

BAILEYS HARBOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

**P.O. Box 336
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historicalsociety.org**

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**LOST
BAILEYS HARBOR:**
I know you remember this
one! Some further details
on our most recent lost
building.
See Page 2.

SUMMER & FALL ACTIVITY

As usual, we have had an active summer and fall that will provide quite a range of stories. Improvements both inside and outside the Toft House will make you proud. Thanks to Lynn Mattke and her many elves, we held an amazing 100-year celebration of the Baileys Harbor School, and learned a few things we didn't know about that. The Brann family and early town history held some surprising information, and our last program, on golf coming to Baileys Harbor with Maxwellton Braes, was a smash. We wrapped up everything with a members' breakfast at Maxwellton Braes with Thyme Catering.

2018 EVENTS – TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| June 13, 2018 | 7PM – TBA |
| July 25, 2018 | 7PM – Conrad Faust Family |
| August 22, 2018 | 7PM – Meet Jens Jensen |
| September 12, 2018 | Members' Brunch |

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The Baileys Harbor Historical Society currently has 120 memberships, representing many more individuals, of course, because of Family and Business memberships. We have added 8 memberships since the spring Newsletter, including 4 Lifetime members. 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. Our display cabinets at the Toft House are almost complete, and the gardens are looking great, thanks to our generous members. 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 all of our new members! Welcome to Sue and Joe Jarosh, Chuck and Debbie Graupner, Michael and Susan Schultze, John E. Fons and family, David and Ann Heyse, Kay Zahn Elliott, Neil and Kathy Ryan, Terry and Ally McArdle, and Mark & Kelly Lindekugel. We appreciate your support, and hope that you will enjoy sharing and participating in our ongoing exploration of Baileys Harbor history.

LOST BAILEYS HARBOR

8099 Highway 57 has been home to a variety of enterprises. Charles Reinhard built his hardware store here in 1902 and ran it successfully for many years. It was then sold to Arnold Prueter. In 1945 Gordon Nelson bought it and opened his first hardware store in Baileys Harbor. Later, he swapped properties with George and Helen Gerdman. Helen ran a complex of buildings as antique shops, with the main building rented for the Post Office. There was a long building across the back of the lot that came from Anclam's Scenic Grove Resort, and a log cabin from Egger's cottages on Kangaroo Lake. The last business in the main building was Fish Creek Moccasins. Time had taken its toll on the old building, and it has all been replaced by the new Door County Brewery as of the summer of 2017, perhaps a place to make more history in Baileys Harbor.

Leann Despotes

THE BRANN FAMILY IN EARLY BAILEYS HARBOR

The four Brann brothers – Andrew, John, Jacob, and Will – arrived in Baileys Harbor one by one between 1872 and 1880. They left Jacobstat, Finland, because of a famine so catastrophic that people resorted to making bread with lichen scraped from trees. Leann Despotes, a great-granddaughter of Jacob Brann, told the family's story at a recent meeting of the Baileys Harbor Historical Society.

Andrew settled in Baileys Harbor, and after his three other brothers arrived, they brought their parents, Jacob and Maria, to join them. A sister, Hannah, and her husband, Alfred Olander came in 1884, along with another sister, Maria, who married Henry Starr after arriving here.

The brothers and their father began life in Baileys Harbor as workers and farmers, but in 1891, they built a furniture/general store on the site of the Cornerstone that advertised that undertaking was a specialty. August and Will soon took it over, and it became known as the Brann Bros. store. The building was also the Brann residence. In 1901, a new store was built across the street on the location that would later become Nelson's Shopping Center. Old ledgers show that many patrons traded cords of wood and farm products to pay for store goods.



The Branns also had a small fleet of schooners -- including the *Nancy Dell* -- operating from the 1,100-foot Brann Pier behind the store. John Brann, an experienced seaman, captained the *Nancy Dell* until December 1901, when the ship ran into a blizzard on its way to Chicago. After struggling for 2 1/2 days, with Captain Brann all but encased in ice, the crew finally dropped anchor east of Gary, Indiana. By this time, folks back home in Baileys Harbor assumed that the ship and all hands were lost. The crew survived, one of the men claiming that they thought they had pumped all of Lake Michigan through the ship. The *Nancy Dell* was a total loss.

On Christmas night, 1885, John married Ellen Short at Andrew's house. Guests reported that they were royally entertained, with dancing past midnight. Twelve years later, John, probably inspired by his brother-in-law's reports from the Klondike Gold Rush, spent seven months in Alaska, but thought better of it and returned home to open the Klondike Saloon.

In 1889, the town was tragically hit by a diphtheria epidemic – 33 cases, resulting in the deaths of 13 children, a number so great that the local school teacher was sent to Sturgeon Bay to purchase more child-sized caskets. Thirteen of the cases were members of the Brann family and seven of their children died. It's likely that the grandparents, Jacob and Anna, and their uncles, August and Will, who owned the store where "undertaking was a specialty," prepared all the victims for burial. Because funerals weren't permitted during the epidemic, all businesses were closed and a public memorial/funeral was held for the children the following May.

Andrew Brann farmed for years, but in 1891 he went into the hardware business on Highway 57, where Chives Restaurant is today. He continued for over 35 years. His wife, Louise, was active in Immanuel Lutheran Church and, together with August's wife, was a founding member of the Ladies' Improvement Club, which still exists as the Baileys Harbor Women's Club.

In the 1890s, Lena Olson, a teenaged girl from Ellison Bay, was hired to help Anna in the Jacob Brann home. Having survived a famine, immigration, and the loss of several grandchildren, Anna died in 1894 at age 70. Lena was left to care for the bachelor brothers and their father, Jacob. A year later, Lena, 18, and August, 34, were married. They and their six children continued living above the original store with Will and Jacob.



In 1915, August and Will helped found the new Door County Telephone Company, and the first switchboard was installed in August and Will's new home at 8104 Highway 57. Until 1959, the local phone company provided a sometime-answering-service for residents, as well as a fire alarm system.

For decades, the Brann boys played baseball for Baileys Harbor on Brann Field, just south of the present Cornerstone, and August and Lena's youngest son, Gordon, is still remembered as one of the best players in the history of the Door County League.

On May 3, 1928, the Brann Bros. Store was destroyed by fire, at an estimated loss of \$10,000. It was believed to have started from spontaneous combustion on the second floor. The Sturgeon Bay Fire Department arrived too late to help, having spent most of the day at a \$50,000 fire in Valmy.

Will, the youngest Brann brother, never married. He owned and showed racehorses that often pulled their hearse. Once, one of the horses got spooked on the way to Grover Williams' funeral, and August often joked that Grover had probably never had such an exciting ride. Will died suddenly during the Spanish influenza epidemic in 1919. His sister, Maria Starr, died of the flu earlier that year.

In closing, Leann noted that "the Branns were close-knit, supporting each other personally and in business. They were ambitious, yet honest businessmen, creative, brave and adventurous. They valued entrepreneurship as well as education, sending many of their children to college. They encountered disastrous, sometimes tragic setbacks, but gathered themselves and continued to move forward."

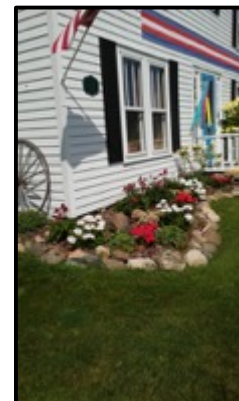
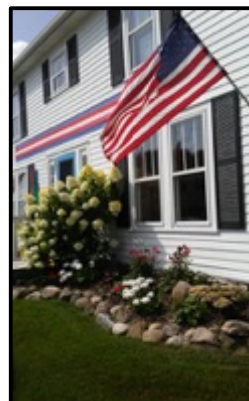
Patty Williamson

TOFT HOUSE GARDENS

**Thanks to the members who responded to our year-end appeal,
the gardens in front of the Toft House are looking great!**

Early this spring, the Baileys Harbor Historical Society hired someone to completely rip out and redo the gardens in front of the Toft House. It took a lot of hard work to remove all weeds and years of plants growing wild, as well as resetting all the stones around the beds. Once that was completed, the BHHS Board asked me to select and install a variety of plants appropriate to the setting, and they have really thrived this summer -- a lovely addition to the building. Next summer we plan to extend the beds by adding more plantings to the south side of the building. A thank you to the staff at the Visitors Center for keeping them watered. The transformation can be seen in our before-and-after pictures.

Suzanne Bauldry



LOST AND FOUND: ONE CABIN, ONE COTTAGE

BHHS received a heartfelt request from John Fons this summer to help find the original settler cabin that his great grandfather built in Baileys Harbor over 100 years ago. He supplied a print of a photo of the structure. Hoping that this would be helpful, I conferred with Lynn Mattke, and we concocted a plan. Remembering that Pauline Fons was married to Martin Schram, we thought of an older member of the Schram family to contact, and then made a short list of senior residents in the “Polish Settlement” area to speak with. We also consulted the Town Clerk regarding land records. First attempts failed, but then one day, with the picture of the Fons cabin drilled into her head, Lynn demanded her husband Ev, **“Stop the car!”** She had spotted a cabin on Highland Road with the same off-center door as the photo. Pictures were taken, I sent them to Mr. Fons, and he was convinced enough to travel here within days.



That it was, indeed, the Fons cabin was proven when a stone carved with “J Fons 1909” was found near the front door! It was an exciting conclusion for all of us.

Mr. Fons, in addition to joining our historical society, sent the following comments that I would like to share. “[BHHS has] performed a great service for which I and other members of my family are deeply grateful. This goes beyond history as simple fact. It helps build the present and influences the future. God bless you and the work and future of the Baileys Harbor Historical Society, a true mission to the community.”

We received another poignant request, but this time for the location of a cottage. I responded to a phone message asking about the lakefront cottage once lived in by the Lovelace family. I had never heard of them, but a little research in historic newspapers indicated that they had spent vacation time on Chapel Lane. Mr. Walter S. Lovelace was the editor of the *Evanston Review* and an enthusiastic booster of Baileys Harbor and Door County. Excerpts of his writings mentioned friends/neighbors who owned the Deerpath Orchards. I knew that to be the Carlson family, and so I called BHHS member Gil Carlson, and he said they were friends with his parents, but that they lived a little south of Jacksonport. Further newspaper reading told me that they lived on Cave Point Road, who built their house, when they bought it, all sorts of things, but not which cottage it was. I thought it unlikely, because Mr. Lovelace died in 1961, but I asked Cave Point Road resident and BHHS member, Sig Hulburt, if she had ever heard of the Lovelace family. She definitely had, and even knew Mrs. Lovelace, whom she characterized as petite and a very lovely person. The Lovelaces lived just three cottages south of her, and had kept the summer home long after Mr. Lovelace’s death.



Deirdre, the woman who contacted me, is the lifelong friend of Charlotte Lovelace Hartley, daughter of Walter. Our conversation became quite emotional. Deirdre made the trip from Colorado to try and find the cottage for Charlotte who has been in very ill health, and has been longing for another look at the lakeside cottage where she spent so many happy summers. What a pleasure to be able to send her pictures to illustrate her childhood memories.

Leann Despotes

REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD

BHHS has found that social media is a great way to reach out to those beyond our Baileys Harbor borders. We had our **website** thanks to a generous member's of information; our program public programs are just a click 4,735 times, and has accumulated current as *Baileys Harbor Historical* events of interest throughout Door County too. We have accumulated 820 likes, and would love to go to four digits, so if you haven't taken a look, please do. We also have a fledgling **Twitter** feed under *BH Historical*, but as yet, few followers. I think more followers will inspire our resident "Tweeter" to fly to greater heights.



professionally redesigned and updated in 2016, donation. It's looking pretty good, and has loads schedule, all of our past newsletters, and all past away. In August 2017 our website was visited 25,223 visits in 2017. Nancy Rafal keeps us *Society* on **Facebook**. She tries to include other

Please check out our platforms to keep up to date, revisit a Newsletter article, or curl up with some popcorn and watch a program you may have missed.

Leann Despotos

BAILEYS HARBOR SCHOOL REUNION RENEWS CENTURY-LONG MEMORIES



More than 150 former students at the Baileys Harbor Grade School came back for their first-ever reunion on June 25. Leann Despotos began her introduction by announcing that the anniversary was a fraud. What the day was actually celebrating was the centennial of Baileys Harbor's **third** school building, which was completed during the winter of 1917.

The first village school, a one-room log building, was built in 1858 on Bluff Road, where the post office stands today. The little school actually had an organ, provided by the Lakeside Lyceum Club, a group formed by two teachers who charged a very small fee for the poetry readings and other

cultural events they held. In 1878, the first little school was dismantled and the logs were used to build a granary on a nearby farm.

The preparation of many of the early teachers involved only passing a special exam after eighth grade or, at most, a year of "normal" school – an early form of teachers' college focusing on clear standards or "norms" in public education, as opposed to local notions of what public education should be.

J. W. Kinsel was one of the teachers in the second Baileys Harbor school, built on what is now the parking lot of the Catholic church. He was reported to be very strict, using a willow stick liberally. Kinsel was paid \$60 a month to teach more than 100 students. Since this sum was not enough to support his family, he also owned a cheese factory nearby and sometimes took students there to help out at lunchtime.

In December 1916, Miss Jameson, who taught the lower grades, noticed smoke coming through the floor. She notified Sam Londo, the other teacher, and the school was evacuated. As the school bell and mill whistle were sounded, the children were dispatched through the village to seek help. Townspeople and even men from the Coast Guard Station formed a bucket brigade stretching to the lake. They extinguished the fire that had begun in the basement,

but when the roof caught fire, they realized that all was lost, and adults and children rushed into the smoke-filled building to save books and other supplies. For more than a year, classes were held in the town hall that had replaced the original log school on the spot where the post office is now located. Classes in the new, Prairie-style building began after the 1917 Christmas holidays – hence, the 2017 centennial celebration.

About this time, both Gibraltar/Fish Creek and Baileys Harbor wanted to establish a high school. Local newspapers reported that the desire for higher education was so intense that it even usurped discussion of World War I. Both towns voted overwhelmingly to host a new school, but the state would not allow two high schools in the same area and, having the deciding vote, awarded it to Fish Creek.

Many years later, Northern Door's country schools were consolidated, and children from the North Bay, Peninsula Center, and Pershing schools were sent to Baileys Harbor. This necessitated adding two rooms in 1954, making it the first four-room rural school in Wisconsin.

The Baileys Harbor District was dissolved in 1966 – the end of an era that lasted 108 years. The two oldest attendees at the reunion, Irene Steinke Peil and Betty Olsen Anderson, are in their nineties, and stories about early school days spanned many decades.

Patty Williamson



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

Sometimes an idea for a program is born when the subject matter sits next door. That was the case as I gazed out my dining room window looking at the Baileys Harbor Grade School. In passing the back door of the of the building in the summer of 2016, I saw the sign saying “Baileys Harbor School established 1917” and realized that the following year it would be 100 years old, and that was something that needed to be celebrated. The Historical Society Board agreed, and I was on my way.

With the invaluable advice of Judi Dexheimer, who organized the Egg Harbor Grade School reunion the year before, the quest began to find the names of former students. The archives at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay yielded the names of many students attending in the mid-twentieth century. Olivia Traven, former Baileys Harbor librarian and school board member, had the foresight to take the school records to the university when the school was incorporated into the Gibraltar system. Additionally, I scoured my memory of Baileys Harbor families and made contacts, getting names and addresses while advertising with flyers and online.



With the support of the Historical Society, the decision was made to host an old-fashioned school picnic using the town hall as the venue for this event. Not only was it large enough to accommodate everyone, it was an appropriate place as classes were held there while the new addition to the school was built in 1953. Also, it was the site of the yearly Christmas pageant, which was a highlight for students and parents.

Countless people made this program a success. Special thanks to the Historical Society board members who pitched in with their various talents, students who donated photos and memorabilia, the members of the business community who generously provided door prizes, the Cornerstone Pub & Restaurant for catering the picnic lunch, and Kristen Peil and Caleb Whitney for opening the school for tours.

Over 150 former students and their spouses returned to share memories and renew old acquaintances. Whole families of students were there! The sense of the school as being the heart of the community was expressed by many of the students. Ernald Viste, principal for 43 years, was cited as being a major factor in students being involved in community service.

How fortunate we are to still have the building in our midst, looking like the school we remember. Her new coat of paint and cosmetic upgrades ensure that this historic building remains in our midst for many years.

Lynn Mattke

A WEDDING MEMORY



Two of the artifacts that have been on display at the Toft House are the striking blue and white wedding dress worn by Anna Jonas on her marriage to Richard Peil on Jan. 12, 1910, together with their original wedding photograph. The dress had been donated to the Door County Historical Society by my mother, Adeline Edmunds, a niece of Richard and Anna Peil. This spring, the Door County Historical Society requested that I share my BHHS presentation on my grandparents, Otto and Hedwig Peil, to be given as one their summer events. That happened to be attended by a distant cousin who brought Richard and Anna's original wedding photo to donate to BHHS. The picture of the handsome couple in its oval gilded

frame was displayed next to the wedding dress. Special thanks to Betty Graf for donating this invaluable photo and the Door County Historical Society for graciously lending the dress. Illustrating the wedding fashion of its day, this display also complemented the recreated Peil farmhouse bedroom on the second floor of the Toft House.



Lynn Mattke

GOLF COMES TO BAILEYS HARBOR



Golf arrived in Door County in 1917, when a six-hole course opened in Peninsula State Park. It was managed by the Ephraim Men's Club and called the Door County Country Club. The park's first nine-hole course opened in 1923 with sand and oil greens. The second nine-hole course wasn't available until 1930, and they were combined into an 18-hole course a year later.

The Alpine Resort in Egg Harbor began offering golf in 1925, but there was nothing on the east side of the peninsula. In 1928, the *Advocate* reported that Frank Blakefield of Baileys Harbor was asking businessmen to contribute \$15,000 each to form a corporation to build a golf club on 52 acres he had optioned at the triangle where County E and Highway 17 (now 57) join. Unfortunately, the corporation was not successful.

At the August meeting, Kriss Schorer, the great niece of Michael McArdle, described his development of Maxwellton Braes. McArdle, who grew up on the family farm along Highway 57 near North Kangaroo Lake Road, became a very successful businessman in Chicago and an accomplished golfer who, with the encouragement of Peter Collins and other local friends, became interested in starting a local course. He and his brother Jim walked the land that Blakefield had optioned, much of which had once been the McArdle farm, and drew sketches of how a golf course could be laid out. Joseph Roseman designed the 18-hole course, and construction began in 1929. McArdle insisted that local materials and local people be used throughout this project, which was a boon in the early years of the Great Depression.

The nine holes on the west side of the highway opened to the public in 1930, with the nine on the east side opening a year later. The name, Maxwellton Braes, came from "Maxwelton Braes are bonnie," the first line of the song, *Annie Laurie*, that McArdle heard during dinner at the Edgewater Gulf Hotel in Mississippi.

Designed by von Holst and Elmslie, early brochures described the Tudor-style clubhouse with its 16 guest rooms as a "sylvan paradise," with appointments "that are marvels of elegance and comfort." The nominal room charge (\$8 per night per person) included three meals. There was also a tea room at the entrance to the property, five cottages, tennis courts, a garage for guests' vehicles, and accommodations for chauffeurs.

The first pro was Arthur Saunders. Caddies were common before the advent of golf carts, and there were once 125 of them. In those days, golfers carried 30 to 35 clubs, and a caddie earned a dollar for carrying a bag for 18 holes. As the Depression grew deeper, caddy fees were reduced to 50 cents, but the boys went on strike until the rate went back to a dollar.

McArdle had planned for the clubhouse to be for selected members and invited guests, but found there were too many extra guests and changed the policy to public access. He died of cancer on May 16, 1935, at the age of 51. His estate ran the resort until his nephew, Harry Ridings, was appointed manager in 1938, with a weekly salary of \$50. Maxwellton Braes hosted the Wisconsin Open Golf Championship in 1947. In 1948, the Los Angeles Rams spent two weeks of their training camp here, with a practice field on Fairway #11.



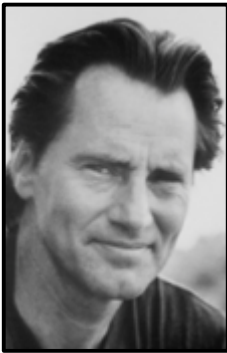
When Ridings died in 1993, his wife, Lois, took over as manager of the resort. Harry and Lois' granddaughter, Stephanie Heald-Fisher, became manager in 1998. Lois died in 2006; five years later the Ridings family decided to sell the golf resort. It was purchased by a group of local businessmen, including Dale

Williams and Kieth Bonville of Baileys Harbor and Dick Daubner of Sister Bay. Many improvements were made, but the real estate crash hit the project hard and it went into receivership in 2010.

Paul Becker leased the golf course that year and operated it successfully until 2015. In 2013, Bill Andersen purchased the clubhouse and all undeveloped property. Over the winter of 2014-15, Jim Bresnahan and his family of Wausau purchased the golf course. Many things have changed, but the charm and mystique of Maxwellton Braes remains for golfers, diners, and lodgers.

Patty Williamson

Sam Shepard, My Claim to Fame



While reading a recently published biography of Sam Shepard, Lynn Mattke noted a reference to Baileys Harbor. It spoke of his time at the local cemetery seeking the location of his grandparents' gravesites in 1993. Sam Shepard died July 27, 2017, and was an Oscar-nominated actor as well as a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright.

He and his oldest son brought a stone they found on the Lake Michigan shore with them to the cemetery. Taking a guess, they placed it between two cedar trees in the place they thought was correct. Shepard's mother, Jane Schook Rogers, later told them she thought it wasn't the right place. Jane was the daughter of Frederick "Pop" DeForest Schook, who ran a summer art school for shell-shocked veterans returning from World War I. The camp was held near the cabin he built himself on Frog Town Road in Baileys Harbor. It was a place that was very special to Jane.

A year after Sam was at the cemetery, his mother Jane died and her ashes were returned to Baileys Harbor. It was at that time I met him. The biography relates, "They checked with the caretaker and found the right spot and buried his mother's ashes to the left of the two cedars."

Now the connection. I was the caretaker. As a member of the Town Board, it was my job to handle all the cemetery business. I remember meeting a very nice gentleman and locating the gravesite. He told me the story of finding the stone on the beach and placing it there a year ago. I had no idea he was a well-known director, actor, and filmmaker. And that is "my claim to fame."

Suzanne Bauldry

BHHS ANNUAL MEMBERS BRUNCH:

The third annual brunch for the Bailey Harbor Historical Society was held on September 13th at Maxwellton Braes this year. Overlooking a beautiful view of the golf course, Thyme Catering provided a delicious brunch for 35 members with many food options. After we thoroughly enjoyed great food and conversation, Leann Despotes led us in a short meeting, updating us on the many BHHS events presented this past summer. As part of the meeting those present voted on the members to the Board of Directors: Leann Despotes, Phillip Graupner, Mary Moran, Marianne Newton, and our newest member, Kriss Schorer. Their two-year term will begin in January, 2018. Each table brainstormed ideas for upcoming events to the BHHS. The ideas were welcome, interesting, and will be considered for future events. Some topics mentioned were the history of North Bay, the log houses on Chapel Lane, taverns over time, and World War I. If you have an interest in working on these topics or others, do let us know.

Marianne Newton