

**5 Questions (by Bob Blazich re: City of Mequon)
News Graphic, August 2017**

1. Mequon just celebrated its 60th birthday. Some might be surprised Mequon hasn't been a city for longer. What led up to the decision to incorporate as a city?

Mequon became a township in 1846 and remained as the mostly agricultural Town of Mequon into the 1950's. As the suburbs developed around Milwaukee as part of the post-war housing boom, several suburban Milwaukee communities were part of an often hostile annexation frenzy. The Town of Mequon was in a very vulnerable position having five legal municipalities on its borders. Cedarburg annexed land along Cedarburg Road south of Pioneer Road, Bayside annexed land in the far southeast corner of the township and Thiensville was preparing to annex over 600 acres of the township. Thiensville had, of course, already left the township when it became a village in 1910. A second major issue was having the township governed by only a three-member board of supervisors as the demands for development and public services increased. Mequon had to protect its remaining borders and prepare for growth by incorporating as a city, so the residents of the Town of Mequon voted overwhelmingly to become the City of Mequon in the spring of 1957.

2. What are a few of the other notable milestones in Mequon's history?

The US Government began to sell land east of Range Line Road in 1835 and west of that line in 1839. The government sold the land for \$1.25 per acre. A major milestone in Mequon's history was the 1839 arrival of 20 families who escaped religious persecution in Pomerania, settled the western portion of Mequon and built Wisconsin's first Lutheran church in Freistadt. John Henry Thien arrived in 1842 and proceeded to construct a water-powered saw mill and a flour mill. The hamlet that grew around Thien's mill became the original "town center" of the Town of Mequon offering blacksmiths, harness shops, taverns, resort hotels, hardware stores and general stores.

Other milestone dates were the founding of Ozaukee County in 1853, the arrival of the railroad in 1870 and Interurban commuter line service in 1907. Homestead High School opened for students in September of 1959, and the Mequon-Thiensville Joint School District, the current school system, was formed in 1972.

3. The M-T Historical Society recently hosted an open house at the Nieman Haus. What's the historic significance of the site?

The Nieman Haus, built in the late 1920's on the eve of The Great Depression, was the private residence of the Edwin J. Nieman Sr. family until 1985. The home, which was repurchased years later by the Nieman family, was designed to resemble a country manor and housed Mr. Nieman's office. Nieman was a partner in the Fromm Bros. – Nieman Company, the largest silver fox breeders in the nation. The home was bordered by fox farms on all sides.

Edwin Nieman was part of a very influential family that helped to build the community. Members of the Nieman family founded Cedarburg State Bank (1908) and Thiensville State Bank (1910) and financed 15 years of private research that resulted in today's distemper shots. At their peak, the Fromm-Nieman Company produced dog food, lumber, furs and ginseng employing as many as 1000 people in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan.

4. What are some of the other activities the Historical Society has been involved with recently?

The main activity of the historical society is to fulfill our mission: Collect, Preserve and Share the history of the Village of Thiensville, the City of Mequon and the former Town of Mequon. In keeping with that mission statement, our main activity continues to be volunteer work sorting and cataloging the materials in our collection. While it's not flashy and glamorous work, it is both interesting and necessary.

MTHS is constantly building and better organizing our collection. Thanks to generous grants from The Mequon Community Foundation and the Mequon Woman's Club, we have been able to purchase archival quality storage materials to protect our valued collection. We recently received a grant from The Wisconsin Historical Society that will allow us to begin to more fully computerize our archival collection.

Thanks to the passion and generosity of our board member, Sam Cutler, Jr., the historical society is converting the 1839 Isham Day House into the Mequon River Post Office and Museum. The building, located directly across from the Mequon City Hall, is currently being renovated and should be open to the public in mid-2018. We will begin accepting donations of stamp collections later this year.

Our 2018 Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, November 5th, at the Mequon Nature Preserve. Our speaker for that event will be the well known author, lecturer and PBS personality Jerry Apps. We will also be present at the September 9th Taste of Mequon celebration.

5. How can people join the Historical Society or get more involved?

The MT Historical Society started in 1987 as a membership-driven, volunteer-run organization, and now, 30 years later, we boast a membership of over 200 voting members. Since our founding, we have not wanted the cost of membership be a barrier to being part of our organization. A single membership is \$15/year, and family membership is \$20/year. We also offer contributing, sustaining and corporate memberships. MTHS is a 501.c.3 non-profit corporation. All donations and membership fees are fully tax deductible.

We urge people to visit our website at www.mthistoricalsociety.org and LIKE us on Facebook. Our archives are located at 216 Green Bay Road in Thiensville and are open to the public on Thursday afternoons from 2 – 5 PM. Visits at other times can be arranged by calling us at 262-242-3107 or emailing us at mthistory1839@gmail.com.