

SHADES OF THE PAST

Williams Bay Historical Society

Established 2013

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THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|---|
| A Message from the President..... | 1 |
| Preserving Williams Family History..... | 2 |
| Fire at Williams Bay..... | 3 |
| Back in the Day Transportation..... | 4 |

UPCOMING EVENTS

2023 Annual Meeting - 10th Anniversary
Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 11:30 am
Mabel Cratty Building
George Williams College of Aurora University
Williams Bay, WI

Renew Your Annual Membership Today

The Williams Bay Historical Society invites you to renew your 2024 membership. Membership forms can be found on our website: www.wmsbayhistory.org Please encourage family, friends, and neighbors to join.

Please keep your email address up-to-date to continue to receiving our semi-annual newsletter.

MISSION OF OUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

The purpose of the Williams Bay Historical Society is to assist in the preservation and exhibition of items of historical interest that are within the boundaries of Williams Bay, and the immediate surrounding area. It will seek to provide the public with educational opportunities to learn about our unique local history. It will also seek to organize and assist in the commemoration of significant dates and events in Village history.

A Message from the President



September 2023

Dear WBHS Members:

I would like to invite you and your friends to attend our Annual Meeting for the Williams Bay Historical Society. This year will mark the "10th Anniversary" of the Williams Bay Historical Society.

The event will be held on Saturday, October 7, 2023 from 11:30 am until 1:30 pm at George Williams College of Aurora University in the Mable Cratty Building. We will be renewing memberships at this time. Our theme will be "Shades of the Past." We would like to acknowledge the founders of our society: John Grove, Greg Trush, Deb Soplanda, and Tom McReynolds.

We will have elections of the 2024 Board of Directors. The nominees are President: Sue Vavra; Vice President: Judy Bausch; Treasurer: Dianna Woss; Recording Secretary: Kim Travis; Corresponding Secretary: Cindy Rademaker; Members-at-large: LaVerne Duncan, Phyllis Janda, Pat Grove.

We have been very busy this summer. We (Cathee Laughlin, Joy Schnupp, Sue Vavra) applied for the "150th Year Celebration of Gage Marine" grant and I am proud to say that WBHS, along with the Williams Bay Barrett Memorial Library, were awarded a \$10,000 grant. We have been collaborating with the library to preserve the history of the Village of Williams Bay. We will share at the annual meeting what the plans are for these awarded funds.

Our Past Perfect Program, that I have talked about in past newsletters, has been updated and ongoing data entry is almost complete. To date there are 1329 records

(library and historical society combined) that have been inventoried, cataloged, and data entered. A big and heartfelt thank you to Cathee Laughlin and Camille Grabski for all of their hard work in this area. We will also present information on the upcoming digitalization of records. We are working along with the WB library for this project. The end goal will be to make available to the public a web-based site to allow people to look up historic information regarding Williams Bay.

We had our annual garage sale fundraiser in June, which was a great success. Thank you to Judy Bausch for hosting the garage sale at her home. Also, thank you to Bob Pernic for driving the Historical Society in the annual Williams Bay Memorial Day Parade.

There are many events that we are planning, such as an informational Podcast, partnering with some Williams Bay High School students and the library. We will continue to have presentations on different and interesting topics for the public.

We hope that our current members will renew their memberships and encourage your friends and neighbors to also join our organization. Donations are also welcome. A future goal for these funds would be to offer one of our Williams Bay students a scholarship at graduation.

We hope to see you at the "10th Anniversary" of the Williams Bay Historical Society luncheon.

Respectfully,
Sue Vavra - President

Preserving Williams Family History

By Michelle Bie Love



Headstones of Israel and Lavina Williams showing their age and weathering

What we now know as Williams Bay was first a camp of Chief Big Foot's band of Potawatomi until the treaty signed in 1833 moved them west in 1836.

Captain Williams arrived at Geneva Lake in the summer of 1837 where his sons Israel Jr. and Moses had arrived in 1836, building their cabins on the south shore of the lake. In the spring of 1838, the Williams family moved to a cabin near the bay on the north Shore of Geneva Lake and planted their first crops in the old Potawatomi gardens.

In the early fall of 1838, Mrs. Williams' mother, Mrs. Hannah Joy died and her remains were interred near those of BigFoot's departed wives, where they remained until 1892, when her grandson, Festus Williams had them moved to East Delavan Union Cemetery.

In 1844, Captain Williams secured an appointment as postmaster, and named his office, not Williams Bay, but Geneva Bay. He held the position until his death when the office was discontinued. The village wasn't named Williams Bay until Marie Williams, granddaughter-in-law of Captain Williams, became postmistress and named the post office Williams Bay in February 1892.

There was a great deal of sickness among the early settlers in Walworth County. In 1845, Williams sons Moses and Austin were taken ill with typhoid fever and died within three days of each

other and were interred at East Delavan Union Cemetery. Captain Williams himself succumbed to the same disease on October 14, 1846 and was buried near his sons in the southeast corner of the cemetery. Mrs. Williams died at the family homestead on June 28, 1852, and was buried next to Captain Williams.

One Hundred and seventy years later, the headstones of Captain and Mrs. Williams were showing their age and weathering.

In the fall of 2022, Henry Kenyon and Michelle Love began exploring the steps that would be required to preserve them. Henry covered all the bases, contacting the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Walworth County Historical Society, the East Delavan Union Cemetery Association Board, the Williams Bay Historical Society, and Ketterhagen Memorials.

The State and County Historical Societies provided legal information as well as advice on the steps to follow. The East Delavan Union Cemetery Association Board was supportive and encouraged the efforts.

To secure the permission of Williams descendants, Michelle contacted the great, great, great-granddaughter of Israel and

Lavina Williams requesting the family's permission to proceed with the repair work. The family fully supported the repairs.

On August 8, 2023, Henry and Michelle met with Pat Vogel from Ketterhagen Memorials and a contract was signed to begin the restoration process that includes repairing the broken headstone of Mrs. Williams, adding a new concrete base, and mounting both headstones. At the suggestion of Pat Vogel, the brass marker for Captain Williams from the Williams Bay High School History Club will also be permanently mounted in the concrete to prevent damage from the lawnmowers.

A big thank you to Henry Kenyon, for his dedication to the project, for the many hours of research, phone calls, and for his generous donation to see the restoration completed.

Thank you, also, to Karen Ubl and her late mother, Irene Williams, for their support of the project and donation so that future generations of Williams Bay historians will be able to recognize and honor the final resting place of the founders of our Village.

Update: Because of the condition of the headstones, especially that of Mrs. Williams whose headstone is sugaring, a very fine crumbling of the stone, Pat Ketterhagen suggested placing both stones flat on the concrete base rather than mounting them in an upright position. The brass marker from the Williams Bay High School History Club will still be placed in the concrete base.

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Affiliated Member of the
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Historical Society Board of Directors

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Vice President - Judy Bausch

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Destructive Midnight Fire Entails Loss of About \$15,000

W.G. DeGroff Building at Williams Bay Burned to the Ground on Saturday Night

Delavan Republican, October 3, 1912 Vol. 49 Issue 50



Granzow & Peterson Grocery
Walworth Avenue (looking north) ca 1907



A - Granzow & Peterson Grocery and Host's Meat Market
B - A. Hollister & Son Lumber Yard
C - Knickerbocker Ice House

Awakened between eleven and twelve o'clock Saturday night [September 28] by the ominous alarm of fire, residents of Williams Bay were called upon to fight one of the most destructive fires that ever visited that place. The fire, discovered by Fred Jensen, was in the W.G. DeGroff building, housing the store of Granzow & Peterson and the meat market of Leo Host. When first discovered a small blaze was greedily eating its way up the back wall of the Host Market. Although the alarm was responded to quickly and citizens worked unceasingly it was only by a determined effort that the fire was confined to the one building.

The building and the contents of the two stores were burned to the ground. The loss on the building is about \$5,000. Granzow & Peterson's loss will total between \$7,000 and \$8,000; Host's about \$3,000. Building and stocks were insured for nearly two-thirds of their value. The origins of the fire is a mystery.

The loss probably falls heaviest on Granzow & Peterson for only the day before they had received a large consignment of freight, containing most of their winter stock of goods. On that afternoon they also received over 200 pounds of butter. This butter was still smoldering as late as Sunday evening.

Back of their store a short distance Granzow and Peterson had over 250 gallons of gasoline stored in cans in a shed. The fire from the building was so hot that

it melted the pitch in the knots of the timber of this shed. Luckily the gasoline did not explode. By eye witnesses at the fire it is said that had this exploded it would have carried the fire to the A. Hollister & Son Lumber Yard and it might have spread from there to the immense Knickerbocker ice houses. This is good evidence that the safest way to keep gasoline in any large quantity is in underground storage tanks.

The DeGroff garage within fifteen feet of the burned building was saved by the hardest kind of work. With practically nothing to work with [the fire department wasn't founded until 1923] the citizens of Williams Bay deserve credit for the courageous and successful manner in which they confined the fire to the building in which it started. Those upon whom the loss falls have the sympathy of many friends.

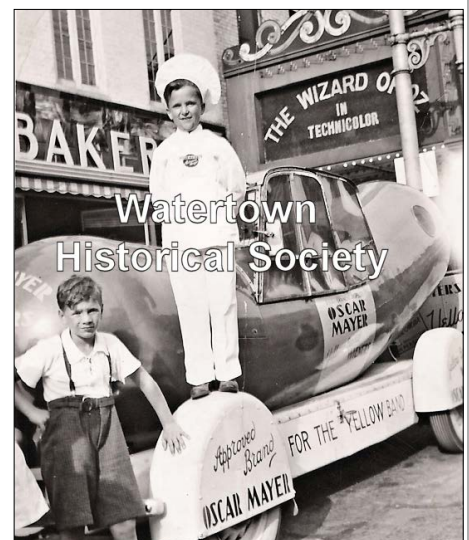
Granzow & Peterson announce that they will resume business at once or as soon as a temporary location can be found. Accounts can be paid for the present at the post office where they will have a temporary office.

The burned building will probably be rebuilt but this has not been decided definitely, as yet.

"Little Oscar" Visited Williams Bay

"Little Oscar: The World's Smallest Chef" appeared at the Fish Line Market in Williams Bay July 2-4, 1937. He greeted patrons and visitors, giving out samples of Oscar Mayer's yellow band wieners, autographed photographs, and other interesting souvenirs.

Little Oscar, who was 22 years old, was 42 inches tall, and weighed 49 pounds, traveled around the Midwest in the unique Oscar Mayer Wienermobile, meeting and greeting hundreds of thousands of people. The wienermobile was the idea of Oscar Mayer's nephew Carl in 1936



In 1939, Little Oscar whose name was Meinhardt Raabe took a leave of absence from his job at Oscar Mayer to appear as the Munchkin Coroner in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. His memorable line from the movie, "As coroner, I must aver, I thoroughly examined her. And she's not only merely dead, she's really most sincerely dead," has entertained audiences for generations.

Raabe was born in Watertown, WI on September 2, 1915. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1937 with a bachelor's degree in accounting. He was hired as salesman by Oscar Mayer and worked for decades as a spokesman for Oscar Mayer. One of the last surviving Munchkins, he died April 9, 2010 in Florida, burial was in Farmington, Jefferson County, Wisconsin.

Back in the Day - Transportation



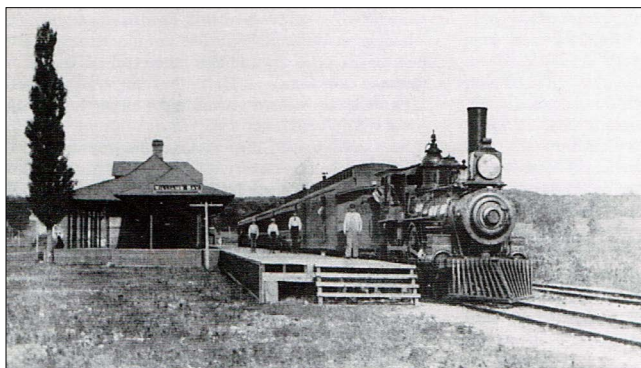
Looking west (corner of hwy 50 & 67) ca. 1905



Gena Dell Snidker
on Walworth Avenue ca. 1920



Ned Grimm with Ford Model A ca. 1930s



Depot in Williams Bay ca. 1888-1889



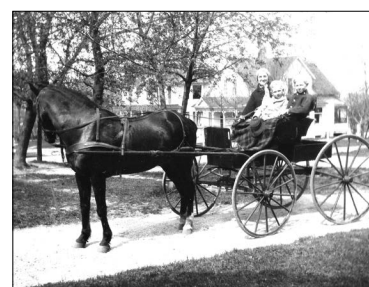
Steam Yachts and row boats ca 1890s



Aeroplane "Geneva" at Observatory flying field
ca. 1920



Horseback riding was a popular pastime ca. 1920s



Horse and buggy ca. 1914

