

Iowa County Historical Society Newsletter



Volume XXX

No. 2

April 2005

Potpourri

The ICHS Museum Open House on February 19 and 20 was a heart warming experience for the Society. We were privileged to have a number of first time museum visitors, especially among the ranks of local government elected officials. Many expressed surprise at the scope and depth of the collections. Plans are to do an Open House again to coincide with the completion of the planned museum addition. You are invited to visit and to support the addition.

Talk about hungry people ... The ICHS Buffet at The Thyms on Sunday, February, 13 was a roaring success with well over one hundred friends attending and enjoying a typical robust Thyms Buffet in the bargain. Thank you all.

John Dutcher of Platteville showed how the hard labor and uncertainty of frontier life made the market for a low priced and flavorful glass of beer often seem the only reward for a life of toil and privation, especially in the mines. "The Breweries of Southwest Wisconsin" was an ICHS sponsored event on January 29 at the Dodgeville City Hall. John Dutcher, sometimes known as Mr. Platteville, became Mr. Brewery Historian. Details are on page 2 of this Newsletter.

Thanks to webmaster, designer and member Chuck Peplinski our website is: iowacountyhistoricalsociety.org Growing, it will cover the County. Chuck also donated the domain name fees for a three year period. Take a look.

*Send us your attics
yearning to be read.*

Yes ... That does sound pretentious, but the ICHS does yearn for those hidden treasure troves in all those neglected attics. We may be short of space, but we would be derelict of our duty to the future if we didn't examine those old letters, old books, old maps, old pictures in your attic. We can copy the best if you choose not to donate them.

Call 608-935-7694
ichistory@mhtc.net

Garage Sale and Baked Goods
at the Museum
"Bring some-Buy some"
April 23 8:30 am

ICHS Directors

Alice Griffiths, Pres.	935-0574
Boyd Geer, VP	930-9084
John Hess, Sec.	588-7082
Marie Sersch, Treas.	935-5752
Melva Phillips	924-5508
Helen Radtke	987-2892
Therese McCarrager	967-2232
Janice Blask	935-5768
Neil Giffey, Editor	935-5557
giffey@mhtc.net	

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Books for sale and
microfilm to study.
Find your ancestors at

A Message From the President

The Board has been working on a strategic plan for the Iowa County Historical Society. In a series of four sessions facilitated by Paul Ohlrogge, the Board reviewed the history of the society, identified stakeholders, and identified strategic issues. You as members of the Historical Society represent our largest number of stakeholders and we need and welcome your ideas and your help. You all know how crowded we are and that we have been talking about an addition to the museum. We now have a plan and a drawing. Please stop in and see the architectural design Jewell & Associates produced for us.

In future issues we will share more about the strategic planning process. In the coming months I also hope to meet personally with many of you either in person or by phone. I hope to gather your ideas and solicit your participation.

Special thanks to Paul Ohlrogge Community Resource Agent UW- Extension, Iowa County for facilitating our work on the Strategic Plan.



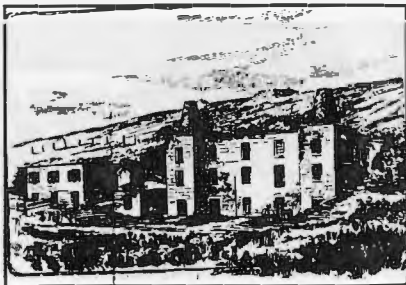
President Griffiths

*Alice Griffiths, President
Iowa County Historical Society*

Dutcher on Breweries

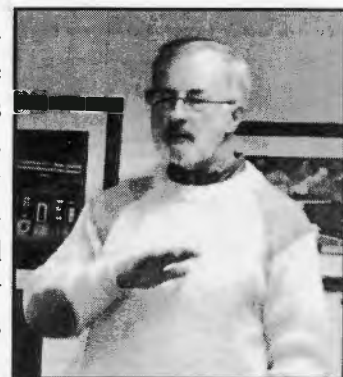
Breweries Were an Integral Part of Early Small Town Culture
by Neil Giffey

On January 29, 2005 **John Dutcher** of **Platteville** put it together for the audience at the Society winter meeting. Dutcher used Power Point images to emphasize how the brewing of beer in the Midwestern frontier communities fit well with the needs and desires of those communities. Very often, Dutcher stated, ... settlers built breweries before they built churches as generations of experience in Europe served as a cautionary lesson in the importance of pure water. The fermentation involved in the brewing process was a rather good guarantee that slaking one's thirst with a mug of beer was not a one way trip to the sick bed. Bad water was as effective a killer of populations as poison.



Garden City Brewery 1855
Mineral Point
Founded by John Phillips 1835
Courtesy of Mineral Point Historical Society and John Dutcher

Dutcher is writing a book on the breweries of the Lead Region. He has contributed numerous articles to the **American Breweriana Journal** as a member of the growing roster of those who care about the cultural past of the Lead Region. The main players in his upcoming book are men like **John Phillips** who founded Wisconsin's first commercial brewery in **Mineral Point**, **Jacob Gundlach** of **Highland** and many successors and **John M. Trentzsch** of **Dodgeville** who had several partners but no real successors after the destruction by fire of his small plant in 1880.



John Dutcher

As I recall

by Leon Nelson

A long time supporter remembers again ...

Trying to find just the right forked branch of a tree that would make the perfect sling shot was a real challenge. You can't imagine the time spent like a miniature timber cruiser hunting the town and neighboring woods over for just the right crotch. And then you would see it, a beautifully conformed piece of natural architecture growing there just for you, your prize discovery. You will be the envy of the whole neighborhood, but it's out of reach! Too far from the ground and too far out on the limb to climb out to. Nothing can be done about it so we have to settle for second best, always knowing in our heart of hearts that the perfect one is still there waiting for you. Well, you take the crotch that is now your choice, notch around the end

of the fork and using one of your rubber gun bands, attach it to the notched area and then place a leather piece in the center and attach in a similar fashion. Now you have a super slingshot, and finding the right size pebbles to shoot has become your next hurdle. Now you really have a pretty good weapon and after you develop some proficiency with it shooting at cans, you make a terrible discovery. There is nothing you want to kill with it and it is too dangerous to use to shoot at your brothers and friends with so, after a few days of hauling it around, it becomes part of one's collection of treasures.

All of my life a pocket knife has been an important tool. You can take a piece of willow, especially in the spring, find a branch about the size of your finger, and cut off a piece about seven inches long. About two inches from the end cut carefully cut around the stick only as deep as the bark, gently tapping the two inch area with the handle of the knife. You will bruise the layer closest to the main wood

area of your willow stick. Grab it firmly in your hand but gently twist it and it will turn and now you can slide it off, having in one hand your two inch piece of willow bark tube, and in the other a two inch bare piece of willow with the rest of the stick intact. Slide your tube back on the stick and cut a notch about one half inch back from the end, a cut straight down about one third of the way through the stick and then slice diagonally down to remove the notch. Gently remove the tube and cut the bare part of the stick off about a quarter of an inch from the end. Save the piece you have cut off and remove the part that has the notch in it and make a flat surface on the part that you have left. Now reassemble the parts and lo, and behold, you have a real whistle! After a little practice making them you can make little slide whistles and change the pitch. When your willow tube dries up, you have to start all over again. Oh well, anything worth having is worth working for! A Mom-ism!

We didn't have a swimming pool in Dodgeville, but they did have one in Mineral Point and that was only eight miles away. We used to "hitch hike" to "Point" and walk the last mile to the pool, down the road past the brewery toward the Pendarvis house. One day going past the brewery I caught a glimpse of a rat on the top of the brewery vat and told the operator about it. He said, "That's OK kid, they fall in and add flavor to the brew!" I wonder if he ever figured that his remark would keep me from ever drinking beer! Blah!

A lot of the kids from Dodgeville would hitch rides to Point to go swimming, and it was easy to catch a ride because people would recognize your towel roll and know where you were going, otherwise I'm sure they would be hesitant to pick up young 10 to 14 year old boys. Generally when our family went swimming, Mom would load us up in the car and the whole family would go to Blue Mounds. Blue Mounds was the highest hill in southern Wisconsin and it was owned by a farmer and bit by bit they commercialized it. They discovered a cave on the property and developed a way to show it off effectively and charged admission, then developed a picnic area. Soon they put in a swimming pool and it became quite a rural resort area.

(Continued on page 4)

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As I Recall ...

After you had seen the cave a couple of times, there was no need to come back but the swimming pool and picnic grounds and observation tower brought people back again and again. I haven't been up there for more than 50 years and I guess today it is a Wisconsin state park.

Boy, did we have a neat "tree house!" On the back side of the garage there was a huge box elder tree. The diameter of the trunk must have been more than four feet. About eight or nine feet from the ground, four huge branches fanned out, each of them would have made a big tree. Any tree that large would have been quite old, but I never heard any adult give an estimate of what the age might be. We had a big electric, wind and rain storm, the kind that southwestern Wisconsin is noted for, and one of the three big branches on the box elder tree snapped off, narrowly missing the roof of the garage. Some men came and cut up the huge branch into fire wood and hauled it away, and Dad tried to save the balance of the tree by having a workman come and place heavy duty screw hooks in the remaining limbs and run some steel cable from hook to hook. Then four to five feet above there they set in another group of hooks and ran cable around them. So now, if you can visualize it, there was a horizontal run of cable to all three branches and about four and a half feet above them there was a parallel run of cable. After the workmen left, Gene and I fashioned some two by fours about a foot and a half long and nailed them on to the side of the main trunk, making a rather permanent ladder up the back side of the tree. As we got up to where the lower cable was placed, we found the reason the one limb had broken off in the storm. It was rotten in the center and there was a big cavity in the center with about a four-inch thick rim of good wood all around the outer edge but jagged where it had broken off. The cavity was full of what looked like saw dust, so we scooped it out and threw it on the ground. Now we had a pit about two feet deep and two or more feet inside diameter. I found an old saw in the garage that had part of the handle broken and a rusty blade - it must have been one of Grandpa Richardson's old saws. I took it up into what we were now calling our "tree fort" and slowly and patiently cut the jagged edge of the "pit" fairly smooth. Standing in the pit you could, if you were nine years old, stand up inside of another limb, almost lost to view from the ground. It wasn't hard to

breathe or see because there was a knothole in the limb a little above my head, which was about as big around as my fist. Now we scrounged around and found boards here and there and made a platform by fastening the boards to the lower cable. We took some burlap bags that were in the garage and opened the seams and made large burlap sheets, and I got a large needle from Mom and using string for thread, sewed the burlap around the top cable - now we had burlap walls! Placing some boards on top we had a roof, but that didn't stay too well. The inside of the "pit" was quite rough so I took some excelsior (looked like wood shavings that had been through a meat grinder) and placed handfuls of it around inside of the "pit" and nailed burlap over it. Now we had an upholstered pit! So now we could bring Little Margie up. She wasn't quite two and when we put her in the pit, she couldn't fall out or hurt herself. The "tree fort" now became the "Tree House" and we felt like the Swiss Family Robinson when all of us kids were up there and Mom would fix a lunch to take up with us. We put in some things to make it "homey". I found an old kerosene lantern in the garage and I hung that in there for effect. Most of that summer we really enjoyed our tree house and then one day Gene, Ken and I were up in the tree house and "Snowball" Aaberg came by and was fooling around. He had his BB gun with him and by accident, or on purpose, he fired it and a BB hit Ken in the thigh. "Snowball" took off and Gene and I got Ken out of the tree. He was really wailing, he had gotten shot so, of course, he would die! Finally Mother explained to him that the BB didn't even break the skin, all he was going to have was a little black and blue mark for a few days. But for a while there, his whole life flashed before his eyes and that doesn't take long when you are only four years old!

Scholarship Recognized at 1917 Wisconsin State Fair by Neil Giffey



Thanks to Board member **Janice Blask** we are the recipient of a medal awarded to **Inez Holman** of **Highland** at the Wisconsin State Fair in 1917 for scholarship in the spelling, arithmetic and writing contest. *Imagine ... emphasis scholarship at a State Fair. A different concept ... a different world.*

The Peter Spang House

Saved by Dedicated Effort

by Neil Giffey

This dignified structure on the corner of Walnut and Union Streets in Dodgeville has been hanging on for dear life as a snapshot of early Iowa County. Built by **Peter Spang**, circa 1860, it is an excellent example of the "Greek Revival" architectural style which was popular in America from about 1820 to 1865. With classic lines and proportions, the Spang home took its place among the more impressive residences in the Village of Dodgeville, Wisconsin. The first structure built on the lot was also the first school in Dodgeville. Early testimony reveals that the first teacher was **Mary J. Carrier**. She later married a **Mr. Ranger** of the wagon making firm of **Ranger and Detchmندی**, themselves natives of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. This partnership is believed to have been the first blacksmith/farm equipment firm in the village, starting in 1840.



Spang/Weier House circa 1937

Peter Spang was a German immigrant. In 1853 he purchased the shop of **Colonel Thomas Stephens**, later site of the *Spang-Strattman* shop on the northwest corner of East Fountain and South Iowa Streets, and went into competition for the wagon and blacksmithing trade. All travel was by horse drawn wagon or buggy and to "retread" the thousands of horses in Iowa County was a never ending task. Spang evidently did well as evidenced by

the size and classic lines of his new home. After breaking up with **Frederick Strattman** in 1872, Spang continued blacksmithing and machinery manufacture in the crude early building which years later became the "**Spang Opera House**" at the intersection of North Main, North Iowa, Spring, Diagonal and Bequette Streets. He added two stories to the shop and employed 6-8 men. This historic building was lost to development in 1997.

The point of the early history above is to bring the reader to the time in 2000 when **Alice M. Edam Weier** died leaving the Spang/Weier house as part of her estate. With taxes to pay and the house standing empty, rapid decline seemed inevitable. That is when the administrator of her estate, grandson **Joe Weier** of Mineral Point, stepped in to help save the day. In 2001 Joe Weier utilized his experience in the restoration of historic buildings in **Mineral Point** to request designation of the Spang/Weier house as an historic structure. The request was approved by the Dodgeville Historic Preservation Commission. The next step was to restore the old house. Alice and her husband **Robert Peter Weier** had purchased the Spang house in 1937 and modernized it in 1940 with the then trendy slate roof and siding material. On November 25, 1926 **Robert "Rob" Weier** bought out the **John W. Hughes** interest in the coal business known as **J. G. Thomas and Co.** which became **Weier-Reese and Co.** and later **Weier-Huen and Co.** a coal and ice delivery firm in the Dodgeville area. Weier's early partners were **John Stanley Reese** and **Mrs. Will Evans**, a silent partner. The ice business was an early casualty and the partners moved to the sale of Fireman furnaces, boilers and heating oil prior to Robert Weier's death on April 13, 1954.

The new **Spang House** owner, presently restoring the old home, is **Doug Finley** of rural Dodgeville. In a short interview with Mr. Finley, he stated that he was interested in older historic homes for many years but found it difficult to settle on something he was pleased with until he saw the Spang/Weier house. He plans to reside in the stately old house after restoration now under way. If another historic building looks promising, he would consider another restoration project. His rationale for pouring so much effort in an old house is just this: "*Once gone, they are gone forever.*" We commend Mr. Finley.

We also interviewed Joe Weier of Mineral Point regarding historic preservation in Iowa County.

1 - When did you start restoration? I started collecting and restoring antique furniture while in high school. I looked, researched, purchased and restored my first historic building (the Daum house, a half-timbered, wattle and daub (*dueschen verban in German*) structure) shortly after getting out of high school.

2 - Why did you become interested in historic buildings as a teenager? That isn't typical, is it? The Mineral Point School District was fortunate to have an excellent art teacher, **Zelda Bruun**, while I was in Mineral Point High School. She insisted that her students go out on location and draw some of the historic buildings in our

(Continued from page 5)

community. Looking at buildings with an artistic eye gave me a new perspective on older structures. Like antique furniture, I began to acquire a taste for handcrafted buildings. I enjoyed the look, feel, texture and patina of older structures.

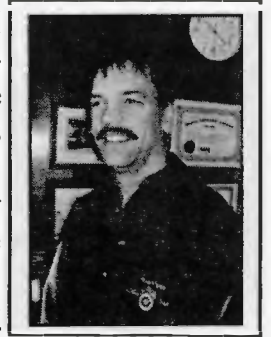
3 - Did anyone in the community encourage you to restore primitive structures? Not initially, I remember when I wanted to buy the Daum house my dad asked why I wanted that old barn. After purchasing the house, I always had the support of my mom and dad. I initially thought it was a log cabin beneath the clapboard siding. Upon further investigation I discovered it was half-timbered, wattle and daub structure, still standing on its original site (a rarity in Wisconsin due to harsh climate according to the Wisconsin State Historical Society). The further I dove into restoration the more interested I became in the actual history of the original occupants and creators of a particular vernacular architecture. While doing research and restoration, I had friends in town, **Edgar Hellum**, **Bob Neal**, **Cleve and Ruth Grant**, **Sam and Liz Holmes** (now all deceased), that gave supportive advice on restoration.

4 - How many buildings have you restored? The **Daum House** - Circa 1853-1854 half-timbered, wattle and daub Structure; the **Bennett-Reed Building** circa 1841 (Brick) Greek Revival; **American Four-Square** circa 1917. (The house my family is living in now, I don't consider this house a restoration. Typically, I like structures built before 1870s); **Lovelace Log Cabin** - circa 1860s, Woodford, Wisconsin. *Weier has assisted and supported other historic preservation and restoration activities in southwest Wisconsin.*

5 - Was financing available? NO! During the late 1970s the government had great incentives for financing historical restorations, probably due to the interest in the Bi-Centennial. By the time I acquired the Daum house and filled out all required paperwork based on the Department of Interior Historic Preservation Guidelines, new government programs kicked in and destroyed all incentives for preservation. This country needs to wake up and start investing in their past before it is all destroyed. We are losing historic structures across this great nation at a very alarming rate. The only way to save these properties is through aggressive brick and mortar tax incentives, encouraging and educating the population on the importance of historic preservation.

6 - Which of your projects was the most gratifying? The Daum house, my first restoration. I bought the house after waiting almost two years for Iowa County to sell the property to settle the estate of **Henrieta Griffiths**. I used the out-house for 1 1/2 years before I built on the bathroom addition. (I wanted to make sure the addition would not conflict with the original structure.) My research of the abstract led me to the original owners/builders **John and Lizzie Daum** and their family who owned the property for one hundred years. Technically, I was third owner. For various reasons neither the Daums nor the Griffiths choose to remodel thus saving the house from the typical 20th century out of character improvements which would have hurt the structure.

7 - The Spang/Weier house must have been important to you because of the association with your paternal grandparents Robert and Alice Weier. Aside from the fact that you were unable to acquire the Spang/Weier house do you have any advice for those far sighted few who plan to restore historical buildings? When I first started my restoration projects, someone gave me advice on how to figure a budget for a restoration project: Calculate all materials down to the number of pounds of nails and the last gallons of paint, then double it. I have found that when one doubles the estimated budget, it more often than not is closer to the true cost. There always seems to be a lot of hidden surprises, thus hidden expenses in restorations. No matter how accurate one's figures are, restorations always seem to cost more than anticipated, though the visual rewards in the project can be priceless.



Joe Weier

Joseph Michael Weier gave up a successful career to go for his dream. He is on pace to graduate from U-W Milwaukee in December 2005 with a degree in Architecture and a certificate in Urban Planning, with additional study towards a Historic Preservation Certificate. This major mid-life gamble has been supported by his wife Lisa L. Reed Weier and his teen age children. His dream after apprenticeship is to work with a firm in the field of historic preservation. He is a member of the Mineral Point Historical Society and on the Board of Directors of the Lead Region Historic Trust, an organization which acquires, stabilizes and restores primitive structures in the lead region of southwest Wisconsin. Editor.

Acquisitions

Nancy Poquette: Book "The Buckeye Rovers in The Gold Rush."

Margaret Peat: Photograph—Cheese Factory in Hunter Hollow and three classroom inkwells.

Shirley Chambers: Photograph—Rose Dale Cheese Factory.

Mary Lou Peterson: manuscript "American Descendants of Thomas & Mary Cockings Paull Family."

Lonna Arneson: Book "Big Band Sound, Swing, Southwest Wisconsin, 1930s 1990s, **Bob Burns Band and Dan Gorson Orchestra.**

Nancy Bowers: Book "The Descendants of Henry and Susan Johns."

Shopping News of Platteville: "Faces and Places of Southwest Wisconsin."

Ed and Eunice Jewell: Book, "Celebrating 75 Years: Standard Process." The story of **Dr. Royal Lee** an Iowa County boy and his success as the founder of "Standard Process," a dietary supplement company in Wisconsin.

Becky Siedenburg: Book "The Dodger Yearbook" for 1902.

Janice Blask: Ornate ribbon, 1917 Wisconsin State Fair, awarded to Inez Holman of Iowa County for scholarship in spelling, arithmetic and writing.

Minutes of the February 16, 2005 Board Meeting

Meeting called to order by President Alice Griffiths at 3:30 PM at the UW Extension Conference Room, following the second of three scheduled strategic planning sessions facilitated by Paul Ohlrogge, Community Resource Development Agent. Other Board Members present were: Janice Blask, Boyd Geer, John Hess, Therese McCarragher, Melva Phillips, Helen Radtke, and Marie Sersch. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and corrected. A Treasurer's report was verbally presented by Marie, and both the minutes and the Treasurer's Report were approved with a motion, that was seconded and carried. Marie reported that the fund-raiser at Thym's Supper Club on February 13 grossed \$3020. The cost of the meals was \$1120, netting \$1900 for the Building Fund. Additional receipts and some minor expenses are expected. Helen donated the cost of the entertainment. Latter in the meeting, there was a motion by Helen to charge the expenses of the fund-raiser to the Building Account, and not the Operating Account. Second by Melva, motion carried.

Alice reported on preparations being made for the Open House at the Museum on February 19 and 20 from 1 to 4 PM, and scheduled Board Members to serve as hosts. Refreshments and snacks will be served and the report on the strategic planning work will be displayed for visitors.

Alice reported on the work being done on the new brochure, and advised a draft will ready for the next meeting.

Ideas for events were discussed (1) with plans to participate again in the Dodgeville city-wide garage sale in April, (2) and to have an Ice Cream Social in the summer, with date to be set later, and to invite again the Governor Dodge Re-enactors that attended last year, and to provide for their meals (one each) from the food brought to the Ice Cream Social. Also on the schedule is assisting the city of Dodgeville as host this spring to representatives of Oakum, England, Dodgeville's twinning city, as reported by Neil Giffey at the November 18, 2004 Board Meeting.

During the planning session prior to the Board Meeting, a mission statement for the ICHS was worked on, with the proposal by Boyd selected. Motion by Janice, second by Therese, to formally adopt the mission statement and include it in the new brochure. Motion carried. The mission statement is: **The purpose of our Society is to preserve, for public benefit, the historical heritage of Iowa County.**

Next Board Meeting to immediately follow the strategic planning session scheduled for March 16 at 1 PM at the EXT Conference Room.

Meeting adjourned at 4 PM. John Hess Secretary

Potpourri Continued

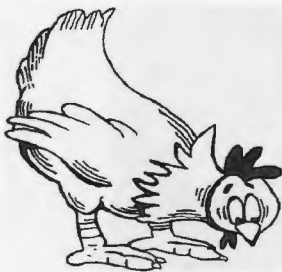
Again ... a state budget cut looms for the **Wisconsin Historical Society**. Remembering that the citizens of Wisconsin support the Society to the tune of about \$2.00 per person doesn't it seem petty to slash and burn the renowned memory of our state? Contact your representatives. They can do better. Editor.

Membership Application

Iowa County Historical Society

MAIL TO: MARIE SERSCH

106 E. Pine St., Dodgeville, WI 53533



Individual-annual	\$10.00	5 year	\$40.00
Couples-annual	\$15.00	5 year	\$60.00
Historian-annual			\$25.00
Master Historian-annual			\$50.00
<i>Membership dues and categories change July 1, 2005</i>			
<i>Membership year is July 1st—June 30th</i>			



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 _____*

Volume XXX No. 2 April 2005

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

Memberships

Mail to Treasurer: Marie Sersch
ICHSP. O. B. 44 Dodgeville, WI 53533-0044

Individual-annual \$10.00	5 year \$40.00
Couples-annual \$15.00	5 year \$60.00
Historian, annual	\$25.00
Master Historian, annual	\$50.00

ICHS SERVICES GENEALOGY-HISTORIC RESEARCH

The Society has extensive archives for Iowa County:
history-cemeteries-obituaries-newspaper microfilm-artifacts

Open May-September

Monday-Friday

10 am-Noon and 1 pm-4 pm

Other times by appointment

608-935-7694.

Email; ichistory@mhtc.net

Web site: iowacountyhistoricalsociety.org

Please call ahead for winter hours.

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ORGANIZATION
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Calendar of Events

**Garage Sale and Baked Goods
At the museum**

**"Bring some-Buy some"
City Wide Garage Sale
April 23 8:30 am**

**Does your organization need a speaker?
*We can help with a variety of genealogi-
cal and historical subjects.
Call or email, addresses above***

**Rededication 75 Years Masonic Temple
Dodgeville
1 p.m. May 22 All are welcome**

*To Our Stakeholders ...
Please remember the Society when
planning your giving.*

Thank You



*Iowa County
Courthouse Bell
A Reminder for
Independence Day*