active in the McFarland Historical Society, serving terms as president and helping prepare museum exhibits, was on the board of the McFarland Senior Citizens group for many years, and was named McFarland Citizen of the Year in 1997. He continued to be active after he and his wife moved to Harmony Health Center in McFarland in 2005, enjoying card games and Yahtzee, driving in the countryside, and visiting with family. He is survived by his wife, Winnie; their four children, Nancy (James) Crossfield of Clovis, Calif., Marguerite (Richard) Zumbahl of Spangdahlem, Germany, Fred (MaryJo) Muenkel of Waukesha, and Paul Muenkel of McFarland; seven grandchildren, Jeff (Dorene) Muenkel, Dan (Norah) Muenkel, Ian and Scott Crossfield, Lonnie (Zumbahl) Brasher, Susan (Zumbahl) Nelson and Keith Zumbahl; and five great-grandchildren, Jaden Muenkel, David and Jeremy Clement, and Steven and Sabrina Nelson. Visitation will be Tuesday evening, Aug. 1, 2006, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., at the funeral home. Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 2, 2006, at MCFARLAND LUTHERAN CHURCH, 5529 Marsh Road, with the Rev. Terry Peterson officiating. A lunch will

follow the service at the church. Private burial will be at Roselawn Memorial Park for family members. The Family would like to thank the Physicians, Nurses, and Staff of St. Marys Hospital, of Skaalen Home, and of the Don & Marilyn HospiceCare Center for their kind and loving care. Olson-Holzhueter-Cress Funeral & Cremation Service 5801 Highway 51 McFarland (608) 838-0655 www.cressneralservice.com.

Carol L. Abernathy, age 71,

Carol was the McFarland Historical Society treasurer at the time of her death. She hardly missed our monthly meetings despite her health problems. She will be missed.

Carol passed away peacefully on Monday, Dec. 11, 2006. She was born on June 10, 1935, in Mexico, Mo., to Clifton Clarence Groves and Helen (Moore) Groves. Carol graduated from Missouri Baptist Nursing School in 1955. She

worked at Jefferson Memorial Hospital in Festus, in labor and delivery, and nursing administration for 25 years. Carol then spent three years working at a hospital in Saudi Arabia. For 20 years prior to her retirement, she worked at Orange Coast Memorial Hospital in Fountain Valley, Calif., in nursing administration. Carol retired in 2001 and moved to McFarland in 2002, where she was involved at the McFarland Historical Society and Christ the King Catholic Church.

Walter Landerud passed away peacefully on Monday, Oct. 2, 2006, at Meriter Hospital. He was born on Dec. 7, 1917, at home in the Town of Dunn, the elder son of the late Oscar and Tilda (Dale) Landerud. He was baptized at St. John's Lutheran Church, Oregon and confirmed at McFarland Lutheran Church. Walter graduated from McFarland High School in 1935. On Aug. 27, 1947, he married Karen Hansen at her home in Stoughton. His occupations varied from working on the family farm, to working for Sun Electric, to driving bus for the McFarland schools, to working for the Watertown Memorial Co. even after "retirement." Walter's hobbies showed his passion for music, horses, and people. He sang with the church choir (where he met Karen) and the Madison Greig Chorus and he founded the Southern Wisconsin Old Time Fiddlers Association. In his retirement years he took lessons on the fiddle and taught himself how to play the harmonica (which could often be found in his pocket). His love of horses stretched throughout his life. He had ponies for his children and grandchildren, a quarter horse for pleasure riding and Belgians and Fjord horses for exercise and reliving the good old days from his Norwegian heritage. He was faithful member of McFarland Lutheran Church for more than 75 years and involved in many different organizations in his hometown including the historical society, public schools and founding the Norwegian Spelemannslag. He was a dedicated volunteer for the residents of Skaalen as well as others who were homebound.

McFarland Historical Society's Summer Tour

By Jane Licht

The McFarland Historical Society usually sponsors a tour to some destination of interest around the state of Wisconsin. Last summer's tour to the Rotary Gardens and the Tallman House in Janesville was a most enjoyable outing. I had decided to take the day off from work to be able to join husband Wes on the tour. Our group of about 25, mostly McFarland Historical Society members, took a bus from the museum and soon arrived at Rotary Gardens. Rotary Gardens is a privately funded, non-profit botanical



garden founded by Rotarian Robert Yahr in 1989. Thanks to Yahr's vision, the help of countless volunteers and the City of Janesville, Rotary Gardens has become a 20-acre botanical treasure enjoyed by more than 100,000 visitors annually.

We entered the visitor's center and met our guide who be-



We entered the visitor's center and met our guide who began the tour with the English Cottage Garden next to the center. There are actually 18 different themed gardens, various small ponds and a large pond that dominates many views of the landscape. There are also friendly



benches along the pathway donated by Janesville families in memory of loved ones. Each wooden bench back was engraved with a famous quote by a conservationist such as



Thoreau, Leopold, Chief Dan George, Chief Seattle and John Muir.

The hosta garden with quiet ponds under the shade of large deciduous trees was serene. The popular Japanese garden with bamboo grasses, a large walking bridge and tiny shelter overlooking the pond was much enjoyed by our group.

We paused for a few moments in the gazebo, just as a light rain fell briefly. We continued our walk through Scottish, French Formal, and Italian gardens as well as less formal fern and moss gardens, and prairie gardens. We ended at the large bronze sculpture named “Dialogue” and back to the visitor’s center which offered a fine gift shop. Lunch was at the “Bistro” in downtown Janesville. Then



our bus took us to the famous Tallman House, an Italian villa style mansion where Abraham Lincoln was a guest in 1859 when he was running for President. Built by William Tallman, this home was in 1871, “the finest and most costly residence in Wisconsin,” and featured walk-in closets, a complete water system, central heating and an indoor privy. More than 75% of the home’s furnishings are original.



Our group was divided into smaller groups, each with a tour guide. When we viewed the room where Lincoln stayed it was explained that he preferred not the best guest room but a more casual and comfortable one, which is where he stayed. However, due to a miscommunication, Lincoln was left without his boots and was reluctant to complain but would not leave his room barefooted as this would have been very poor etiquette. When Lincoln failed to appear for breakfast, the host family finally realized the problem and delivered the boots that had been removed and polished for him. Then all was back to normal and a hearty breakfast was enjoyed.

Was the 2006

After the tour of the Tallman House we walked next door to the Rock County Historical Society Museum and gift shop to view a video on the Tallman House that included Wes Licht and his pair of light horses pulling an antique carriage up to the front of the mansion. The Rock County Historical Society commissioned the video and maintains the mansion.

Was the 2006 McFarland Historical Society annual tour worth taking a day off of work to attend? Absolutely! I wonder where they will go this summer?



WINTER FUN ON BENNY'S HILL

by Crystal Lokken

How many generations of McFarland's youngsters enjoyed sledding and skiing on Benny's Hill is something we'll never know. 'Benny's Hill' is an undocumented part of McFarland's history!

Children could be found there on many a snowy day and evening, sliding down and then pulling their sleds and toboggans and carrying their skis back up the hill. I wonder when or whether Benny Olson ever gave the first of them permission to use his cow pasture for their winter fun!

My sisters and I found our way there in the early 1940s, but I am sure we weren't the first! We would trudge up Main Street, pulling our sled which we four sisters shared, and along the way, other friends would join us. Main Street wasn't always plowed then.

We would go there after supper - it was dark, but there were the street lights and the moon, and then just the whiteness of the snow to light our fun. But there were also afternoons and weekends to enjoy Benny's Hill.

It was Benny's cow pasture, but the cows were in the barn and out of the cold. So the hill was ours to enjoy!

The hill seemed very high to us in those days. We would walk up it, pulling our sled. Then we would slide down it for an exciting ride! We went fast, over bumps and over the ridge at the bottom of the hill, hoping to stop before we reached the road. Then it was time to climb up the hill and slide down again.

Then we would slide down it for an exciting ride! We went fast, over bumps and over the ridge at the bottom of the hill, hoping to stop before we reached the road. Then it was time to climb up the hill and slide down again.

The big boys were pretty daring fellows. They had a long sled and sometimes we were invited to slide with them. That was the best of fun, being invited to join the big kids! We would sit down and wrap our legs over the legs of the person in front to keep them out of harm's way. Down we would go, fast and furious!

One Christmas we got skis. That was another adventure. They had straps into which we slid our overshoed feet. No poles. We had to balance ourselves the best we could. When we got to that ridge at the bottom, it became a kind of a ski jump and that made the ride thrilling. We could imagine ourselves soaring through the air! Lots of falls!

Did anyone get hurt? Not that I know of. Those were the days before anyone thought of insurance or of being sued.

Tim Mitchell tells a funny story about sledding on Benny's Hill. It was during the 1960s and he was 6 or 7 years old. He was the last person on the toboggan. Down they went. The toboggan hit a frozen cow pie (remember that this was a pasture) and off Tim flew into the snow!



Toboggans must have become popular as the years went on. Julie Paulson sledded on Benny's Hill in the 60s and early 70s. There were sometimes 50-100 kids on the hill so they had to wait in line. She remembers standing up while going downhill on a toboggan when she was 8 or 9 years old. She flipped off it and landed on her back but never mentioned the incident to her mom because she didn't want to be told she couldn't play on Benny's Hill!

Dr. Lofgren said, when asked if his children played on Benny's Hill, "Oh, all the time, any time of the day and weekend!" He says that the sledding and skiing days on Benny's Hill were over when the road was constructed up the hill through the cow pasture, and houses were built on both sides. That was probably in the early 1970s.

Oh, the memories of the fun we had on Benny's Hill!

