

# Iowa County Historical Society Newsletter



Volume XXIX

No. 2

April 2004

## Potpourri

Ponder this tale just heard. A friend reminisced about an ancestor who was slogging around Iowa County selling raffle tickets on a horse. ... A blind horse! ... Well, the blind horse fell off a cliff and broke its neck. The intrepid owner continued to sell raffle tickets on a dead, blind horse. To protect the guilty and the innocent, I will only reveal that the friend is active in township politics not far from the Iowa County seat

Walt Whitman's "*When Lilacs Last in The Dooryard Bloom'd*" reminds us of April, the tragic month one hundred thirty-nine years ago when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Most of America mourned with Whitman. A few lines:

*When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd, And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night, I mourn'd and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.*

*O ever-returning spring! Trinty sure to me you bring; Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west, And thought of him I love.*

It is mindful of our heritage which still brings the peoples of the earth to "America."

The Society welcomes **Alice Griffiths** to the Board of Directors. She has been appointed to fill the term of **Calvin Olson** who recently resigned. Alice has a strong commitment to local affairs. She resides in Dodgeville with her husband James.

## And The Baby Was ...

Thanks to a letter from long-time member and donor **Frieda Schurch** of Kenosha, Wisconsin we started to zero in on the blizzard baby of 1946 mentioned in "A Letter to My Grandchildren" by Jane Lane Davies in the January 2004 newsletter. Frieda knew that **Ralph and Lorraine Duffey** participated in just such an event in 1946 with an exhausted county road crew creating a path to the Duffey farm and leading Ralph and his expectant wife to Dodgeville where the child was born. A look at the plat book for a Duffey farm on County road "J" was followed by a call to **Edward Duffey** of rural Barneveld who informed the writer that the baby was **Robert Duffey**, now of Madison and that Edward is the brother of the late Ralph Duffey. Thanks to Frieda and Ed for volunteering this interesting to the Society.

## Worried?

Concerned about finding a place for your family genealogy, your family pictures? Why not include them in your will as a gift to the Iowa County Historical Society. Due to limited space, the Historical Society will reserve the right in its discretion to retain or dispose of bequested material pursuant to the historical and educational purposes of the Society. **Please note: The Society needs a notice of your intentions when you make the decision.**

## ICHS Directors

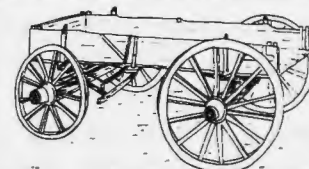
Sherry Einerson, Pres	930-2035
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Ruth Bahr	532-6843
Melva Phillips	924-5508
Boyd Geer	930-9084
Alice Griffiths	935-0574
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## In This Issue



**Meuer Family Connects in Montabaur, Germany**  
by Caroline Meuer  
Pages 2 and 3

**Show and Tell Report**  
by John Hess  
Page 4  
**Growing Up in a Small Town**  
by Leon Nelson  
Pages 4 & 7



**Paschal Bequette**  
**Entrepreneur ... Waggoner**  
Pages 5 & 6

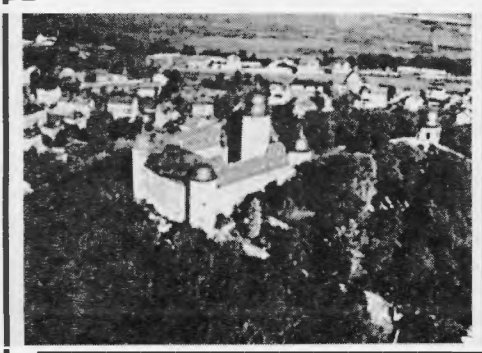
**News of Interest, Books - Page 3**

**Membership Application Page 7**

## Meuer Family Connects in Montabaur, Germany

by Carolyn Gratz Meuer

More than 150 years ago hundreds of residents of the **Montabaur** region near **Koblenz** in western Germany emigrated to America due to poverty and perhaps for adventure, too. Since 1842 the Mainz Adelsverein (a club of wealthy noblemen) supported the emigration, especially to Texas. Seven hundred twenty six persons emigrated and three hundred fifteen indicated Texas to be their goal. We can only guess at the hardships and adversities that made whole villages leave. Three villages of what was then called the **Duchy of Nassau** were given up all together. Among them was the village of **Sespenroth** which was situated in what is



Montabaur Castle

now the communal land Heilberscheid (*Communal land is owned in common and may be park land.*) Forty-eight of the sixty inhabitants left for Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Only three families stayed behind in the **Westerwald** region. **Guido Feig**, an historian from Montabaur, (*town of 12,400 about 19 miles east of Koblenz*) had always wondered about the groups of people that gave up their homes. He came to Wisconsin in 1992 and found their graves and met their descendants. It was 150 years ago Easter Monday 2003 that the people of Sespenroth left. Feig, with the help of the Deutsch-Texas club and many locals, decided to hold a celebration and invite their cousins in America to travel to Germany. An ad for host families was put in the newspaper.

**Guido Feig** had met **Merl and Vicky Meuer Nadler**, **Jerry and Lynn Meuer Litchfield** and **Carolyn Gratz Meuer** during his visit to Dodgeville in 1992. Vicky took him to the Union Mills cemetery and Lynn took him to Saint Joseph's cemetery in Dodgeville. He collected the needed information, some previously compiled by **Frances Meuer Jacobson**.

Carolyn Meuer was already touring Belgium and Holland in early April of 2003. Since no one else from

the family was going, she decided to stay in Europe and attend the celebration. **Marie Sersch** also of Dodgeville, her traveling companion, agreed to accompany her. They left the tour at Amsterdam, took the train to Paris for three nights, stayed two more in Frankfurt near Marie's cousin and arrived April 19 at Montabaur. They were greeted by Guido and Erika Feig, **Gerhard** and **Enger Wick** and their host family, **Gerhard** and **Margit Ferdinand** of Montabaur **Ettersdorf**.

A reception was held at the Montabaur town hall followed by a tour of the castle, the town, and a dairy farm. They continued on to Ettersdorf, a village of 200. The **Ferdinands** have a very nice home that is attached to his parent's home. A single brother lives there now. Margit had some English in grade school as she grew up in Mainz on the Rhine. Gerhard did not have that opportunity living in such a small dorf (*town*) and did not want to host people that he could not speak with. Marie soon had him saying things "like piece of cake" and "yup." It took 30 minutes to find out what Margit did for a living as legal secretary was not in her English dictionary. Gerhart retired in 2002 from the sawmill in Montabaur. We spent the evening with the other guests and their host families.

Sunday was our free day. We wanted to go to church as it was Easter Sunday but were not getting any cooperation. Little did we know that Easter is celebrated for four days and they would be going to Mass on Easter Monday. We spent the day in the Rhine River valley which was only 40 minutes away.

On Monday we attended church in **Heilberscheid** which has a population of 400. The beautiful sounding choir was made up of four-part harmony and it had four Meuers in it. The plaque on the side of the church told of a Meuer dying in both WWI and WWII. A reception was held at the town hall with a three-piece dance band providing music. The mayor and American vice consultant were among the speakers. We met 17 Meuers. Next was a dinner with many local dishes after which we walked down the hill to the Sespenroth valley. It looked much like the valley of the Union Mills church north of Dodgeville. All physical evidence of the village of Sespenroth had been sold so the only thing left of the village are the pieces of pottery

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

that were dug up and are displayed in Heilberscheid. There was a celebration in Heilberscheid with a 15-piece band, dogs, horses, two fire departments, antiques, food and costumes of the 1850s period. A new cross was dedicated at the shrine. Sespenroth is now a park. We talked with many of the locals and believe we now are linked to many Meuers.

We had another free day on Tuesday, went to Limberg, and the next day returned home from Frankfurt.

**Ed Rosenthal** of Illinois also took part in the celebration. Ed is the great, great grandson of **Johann Jacob Meuer** who had helped build the Union Mills church and is buried in the cemetery. Ed has been researching family history for over 30 years and now has all the information computerized.

**Kathy Barr** of Texas returned to Germany for the seventh time to be at the celebration. Her great, great grandfather is **Anton Meuer** who is also buried at the Union Mills cemetery. Kathy has been researching family history for over 50 years and is currently writing a fictional book based on fact about a young girl's adventures when migrating from Sespenroth to the Union Mills area in Iowa County, Wisconsin.



L. to R.: Ed Rosenthal, Kathy Barr, Carolyn Meuer, Berthold Meuer of Niederbabach, Germany

**Berthold Meuer** is from Niederbabach, Germany and is making the connections between his line and our line which is **Johann Peter Meuer** of Horbach, Germany, married to **Anna Marie Reckenthaler**.

*Kathy, Carolyn and Ed are members of the Iowa County Historical Society. Carolyn mentioned that the Meuer line has a gene which causes the hair of males to become darker with age, usually. At the ICHS we hope that you too will search for the roots of your ancestors, regardless of the color of your hair. Editor.*

Carolyn Meuer is married to **Donald Francis Meuer** whose great, great grandfather is **Ludwig Meuer** also buried at Union Mills.

## Society Updates

Twenty seven books and maps are for sale at your society museum. See the list in the January 2004 Newsletter. We mail if you call.

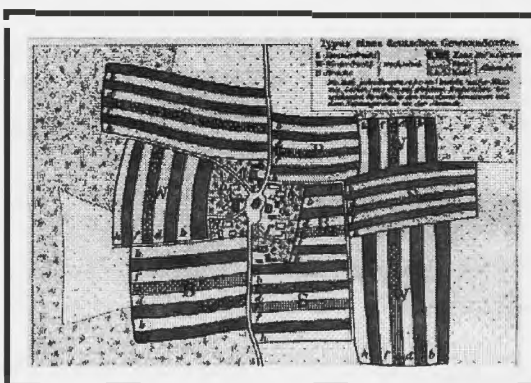
We are pleased to announce that the Society has been awarded a grant for the purpose of hiring a research specialist to augment the application of the Dodge Mining Camp Cabin for inclusion on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

## Wonders Never Cease

In late February the Spring issue of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* published by the *Wisconsin Historical Society*, arrived in the Editor's mailbox. This stunning and colorful fifty-six page glossy magazine contained well-researched stories such as "Tinker to Evers to Chief" relating the gradual switch of the young Indian men on Midwestern reservations from the thousand-year old (estimated) game lacrosse and other games which soon gave way to baseball. *Charles Bender* was the deservedly famous Indian pitcher for *Connie Mack's Philly "Athletics"* early in the twentieth century. Wisconsin stories, great historic photos and many short articles make this magazine a must for local history buffs. To receive discounts and this fine magazine join *The Wisconsin Historical Society* at 816 State St. Madison, WI 53791-9012 or join on line at [wisconsinhistory.org/membership](http://wisconsinhistory.org/membership).

## German Village and Farm Layout

This layout will vary in different regions, but



Some of the strips are for winter "W" and some for summer "S" "fruits," while the "B" strips are "fallow" or resting. Note, all is within walking distance.

the idea of a central village surrounded by narrow strips of tillable land is found in most of the lands of our ancestors.

## Show And Tell – Historic Photos

*As recollected by John Hess*

The Iowa County Historical Society, following last year's big success, held its second "Show and Tell" on a sunny but frigid Saturday last January. This year Iowa County residents were invited to bring in historical photos and identify them. Many interesting stories came forth from the photo owners as they passed albums and photographs around a big table where everyone was assembled. To their surprise and delight, they also heard stories and information about their historic photographs from others. Following are the participants and some of the photos they brought in, but without the stories. You must ask about their stories next time you see them. At the conclusion of the program there were countless photos and albums mixed together on the big table, but everyone seemed to have retrieved their own and didn't go home with someone else's treasure.

1. **Sherry and Ray Einerson** started with a mystery picture of a narrow restaurant on the east side of Iowa Street in Dodgeville which no one could identify, then followed with historic photos of Dodgeville, Hollandale and Mineral Point
2. **Melva Phillips'** collection included a photo of her father, Floyd Polkinghorn, and Teddy Roosevelt with members of the Williams-Bennet families. Her final item was a nighttime Christmas photo of the tree in front of the Iowa County Courthouse, which since has been cut down.
3. **Lois Wieland** showed an album with a picture of Ira King, her grandfather, and many photos of family and neighbors, as well as the Bunker Hill School.
4. **Helen Radtke** passed around an interesting collection of post card photos of Iowa County that came from her husband's grandmother, as well as her own Sweet Clover School class picture.
5. **Alice Griffith** showed a 1918 photo of the Pleasant Valley Griffith Farm in the family since 1846, as well as other interesting Iowa County scenes. Also a photo of John F. Kennedy campaigning in the Dodge Theater. **(Jim says correct, 2-16-04)**
6. **Doug Miller** announced two upcoming **Folklore Village** programs of historic photographs, showed a photo of the Springdale Church and a photo of the house of Aslak Lie, the Norwegian craftsman,

which will be restored at Folklore Village. He also solicited photos of students who attended the Wakefield School.

7. **Thelma McKenzie** showed Erickson and McKenzie family photos, which included many interesting shots of buggies and cars.
8. **Neil Giffey** showed images of old Dodgeville: the Stratman Wagon Works ca. 1883, the Spring Street Illinois Central Trestle in 1894, Iowa Street in color plus a 1916 snapshot of GAR veterans, after a Memorial Day Parade, showing how surroundings had changed in eighty-eight years.
9. **Boyd Geer**, who served as a guide at Yorktown Battlefield National Park, showed material from that 1781 Revolutionary War historic site, including information about his responsibility the Moore House, the site where negotiators drew up the "Articles of Capitulation." *(The surrender of Lord Cornwallis to George Washington)*
10. **John Hess** showed two photos taken in 1928 by Gladys Richardson of members of the Will Rogers family on their farm, which today is his farm.
11. **Melva Phillips** concluded with a presentation of historic photos from the ICHS collection.

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### Growing Up in a Small Town in the 30s and 40s

**By Leon Nelson**

*Continued from the October 2003 Newsletter.*

When we left him (*the depot agent*), we started to drive our bikes on the train platform, then this got too tame so we figured how to jump our bikes across a void of about a foot and land in a boxcar, turn quickly and stop without falling. Hey, this was great fun. Then we started jumping out over the chasm back onto the platform. Then all three of us would take a flying jump into the box car. Oh, my gosh! The train was moving! Here we were, all three of us in a moving box car on our way to Freeport! Well, we were smart enough not to try to jump our bikes out while we were by the platform; but as soon as we cleared the platform, we threw out our bikes. As the train picked up

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Paschal Bequette

### The Life and Adventures of A Lead Region Entrepreneur

Compiled and Written by Louisa Bradley Watson

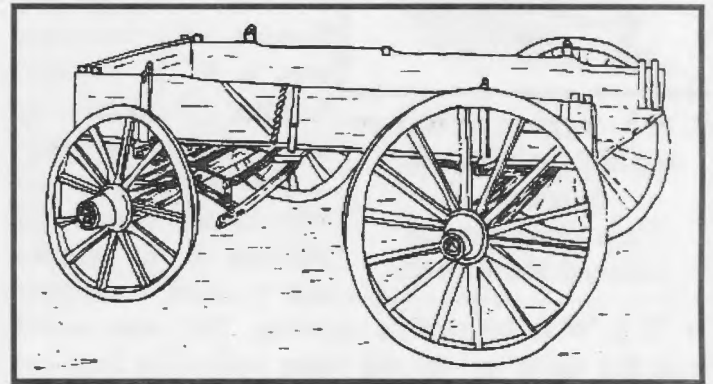
**Pascal Bequette** was born to **Jean Baptiste Bequette** and **Louise Mesplait** in **Ste. Genevieve, Missouri** on October 24, 1805. (*This was shortly after the Louisiana Purchase and while the Rogers and Clark Corps of Discovery was moving down the Columbia River prior to their return to the United States in September 1806.*) **Ste. Genevieve** was the old French headquarters of what was then Upper Louisiana. **Pascal Bequette** was of French descent, his paternal ancestors coming in the early days from Canada. His mother was from New Orleans. He was reared in **Ste. Genevieve** and received his education there using French as his native speech, though as he grew to manhood he spoke English fluently. He started to learn merchandizing in the store of **Bossier and Valle** in **Ste. Genevieve**. Then he went to **Minne La Motte** and remained for some years at **Frederickstown**. From there he went to **Mineral Point, Wisconsin** and engaged in the business of merchandizing and lead smelting. He was one of the first volunteers to fight the Indians in the Black Hawk War where he served under his father-in-law, **Henry Dodge**. During this war he rose to the rank of colonel and thereafter was always called by that title. He married Governor Dodge's daughter, **Elizabeth Piety Dodge**, in 1832.



They lived in Wisconsin for twenty years. (*Pascal and Elizabeth Piety lived in or near Dodgeville, Mineral Point and finally Diamond Grove, where for a time they operated a blacksmith shop, general mer-*

*of the runway of the present day Iowa County Airport.*)

During the administrations of Presidents **Van Buren** and **Polk**, **Bequette** was appointed Receiver of Public Moneys at **Mineral Point**. (*This included prime responsibility for collecting the fees for land purchase from the Federal Government at that time. The early purchases at \$1.25 per acre were for the purpose of prospecting for lead. Later, the value of the land for farming became paramount and the second Wisconsin land rush began.*) Through his own efforts he amassed quite a modest fortune for those days and like so many of his time he was attracted to the West. Selling out his interests in **Mineral Point**, he started in April 1852 to make the arduous trip



Style of wagon used in wagon trains of the 1850s.  
Covering added as desired.

across the plains. No record has been kept of the name of the (*wagon*) train he joined. He took with him his wife and their six children. The elder son, **Henry Dodge Bequette**, proceeded them to California, having come out in the '49 rush. Mr. and Mrs. **Bequette** made the trip in as luxurious a style as was possible in those days. They had large and comfortable wagons with especially fine springs. They also had carriages and Colonel **Bequette** had his own buggy and would ride ahead of the train to scout for the always possible Indians. They had sixteen wagons, eight drawn by horses and eight by oxen. The men who drove the teams worked for their board and

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

transportation to California. The party was composed of the six children: **Louis Linn**, **Mary Louise**, called **Lilly**, **Christiana Adelle**, called **Kitty**, **Elizabeth Augusta**, called **Gussie**, **Paschal Jr.** and a two and a half year old **Virginia Josephine**, called **Jennie**. They had a governess, Miss **Gorgie Allen**, whose duty was to



L. to R: Virginia, Christiana and Elizabeth Bequette, daughters of Pascal Bequette and Elizabeth Piety Dodge

teach the children their lessons en route. They also had servants, one a Negro man. Mrs. Bequette said the journey of three months was exceedingly pleasant and like a prolonged picnic. No ugly incident marred their western progress. At **Salt Lake City** they were entertained by Colonel Bequette's old friend, **Captain Hooper**, who was at one time a U. S. Senator. Nearing California in

order to cross the desert safely they made up beds for the women and children in the wagons and traveled a distance of 75 to 90 miles without stopping. The oxen would have run away looking for water and never have returned.

An amusing incident occurred when an Indian Chief desired to barter with Colonel Bequette. Looking at their little daughter, Kitty, whose flower-like beauty always attracted attention, he proposed to trade a fine horse for the delicate little white girl. Needless to say the trade never took place.

A friend of Colonel Bequette took his family immediately to **Sacramento**, where Bequette invested in a wholesale grocery store. He also established his stock (*cattle*) on islands in the Sacramento River. An unkind fate overtook this kindly French gentleman. His entire fortune was swept from him by the fire which destroyed his store when the whole city burned in 1853, and later the terrible floods drowned the cattle. Colonel Bequette never recovered from these financial losses and in a time when everyone was amassing those enormous fortunes, he remained com-

paratively poor. He was appointed Receiver of the Land Office in **San Francisco** and he moved to that place shortly after the catastrophes. Later President **Franklin Pierce** (1854) and President **Buchanan** (1858) appointed him Receiver of Public Moneys in **Visalia**.

In 1859 he came to Visalia and decided to make that place his home. It was a very small town and to house his large family, which had increased by two since his arrival in California, he bought a brick hotel, known as "The Eagle" which stood on Bridge and Acequia Streets, the present site of the Santa Fe depot.

In 1861 Louis Linn Bequette, son of the Colonel, was elected Recorder of Tulare County. Louis resigned from this office and his father held the office for a few years. Colonel Bequette was a democrat in politics and a southern sympathizer. He lived through the trying period of the Civil War, holding the respect of the citizens of his town. He was at all times deeply interested in the affairs of his country and held various positions of trust. His opinion was fully given in an open, candid and patriotic manner, commanding admiration from his friends and personal respect from his enemies.

Colonel Bequette died on December 2, 1879 in Visalia and is buried in the city cemetery where an appropriate monument marks his resting place. His devoted wife died a few years later and is laid beside him. They left numerous descendants, with a large proportion living in Visalia or in Tulare County.

*This article was extracted from a history of the Bradley-Bequette Family done in the 1930s by Louisa Bradley Watson. It is part of the history of a portion of the Dodge Family in Mineral Point-Dodgeville and Diamond Grove. Many of the street names of Mineral Point and Dodgeville reflect the Ste. Genevieve inhabitants who flocked to the lead region in the late 1820s. Editor.*

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(Continued from page 4)

eed, we jumped out, rolling on the ground, getting cinders in the heels of our hands. If you wanted to see three shook up boys, we were it! We never went back to that adventure again. Even little boys know when enough is enough!

We liked to go camping and went out every chance we would get. When we were in the Scout troop, we went to summer camp and camporees; but I think we enjoyed our own little private camp-outs the best. We sometimes would go west of town a few miles near "Little Woods" but most of the time we went down on the Hollandale road by a little stream or down to Cox's Hollow, which is now Gov. Dodge State Park. We had a ground cloth that was a material called oil cloth. It had a waterproof surface on a cloth backing. This made a good ground cloth and our sleeping bags were blankets that were held together with horse blanket pins. These pins were like large safety pins and they would hold our blankets secure and be just as good as any sleeping bag today. On these outings we never used a tent, because we didn't have one. It is a shock to wake up at six in the morning and find a whole herd of Holsteins milling around you and then one decides to flop a "cow pie" a few feet from your head!

We would bring a frying pan, bacon and eggs, some bread and eat like Kings! The night before we would have had cube steak or hamburgers, potatoes and vegetables. Nothing like camping out and preparing your own food in the great outdoors. However, we were always back home for our noon dinner!

Tribal warring instincts come out in all boys one way or another, and for me in our part of the world it was with rubber band guns. We would make a

gun about 15 to 18 inches long with a pistol grip, and we fasten a spring type clothes pin to the back of the grip. We would wind our giant rubber bands tightly around the upper part of the clothes pin to increase the tension on the gripping end. Taking an old inner tube that we would get from Sully's station dump area we'd cut huge rubber bands out of the part of the tube that didn't get ruined in the blow out that had consigned the tube to the trash. After gathering as many tube rubber bands as we could, we would take one, place it in our super tight clothespin trigger mechanism, and stretch it out to and around the end of our pistol. Pressing on the hand grip would allow the rubber band to fly out and slap into the torso of our hated enemy of the day, our neighbor's son. And he was trying to do the same to us. Then we developed our magnum loads, we would tie knots in the rubber bands creating a longer stretch and more wallop to the shot. So we marauders of the north would stalk the streets of our war torn neighborhood with bandoleers of rubber band ammo slung over our shoulders like Mexican banditos. When our ammo supply was running low we would sacrifice one of our brave soldiers by letting him be in the direct line of fire, drawing fire from all of our opposing army then quickly gathering up all of the spent rubber bands laying about, replenishing our ammo supply. Then all of a sudden, both armies would break and scatter like quail, our Mother's had just called us for dinner!

### *Ice Cream Social*

*Music and Fun at 4:30 p. m.*

*Thursday, July 22, 2004 ... at Museum*

### **Membership Application**

**Iowa County Historical Society**

**MAIL TO: MARIE SERSCH**

106 E. Pine St., Dodgeville, WI 53533

Family, includes spouse	\$10.00
5 year membership	\$40.00
Historian, annual dues	\$20.00
Master Historian, annual dues	\$50.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street, P. O. Box \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Period \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

*I am interested in making a tax deductible gift to the  
Iowa County Historical Society. Please contact me at the above address.*

*Signed* \_\_\_\_\_

Iowa County Historical Society  
1301 N. Bequette St.  
P. O. Box 44  
Dodgeville, WI 53533-0044

**MEMBERSHIPS**

**MAIL TO:**

**MAIL TO MARIE SERSCH**

106 E. Pine St., Dodgeville, WI 53533

Family, includes spouse	\$10.00
5 year membership	\$40.00
Historian, annual dues	\$25.00
Master Historian, annual dues	\$50.00

**ICHS SERVICES**

**GENEALOGY-HISTORIC RESEARCH**

The Society has extensive archives for Iowa County:  
history-cemeteries-obituaries-newspaper microfilm-artifacts  
For an appointment call Melva Phillips, Marie Sersch or  
Sherry Einerson. See their phone numbers on page one.  
Museum: 608-935-7694.

**NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
DODGEVILLE, WI  
PERMIT NO. 86**

Address Service Requested

**Calendar of Events**

**Bake and Yard Sale**

**At the Museum**

***1301 North Bequette St. Dodgeville***

**April 24, Open at 8 a. m.**

***Dodgeville city-wide garage sale,  
same day—make the rounds***

The Dodge Cabin at 205 East Fountain St. in  
Dodgeville will be opened by request all year.

Call the Museum or 608-935-5557

for an appointment or to volunteer as a guide  
Make the Cabin a part of your Iowa County tour.

*If your label is highlighted, your membership  
has expired. Please renew.  
Your support is appreciated.*

**Ice Cream Social**

**Thursday, July 22, 2004**

**4:30 p. m.**

***Iowa County Historical Society***

**At The Museum 1301 N. Bequette**

**Music, Good Food and More**



*A Bison by George Catlin-1834*  
Buffalo roamed Wisconsin in the  
distant past. May we in the present  
ask you to renew ?

Volunteers are priceless  
Posterity depends on you to preserve  
memories so that they can do the same