

BAILEYS HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019

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Baileys Harbor
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SUMMER – FALL ACTIVITIES

We have had a robust series of events this summer. First, Kriss Schorer presented a history of the Baileys Harbor Women's Club, John Fons explained how the Fons family found its roots in a humble log cabin outside of Baileys Harbor, and last, we learned about the beautiful log houses on Chapel Lane from Roy and Danita Cole Medved.

BHHS has also received donations from friends near and far. A woman who vacationed in Baileys Harbor in the 1940s donated three birds carved by Albert Zahn. Also, the children of Allen Erickson allowed us to select some historic items from the Erickson estate. Descriptions will follow.

Thirty-two of our members gathered once again for our annual breakfast/brunch at the Harbor Fishmarket and Grille. It was a great get-together and meeting.

L.D.

2020 EVENTS – TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

June 17, 2020 – 7PM: *A Baileys Harbor Fishing Family*
by Dennis Hickey

July 15, 2020 – 7PM: *Soda Bottling in Door County*
by Stephen Pleck Johnson

August 19, 2020 -7PM: *Early Door County Grocery Stores*
by Patty Williamson

September 16, 2020: *Members' Annual Meeting & Breakfast*

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Baileys Harbor Historical Society currently has 119 memberships, representing many more individuals, of course, because of Family and Business memberships. Renewal reminders are sent each month as yearly memberships expire. Membership levels are: Business \$50, Family \$25, Individuals \$15, and Lifetime \$150. Members' dues help support our continuing research, displays outside the Baileys Harbor Library and at the Toft House, our events and presentations, and our newsletters. Please encourage your friends, neighbors, and family members to join BHHS so that they can enjoy supporting the dissemination of our local history, sharing information, and exploring the history of our community. A printable membership form can be found on the home page of our website <www.baileysharborhistoricalsociety.org>; just print it, fill it out, and mail it in.

WELCOME!

This is BHHS's way of giving a warm smile and a hearty handshake to our new members! Our most recent members are Tom & Shirley Kenney, Mary Pikul Anderson, and Dan & Melinda Sheehy. They come from California, Baileys Harbor, and Florida, respectively, so I guess you could say that we cover the country!

LOST BAILEYS HARBOR —

This is the view from atop Bluff Road looking east to the intersection with Highway 57. The photo has no date, but we can see Prueter's Mill on the left, in the distance, and the mill burned in February 1923. Many of the structures in this photo are lost. The white building on the left was the old Town Hall that was built on the first school site no earlier than 1878. The gray buildings on the left near the corner were outbuildings of Thomas Toft's. We can see his house just to the north. Across the street is the storefront we have known as The Yum Yum Tree, along with several outbuildings that are no longer there. The barn that used to stand next to Florian II has been replaced by condominiums, and the original building on the Florian II site burned quite a while ago. The south side of Bluff Road is hard to make out in this photo, but it seems that building that is now the Blue Ox is certainly there, as well as a house built in front of the bluff.

I was surprised when I realized that so many of these structures are gone. Just a couple of weeks ago, I was sitting on the steps of the Visitor's Center and feeling really pleased that almost all the buildings within my view were over 100 years old and looking great. This view down Bluff Road shows, instead, what has been lost, from just a slightly different perspective.

Leann Despotes

2019 ANNUAL MEETING/ BREAKFAST



As members entered the beautifully prepared dining room at the Harbor Fishmarket & Grille, they were directed to view a recent donation of three of Albert Zahn's bird carvings together with contemporary photos of the children visiting Birds Park and then playing with their birds. Everyone then enjoyed a wonderful breakfast of either scrambled eggs, quiche, or French toast with fresh fruit, bacon or sausage, and fresh muffins.

Brynn Swanson of the Baileys Harbor Community Association gave a brief presentation and requested volunteers to help fill out docent hours at the Visitor Center. She was pleased to report that she got four responses on the calendar she circulated.

It was explained that we would like to expand the *Historic Baileys Harbor* booklet to include more sites such as the Fishmarket Restaurant, but need an individual to pitch in on that. We are also looking for ways to update and enhance our website; BHHS has set aside money for that. BHHS is also working on an outdoor display in front of the Toft House explaining its significance. We plan to move the BH author displays currently in the Toft House to the library after the Visitor Center closes. Ideas for future programs included Spikehorn Campgrounds; ethnic settlements within the town; the Toft, Eatough, or Anclam families; and former town businesses.

Five board members' terms were up for election this year. They were Leann Despotes, Philip Graupner, Mary Moran, Marianne Newton, and Kriss Schorer. All agreed to serve another term; there were no nominees from the floor, and Lynn Mattke moved to accept the slate to another term of office. They were unanimously approved.

As the meeting ended, we were all surprised by wrapped and decorated cookies commemorating the fact that the Baileys Harbor Historical Society is ten years old! Time sure has flown. That tasty surprise was provided by Lynne Mattke and Nancy Rafal. A big Thank You!

Marianne Newton

OUR 106-YEAR-OLD WOMENS CLUB



Kriss Schorer, a third generation member of the Baileys Harbor Womens Club, presented a program on the history of that organization at our June meeting. She is pictured at the left in her pearls and hat, demonstrating the proper apparel for attending a meeting in earlier days.

On Feb. 13, 1913, a group of 15 Baileys Harbor women gathered at the Etough home to establish the Ladies Improvement Club (LIC). Dues were 25¢ per month, and the hostess was expected to serve sandwiches, cheese, pickles, coffee, and two kinds of cake. An additional nickel was charged for each small child attending.

The ladies' initial project was installing a fence at the town cemetery to keep out wandering livestock. The first bazaar in 1916 produced a profit of \$147.27 (the equivalent of \$3,592.14 today!).

The club's next major projects were funding a bathhouse at the Baileys Harbor (Ridges) Beach and acquiring a gas streetlight for the town. In 1919, attention turned to the need to oil the streets, and a request was sent to the town board. In 1921, the club purchased flags, bunting, and other decorations for the cemetery on Decoration Day, and this became an annual event. Decoration Day has since become Memorial Day and was made a federal holiday in 1971.

In 1926, the need for streetlights was again discussed, and the LIC agreed to pay \$300 a year for three years to support the project. The order was placed, but the power company refused to accept it because it had been signed by a woman. The company said that a "man in authority" was required as a co-signer. When it was suggested that Baileys Harbor needed a phone book, the LIC oversaw printing of 3,000 copies.

In 1930, gift baskets for needy families became a Christmas tradition. In 1934, the club donated \$200 toward the purchase of a new fire engine.

In 1937, the club used money from the estate of Michael McArdle to purchase dishes, silverware, glassware, and long tables and chairs for the town hall. They were used for the first time on Aug. 21, 1938, at the dedication of the town hall and library, also funded by McArdle. The LIC served 150 meals after the ceremony.

On May 22, 1941, the name of the organization was changed to the Baileys Harbor Womens Club (BHWC). On that date, they were asked to host the June 4-5 convention of the 8th District Womens Clubs. With less than two weeks to prepare, they arranged programs, entertainment, dinners, a tea, and housing for guests. The club mobilized for World War II and donated to the Red Cross and the Bomber Fund. They also rolled bandages, hemmed bedpan covers, and made pajama tops for the Red Cross.

In 1944, cookbooks developed by the club sold for \$1.25. Twelve Atomic Bomb Instruction Books were purchased for the community.

In the 1970s, when St. Mary's Church was short of bell ringers, club members volunteered to help out. A new cookbook (new price: \$9.95) was printed. All were sold for \$6,764 and 1,000 more were reprinted. In 1987, strawberry shortcake – the official start of the BHWC's July 4 Strawberry Festival – brought in \$527.07. The next year, each member was asked to supply two dozen baking powder biscuits to the festival.

By the early 1990s, the club had 91 members. They donated \$1,500 to the fire department for new equipment and \$1,500 to the Ridges for repair of the lighthouses. In 2004, the club presented two \$500 scholarships, the first of many, to Gibraltar graduates. In 2013, the club celebrated its 100th birthday, and \$400 was given toward the cost of the Baileys Harbor Community mural. Strawberry hulling for the 4th of July set a world record – one hour! (Topped three years later by 45 minutes.)

Over the past 106 years, members of the Baileys Harbor Womens Club have contributed their time and money to hundreds of organizations, projects, and activities, many of them multiple times, and have awarded more than \$21,000 in scholarships to Gibraltar graduates. As the old saying goes, "If you need something done, ask a busy woman!"

Patty Williamson

BIRDS HAVE COME HOME TO ROOST



Readers may recall that I alluded to a pending donation in the Spring 2019 newsletter. The pending is over, and a generous and thoughtful woman from Connecticut has decided to donate three birds that her father bought for her during vacations in Baileys Harbor in the 1940s. Anne Goslee-Jovovic contacted the Historical Society through our website to ask whether we would be interested in receiving carved birds that she and her brother had been given when

they were small children vacationing in Baileys Harbor. She nostalgically referred to "The Birdman" and the walk to Birds Park to pick out the wooden, painted bird or animal for that year.

She wanted to be sure that the birds would be where they would be appreciated, and I think she liked the idea of them returning home. Anne also mentioned that she was having an 8-mm film from those days reformatted and that she would try to send some still pictures from the film to show Baileys Harbor in the 1940s. She did, and in the pictures we can see the town, Anclam's Dock, Ridges Beach, Birds Park, Albert Zahn, Anne's family, and she and her brother playing with the "toys" they selected at Birds Park. We plan to display the birds with accompanying pictures in the Toft House next summer. Don't miss them!



Leann Despotes

FAMILY ROOTS FOUND IN A 110-YEAR-OLD CABIN



John Edwin Fons of Madison spoke at the July meeting about searching for his roots. He had a clue – a faded, 60-year-old photo of the 21' x 21' log cabin his great-grandparents, John and Susan Fons, built somewhere in the county when they emigrated from Poland. The only other things he knew about it were that they'd raised 11 children in

that 441 square feet and that there had been a rock on which the original John Fons had chiseled his name and the date – 1909.

John Fons (the younger) sent the old photo to Leann Despotes, asking if the cabin might be in this vicinity. Leann and Lynn Mattke had an idea. They knew that Martin Schram had married a woman named Pauline Fons in the 1900s, and that Schram lived in a neighborhood northwest of town called the Polish Settlement. They hatched a plan to contact a couple of older former residents of that area to see if they would remember where the Fons family lived. Before this plan could be executed, Lynn and her husband, Ev, just happened to be driving down Highland Road,

and sure enough, as they neared the intersection with High Plateau, there it was – the little log cabin with the off-center door, just like in the photo.

Within two days John and his beloved, Jane Meyer, were on the scene. “I heard Jane squeal as she walked around the corner of the cabin,” John said, “and I thought she’d either seen a snake or fallen in the well.” But no, Jane had found the inscribed rock.

Every summer of John’s childhood, the Fons family vacationed on Washington Island with his grandparents, John and Thelma Fons. “It was like heaven,” John said. “Even as a child, the quality of light, the sweetness of the air created a sanctuary for me. Washington Island gave me something that was indelible.”

Grandfather John was one of the 11 children born in the log cabin in the Polish Settlement. He left home at 15 to work in a lumber camp, later oversaw road construction on Washington Island, and, in the late 1920s, was one of the foremen on the construction of Chester Thordarson’s magnificent boathouse on Rock Island. He was a prodigiously strong man. When he asked one of the workers on the road crew to move a rock, the man refused, saying it looked too heavy. “Sit on it.” John II told him, and proceeded to move the rock with the man on top of it.

One of John’s great uncles, Chris Klingenberg, had a three-masted schooner, the *Pride*, that was caught in a squall and went down just off Washington Island, its rigging tangled in the trees. No one died, but the cargo of lumber and potatoes that was lost represented a year’s livelihood for the island’s farmers. Christian left the sea for a foundry job in Racine and worked the rest of his life to pay them back.

Grandfather John was a good friend of Dave Lucky, the pilot of an early ferry across Death’s Door. When John III was eight, Dave let him steer the boat. “Can you imagine what that felt like to a little boy?” he said. “I could believe that anything was possible – castles, knights, dragons!”

Years later, Grandson John attended Dallas Seminary with young men who came from traditional, evangelical ministerial families. “They’d speak of learning the Bible and old hymns at their grandfathers’ knees,” he said, “and I’d think about sitting with my grandpa while he ate his breakfast of cold bacon grease on burnt toast, letting me have a puff of his unfiltered Pall Mall, and teaching me drinking songs.”

John teaches writing at UW-Madison. The things he treasures from his boyhood might not seem important to others – little vignettes of people he loved – but they’re the roots that give him a sense of where he came from and who he is.

Finding his great-grandparents’ log cabin took those roots a generation deeper and, through that search, he found a cousin, Michael Fons, who came with his wife, Roxanne, from Minnesota for John’s presentation. More roots growing up through the present generation.

John urged the audience, as he urges his students, to preserve their memories. “You are living history,” he said. “Write it down, even if you just fold up what you

write and stick it in a drawer, under the socks you never wear. Someone will find it someday, and it may change their life.”

Patty Williamson

CHAPEL LANE'S LOG HOMES DRAW A CROWD



The Baileys Harbor Historical Society drew its largest crowd of the summer with a program on one of the little town's unique assets – a significant collection of nine log homes on a single small street, Chapel Lane. Many of them were built between 1922 and 1926, and at least four were designed by the same architect.

Roy and Jo Cole spent a year researching the history of the eight

other homes and gaining permission from the current owners for them to be photographed by Len Villano. The program was narrated by Danita Cole Medved.

Chapel Lane is just one-third of a mile long, but it holds a treasure trove of Baileys Harbor's early 1900s history. In 1918, on the heels of World War I, the government passed the Soldier Rehabilitation Act, and four years later, F. DeForrest Schook and Frederick Victor Poole, professors at the Art Institute of Chicago, came to Door County to start an art education program for veterans. The art colony was the beginning of Door County's recognition as a mecca for artists. Although it ended in 1924, the spirit it brought to the community lives on in the artists who continue to learn and create here.

7748 Chapel Lane – Robert and Tammy Hanson

This cabin was built in Pulaski in 1860 by Edward Johnson, a Danish man. In 1990, it was purchased by Bill and Fran Cecil, dismantled and moved to Chapel Lane, near the large Victorian home already on their property.

7740 Chapel Lane – Roy and Jo Cole

In 1925, the land now known as *Loc Haven* was purchased by Don Cole (no relation to the current owners). Logs, perhaps already 50 to 100 years old, used for the house and one cabin were from old barns on the Zak farm. In those days, a cabin rented for \$50 a week.

7732 Chapel Lane – Gil Carlson

In 1922, Edwin and Martha Carlson vacationed at the Sunrise Hotel on Lakeshore Drive (now Frogtown Road) in Baileys Harbor and enjoyed it so much that they returned the following year to purchase property on Muckian Road (now Chapel Lane). In 1925, they spent their first summer in their new log cabin, designed by Professor Schook and built by Frank Oldenburg. Gil Carlson, who was brought to the cabin as a baby, has the longest residency on Chapel Lane.

7726 Chapel Lane – Cooper Family

The Coopers' cabin was built in 1921. Their metal sign was likely made by Baileys Harbor blacksmith, August Zahn.

7714 Chapel Lane – Walter Cole (no relation to Roy and Jo)

This property, known as *Schook Shack*, was designed by Professor Schook and built for him in 1922 by Bill Tishler, Sr. and Frank Oldenburg.

7704 Chapel Lane – Bob and Mary Schoenthaler

Frank Cole – again, no relation to other Coles on Chapel Lane – purchased land from the Muckian family, and had a home designed by Professor Schook built in 1924. When Bob was researching the history of the house at the Sturgeon Bay Library, he discovered that the main beam in their home was hewn from the mast of the *M. Capron*, a sailing ship that went down in the local harbor on Halloween night, 1896. It was one of two ships anchored there; the captains drank too much and got into a great hassle. The captain of the other ship rammed the *M. Capron* mid-side and she sank.

7697 Chapel Lane – Poole Family

The cabin is owned by descendants of Professor F. Victor and Amy Poole, who had it built in 1922, the first year of the Frogtown Art School. It's the only log home on the west side of Chapel Lane. On Aug. 4, 1935, there was a dangerous grass fire on the McArdle estate west of the cabin. The Pooles' cabin was spared, but was known ever after as *Burnt Hollow*.

7694 Chapel Lane – McAllister Family

This cabin was built in 1926 by Walter and Marian Dona and sold in 1940 to Edith and George Klyn, a furniture manufacturer from Chicago. Their garage held an unusual thing for that day in Door County – a long, black Cadillac limousine, driven by the family's chauffeur.

7684 Chapel Lane – Elizabeth Hoke

This property, adjacent to the entrance to Björklunden, is another cabin designed by Professor Schook and built in 1932 for Henry Van Wingen. In 1973, it was purchased by Martin and Donna Knauer, and it remained in their family until 1990, when it was sold to Hoke and named *Hoke's Seven Gables*.

Besides this cabin and those belonging to the Coles, Carlsons, and Schoenthalers, there is speculation – because of similar design details and time of construction – that Schook also designed the cabins of the Coopers and McAllisters. Quite the little neighborhood!

Patty Williamson

ALLEN AND AUGUSTA ERICKSON ESTATE DONATIONS



Anyone who knew Allen Erickson was aware that he was a man of many interests, a lover of history, and an inveterate collector. He even established and operated a small geodesic-shaped museum on his property along Highway 57 that he called the Musicbox Museum. As the Erickson children were settling the family estate, they contacted BHHS, and invited us to come and see if any of the items from Baileys Harbor's past could be donated. Of course, our space is very limited, but we were excited. As it turned out, we were able to accept an antique baby buggy from the Kalms family, a clothed dress form made from papier-mâché to the exact shape of Emma Kalms's body, and a quilt brought from Germany in the 1880s that belonged to Carl and Augusta Peil, whose pioneer bedroom is on the second floor of the Toft House. Augusta Erickson was a descendant of the Peils. These items are currently on display at the Toft House, which will be open until October 21.



In addition, we acquired a photograph portrait of Carl and Augusta Peil, a framed picture of the Brann Bros. store on mirrored glass, and a framed commemorative of local World War I soldiers. Finally, we received a selection books and ephemera with local interest. Thank you, Carol Zimmer, Trudy Erickson, and Lee Erickson for your generosity and interest in Baileys Harbor history.



Leann Despotes