

Iowa County Historical Society Newsletter



Volume XXX

No. 4

October 2005

Potpourri

President Alice Griffiths informs us that after several meetings with the appropriate Iowa County Board Building and Finance Committees that they look with favor on the Society building needs and will recommend that substantial support be placed in the next budget.

Boyd Geer has prepared a step-by-step instruction sheet to enable trained ICHS data entry volunteers to enter data in the Society computer. This will eventually provide very fast ancestral and historical information to ICHS members.

Note the Annual Meeting on October 25 includes elections to fill Board vacancies and an interesting program.

Recently the great historical writer, David McCullough, was quoted as remarking "Nobody lived in the past. Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, Washington didn't walk around saying 'I live in the past.'"

They lived in the present just as we do. This does make it important to help young citizens to know the importance of the every day events of their lives. They live in the present. They do not know how it will turn out. They can give it their best effort and someday ... for better or for worse ... it will become history and ... another reason to volunteer at the Society.

The outpouring of financial support for the planned museum addition has been gratifying ... Thank you ... Keep it coming

Would You Believe It??

The ICHS Editor is calling on the world of Iowa County history buffs for a little help. He has been Newsletter Editor for about 15 years and looking ahead, would like to recruit a few eager, budding journalists-no experience required. This is a chance to get your feet wet by helping this old Editor with story ideas and plans with a chance for advancement. Let's talk. My phone number is on the right.

Nell

ANNUAL MEETING

7:30 p. m. Tuesday

October 25, 2005

Dodgeville City Hall

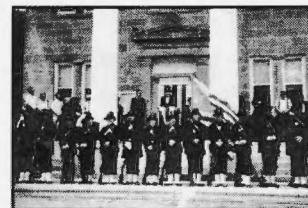
Doug Cieslak speaks on

"Preserving Our Material and Cultural Heritage" See Page 8

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	

In This Issue



Civil War Veterans' Grave Registration
Page 2



Leon Nelson
"As I Recall"

Pages 3-4-5



Iowa County Board Proceedings in Mineral Point ... 1849
Page 6

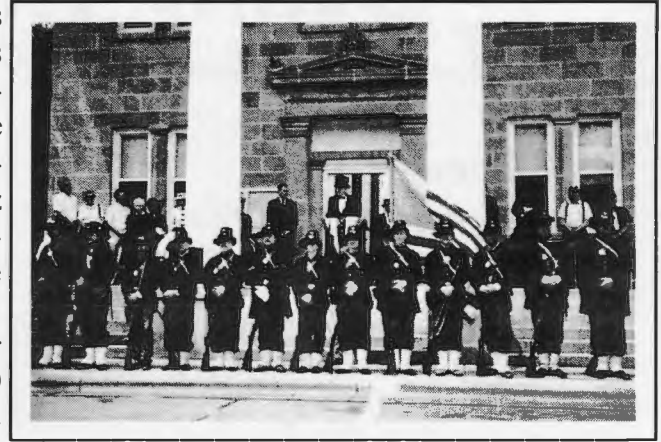
Donors listed

Page 7

Civil War Veterans' Grave Registration

by Neil Giffey

Virgil Matz of Black Earth, Wisconsin is the Graves Registration Officer (GRO) for the **Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Department of Wisconsin**. In a recent report published in the Department Newsletter, Matz listed the total Civil War veterans' graves officially registered in Wisconsin as 10,383. This is the result of the diligence of Matz and his predecessors as GRO. The 1885 Wisconsin census tallied 29,686 veterans living in the state. Twenty years after the conclusion of the rebellion many of the participants had died, not infrequently related to the abominable conditions under which they lived during the war. The record as of 2005 is 409 Iowa County veterans' graves registered nationally as compared to 355 living veterans counted in the 1885 state census. The discrepancy between the approximate 900 Civil War veterans who enlisted from Iowa County and the number who were either deceased or counted in the census in 1885 may be



Iowa County Courthouse Rededication—1994
Second Wisconsin WVI Honor Guard
Reenactors maintaining the Civil War tradition

explained in two words, “the West.” For example, many followed **Captain William Wigham**, Highland area farmer, who raised Company “G” of the 27th WVI. He later became Iowa County Sheriff, traded in cattle near the Chisholm Trail in Kansas, returned to Iowa County and in 1873 joined a wagon train to the promised land of rich prairie soil with several hundred other Iowa County citizens. That “land” was Nobles County, Minnesota. Mortality tables did not account for all of our local veterans; the lure of cheap government land did the trick.

The mission of all Graves Registration Officers is to locate and mark with a headstone the confirmed grave site of Civil War veterans regardless of the state or country in which they are buried. There are a number buried in the former states of the Confederacy and indeed several present day regional camps of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War are located in the former bastions of the rebellion.

In 2002 the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War embarked on the “Last Soldier Project.” The purpose is to locate and ceremonially mark the final resting place of the last Civil War Soldier buried in each county and in each state.

If you believe you know of an unmarked Civil War Veteran's grave or have some clues as to the possible location, please contact Matz at 608-767-2305 or at 1215 Spring St., Black Earth, Wisconsin 53515. Hint ... If you are unable to participate, ask for help from young men working toward the Eagle Scout award. Editor.

Under the Wire

by Neil Giffey

Cindy Downs, President of the Blue Mounds Area Historical Society, informs us that their Annual Meeting will be at 7 pm October 10, 2005 at the Blue Mounds Lutheran Church. The speaker will be **Tracy Will**, historian and author. His topic ... “Wisconsin's First Military Road.”

Many **historians** and **genealogists** are transferring their stories and pictures to **CDs**. Bear in mind that no archival record system will last indefinitely. It is a great idea to burn backup CDs but do copy them over to the newest media equipment available in a few

years. It is just like the dairy farmer who always tries to raise more cattle hay and corn than can be fed in one year. That's backup, too.

Smith and Kersey of **Milwaukee** are listed among our new members. Their first contact with the Society was at the Dodge Mining Camp Cabin in August. Fresh from a bit of gardening at their newly acquired Iowa County residence, they noticed the weeds and soil which were starting to fill the vents under the cabin floor. Grabbing their gardening tools, they promptly cleaned them. Our gratitude is heartfelt.

As I Recall ...

More Recollections of Boyhood in the 1930s and 40s

by Leon Nelson

It is the pleasure of the Editor to honor Leon Nelson, a talented and loyal supporter of the ICHS, with a photo montage of his parents, the house which housed the Nelson family during most of the adventures about which he writes so persuasively and a look at Leon in 1946. Editor.

One day in the fall **Dean Vivian** drove home for lunch and just happened to look down cross-lots to our place. You could see our garage from their garage, and he saw smoke billowing out from the knot-hole in the tree house. At first he couldn't tell if it was the garage or the tree but he ran down and with the help of some others put the fire out. The whole family was away at the time and all we could figure out was that some neighbor kid crawled up in the tree and tried to light the lantern and started the fire, then panicked and ran away. Anyway, that was the end of our "Tree House." Within two weeks the whole tree was cut down and turned into firewood.

When **Dorothy** and I were little toddlers, we lived almost across the street from **Judge Aldro Jenks**. He was an impressive man. To a little kid he was a giant to stand next to. All I remember is his black suit and his gold watch chain linked through his vest button hole going from one vest pocket to the other. He was a distinguished Judge in southwestern Wisconsin and was the Past Grand Master of Masons in the state of Wisconsin. His son Aldro also became the Grand Master of the Masons in Wisconsin. The Judge's daughter and her family would come to visit and we would be invited to go to the Judge's house to play. That is when we first met **Dorothy Ann** and **Gretchen Grunenwald**. We would play and have a grand time. One thing that we enjoyed doing when the winter winds were blowing was to stand over the

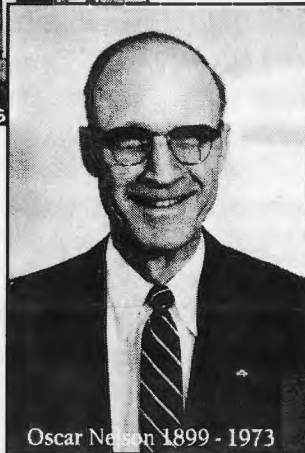
the goose down feathers that we would pluck out of pillows, release them over the hot air rising out of the register and watch them float in the air until a cold draft would send them plummeting to the floor. Then we would pick them up and start all over again. Can you imagine, "Sesame Street" is trying to replace that kind of fun!

When I was about ten (that would make **Gene** seven and **Ken** about five), we found out somehow that there was a man who lived two doors west of where Judge Jenks used to live, and this old guy was a master whittler. We knocked on his back door and he would let us in and show us his magnificent carvings. He did not carve figures, as I remember, but he made the American Flag and each of the thirteen stripes were a chain of wood, and each of the forty-eight stars was carved in a socket and they turned. This whole flag was made out of one piece of wood, and it was the only carving that he made that I remember was painted. Each of

the chain stripes was painted alternating red or white and of course the stars were white on field. The flag was three feet by five feet. made a candelabrum was linked with flow-chains and on the up-positions he had little



113 West Fountain S



Oscar Nelson 1899 - 1973



Gayle Richardson Nelson 1905 - 1948



Leon Nelson—Author

a blue
about
H e
t h a t
i n g
r i g h t
b a l l s
i n
a c a g e
t o w i t h
w h i c h

to decorate it. He made a pair of pliers that opened and closed and in the handle there was another pliers that operated and another pair in the handle of that, all together five pair of operating pliers, all carved out of one piece of wood. Everywhere you

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

looked there was another carving that he had made. We were always very impressed, so I had to learn how to make a chain and a ball in a cage, which I still do from time to time. If we ever knew his name, I've forgotten it. *(It was William Wallace Powers. Editor.)* We always called him "Mr. Whittle-stick!"

There was no television when we were children, but we had the magic of radio. What fun it was to listen on cold winter evenings while we waited for Dad to come home from the store. We would lie down on the floor in front of the radio and listen to "Little Orphan Annie" and all of her adventures. The announcer was Pierre Andre and Ovaltine was the sponsor. If you sent in a certain number of foil tops from your Ovaltine cans to WGN in Chicago and a few cents for postage, they would send you a decoder ring. Every day on the program Pierre Andre would give out the message for the day, generally something that gave you a clue of the next day's program. Then in the next fifteen minutes we would listen to the program sponsored by Wheaties, "Jaaaaack Armmmmmmstrooong, the all American Boy!" Following that was the sound of a big Buddhist gong, and the announcer introduced, "Terriieey and the Piiirates!" Then the next fifteen minute segment was introduced with the roar of an airplane motor, RRrrrrrooaarrRR, "Captainnn Middnight!" What excitement, you can't believe the images conjured up in little folks' heads while listening to the radio. On Tuesday nights we could hear the Jack Benny show and Fibber McGee and Molly. Fibber always had to go into his closet to get something and CRASH, BANG, CLUNK, everything would fall out of his closet. To this day when we open a cupboard or closet and something falls out we say "Fibber McGee's closet!" He would make a pun and Molly would say, "Tain't funny, McGee!" We would hear a detective story that was introduced by "The Flight of the Bumblebee" and then a deep voice would say "The Green Hornet!" Radio plays were put on and you would hear the sound of a car coming to the front of the theater and you could hear the doorman opening the car door and saying, "Good evening Mr. and Mrs. First Nighter!" and then into the theater and the play would begin. We enjoyed hearing Lamont Cranston in "The Shadow" with the deep voice saying, "What evil lurks in the minds of men? The Shadow knows! Nehaaa haaa." (a kind of an evil laugh). Ken and Jan and Lois and I were in the Debbie Reynolds'

Theater last January (1995) and Lamont Cranston was there celebrating his 80th birthday. Another radio show was introduced with the "On the Trail" portion of the Grand Canyon Suite. "Who was that masked man?" "The Lone Ranger" Of course we also had, "What is that, up in the sky? Is it a bird, a plane? No, it's Superman. Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive. Up, up, and away he goes, SUPERMAN!" We would wait all week for "Mr. Keene, tracer of lost persons," the "Red Skelton Show," "Mr. District Attorney" and Lois' favorite, "One Man's Family." Pepsodent toothpaste for years sponsored the "Bob Hope Show." I tell you, we certainly weren't deprived of entertainment without TV! And so were the Moms all around the neighborhood. That was the beginning of the "Soap Operas" because most of the programs were sponsored by soap companies. In the summer you could hear the radios in the homes blasting forth with "Our Gal Sunday" introduced with a man saying, "Can a young girl from a little mining town in the West find happiness as the wife of England's richest, most handsome Earl?" And then there was "Stella Dallas" and "Just Plain Bill." There were quite a few radio shows for the ladies in those days; but to be honest, I don't remember that Mom ever listened to them. Dad used to tell about when he was a roomer at Mrs. Harker's in the early twenties and one of the other men rooming there had a "crystal set" which was an early radio and you had to have earphones to hear it. There were not many stations in those days cluttering up the airwaves and they could get a station from Atlanta, GA and to quote Dad they would come on the air, name their call letters which I don't remember and say, "We cover the Southland like the morning dew!" Static was a big thing in those days and was caused by atmospheric problems and trucks going by, but the worst was electrical storms. Even though the storm might be many miles away it would cause a big garbled static just when Jack Benny was giving his punch line. The winter air was pretty clear so we didn't have as many problems then and that was when kids were glued to the radio.

In July of 1940 I turned 12 years old. At 18 in Wisconsin you could drink beer and at 21 you were a man. You could vote and do whatever you wanted without your parents' consent, but 18 and 21 never meant much to me, anyway not as much as TWELVE. At 12 years of age you could become a Boy Scout if

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

you had a troop in the town. I had a Boy Scout handbook and I had been bugging Mom and Dad for months. Dad finally contacted the Scout Service Center for the Four Lakes Council in Madison and the district Scout Executive, **Cedric Dunkerly**, came out to Dodgeville and we got a troop organized. What a day, I WAS A BOY SCOUT! I think **Bob Perkins** was our first scoutmaster. We would go up to his place on the north side of town and meet on his front lawn. He was a young banker in town and was married to **Cathryn Munday** whose folks lived next to **Aunt Ruby and Uncle Harold**. When we started to meet at the school, we had an assistant scoutmaster by the name of **Anderson** who was an employee of the Roach Funeral Co. He was a nice guy and he sure knew first aid. We used to kid that he practiced it on the "stiffs." We studied first aid with him and went to district first aid meets and always came away with a top score! We even attended the Council First Aid Meet in Madison and did quite well. **Jim Wilson**, the veterinarian, was our scoutmaster for a time. He was really popular with the boys as he had been a great wrestler in the Big Ten when he attended the University of Iowa and he taught us kids some wrestling. We didn't want to play basketball when we went to his meetings. When we had game time, out came the mats and we would wrestle. I must digress some here and tell you a story about Jim. A few years before this, we had a carnival come to town and they set up at the Centennial Park. I was up there snooping around as kids will do and it was evening. I had hidden my bike in some bushes and had walked over by a tent where a carney was giving his pitch, so I stood with the rest of us country bumpkins and listened. He was trying to get one of the local farm boys to come up and wrestle with his "Champ," and the more he talked the more every one started to back away. Finally he said if we would come up with a wrestler, he would let every one in free. If our man won, he would pay him \$20 and we would get out free. If his man won, we would all have to pay to get out! Well, we didn't have anyone in the crowd who knew anything about wrestling and the crowd was about to leave when, lo and behold, here comes Jim Wilson wearing a pair of farmer's hickory striped overalls, looking just like a country bumpkin, like the rest of us, and the guys in the crowd recognized him and talked him into going in to "uphold the honor of the town." Well, I traipsed in with the rest of them not

knowing what I would do if I had to pay to get out. I didn't have a red cent on me at the time, and I didn't even know who Jim Wilson was. Well, here we were and the barker was the referee also. Jim threw the carnie guy and he was pinned and the barker wouldn't start counting for the "pin." So then the crowd started to count. Three times Jim threw the big Carnie hunk and pinned him and that was the match, but the barker didn't want to pay Jim, so the crowd started to move in on the barker and he paid quick enough then! So we all got out without paying! and I retrieved my bike and high-tailed it for home. What an adventure. And now he was my Scoutmaster! The last Scoutmaster we had was the father of two of our scouts. **Lewis Trine** and his brother **Dawson** had the honor of having their dad, **Franklin Trine**, serve as our scoutmaster. He stayed closer to the scout handbook than any of the other men who had worked with us. Bit by bit all of us would advance a step at a time and when the months would pass into years, our younger brothers would come into the troop. Going to summer camp cost eleven dollars a week and that sure took up our savings from paper routes. We got a penny a paper a day when we delivered the Milwaukee Journal, but we only got six - sevenths of a cent per day per paper with the Wisconsin State Journal. Then when you had people who did not pay their weekly paper dues, it would only take a few and all of the week's profit was tied up with a couple of deadbeats. We would have about forty or so papers to deliver. *To be continued.*

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Newspaper Microfilm at ICHS

Arena Wis. Star, 1874-1876 and 1877-1886, became Dodgeville Star in 1883-1886, became Rural Eye, 1887-1887
The Eye and Star 1893-1895 became The New Star, 1895-1896
Rural Eye of Arena, 1887-1888 and 1888-1889 became The Eye and Star, 1890-1893
New Star, 1896-1897
New Star, 1898-1900
Dodgeville Chronicle, 1862-2004
Barneveld Banner, some issues missing
The Hollandale Review, some issues missing

For your research ...the Society has an Index to Miscellaneous Wisconsin newspapers. Please call ahead.

If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Historical society members may well consider themselves gatekeepers (*gate openers*) between the past and the future ... Telling the story of a people who were not self-indulgent but were consumed with a vision of how to live, how to make do and how to participate in community affairs. Our forbears set an example. Let's emulate them.

Iowa County Board of Supervisors in the New State of Wisconsin At Mineral Point June 4, 1849 Sheriff Levi Sterling Opens Meeting

June 4, 1849 was significant date in Iowa County history. The faded image on the right is taken from the Iowa County Board proceedings for that date. Sheriff **Levi Sterling** opened the session in the old courthouse in Mineral Point which proceeded to elect **John Messersmith** of Dodgeville Township as Chairman Pro Tem. The Supervisors then elected **Parley Eaton** of **Mineral Point** as Chairman of the duly constituted County Board of Supervisors of Iowa County in the new state of Wisconsin. Within a short time Eaton became County Judge.

In October 2004 the Editor took digital photos of a number of relevant pages in the book "Iowa County Board Proceedings" beginning with July 3, 1848. Some of the images have not reproduced well so another trip to the courthouse is in order. The records show that the first business of the new County Board in the new state was to direct the Clerk of Circuit Court of Iowa County to

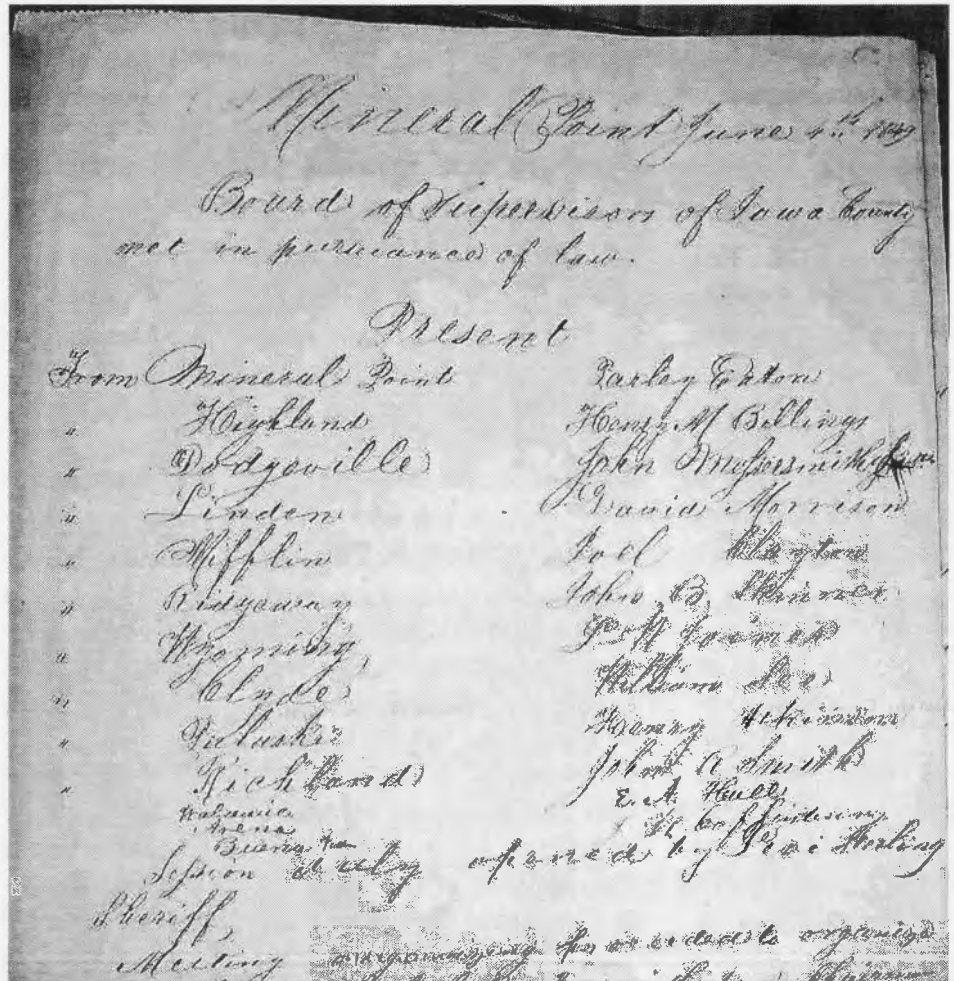
provide the Clerk of the County Board with a report on the daily attendance and travel for each juror serving at the April Term of the Court and the special May court term. It seems the desire of the Supervisors was that the jurors earn their daily stipend for time and travel. Fair enough.

The original stone Iowa County courthouse located in Mineral Point is the thumbnail print on page one. Please contact the Editor if you know of other images of the ill fated old courthouse.

We transcribed the illustrious early Iowa County citizens, listed on the image above, to help the reader to interpret the handwritten list. Here they are. Please inform the Editor if errors are found.

Mineral Point—Parley Eaton
Highland—Henry M. Billings
Dodgeville—John Messersmith
Linden—David Morrison
Mifflin—Joel Clayton
Ridgeway—John B. Skinner
Wyoming—L. W. Joiner

Clyde—William Lee
Pulaski—Henry Atkinson
Richland—John R. Smith
Waldwick—E. A. Hull
Arena—J. W. Coffinburg *This name may be misread or may be a resident of Buena Vista in Richland County which was administered by Iowa County when first organized.*



Donors ... Museum Addition

At press time ... listed in the order of arrival of contribution

Thank you ... Thank you ... Thank you ... More to follow

Chris Spurley
Eric Anderson
Terry Certa
Tari Engels
Terry Carroll
Jim Stoddard
David Ladd
Tamara Funk
Therese McCarragh
— — Johnson
Mary Allness-Philipps
Grace Schwartz
Frieda Schurch
Lou Engelbert
John Hess
Margaret Peat
Mike & Florence Crubaugh
Gorgen Funeral Home
Belva Espeseth
Ruth Espeseth
Wells Fargo Bank
Farmers Savings Bank
Arthur Real Estate
M & I Bank
Ann Whalen
Mark Masters
Florence Holland
Della Guarraci
Anonymous
Melva Phillips

Dorothy E. Halverson
Irving & Hazel Kelly
William S. Sawle III
William & Beverly Zimmerman
Dorothy Anderson
by *Donna Peterson*
Ron Dentinger
Robert & Gladys Dott
Dave & Enid Wilke
Ron & Eileen Arndt
Luella Engelbert
Miles & Linda Narveson
James & Barbara Ballard
Robert & Gladys Bray
Dr. David & Bonnie Downs
Richard A. Hay Jr. &
Sandra Shahe-Dubow
James D. & Alice Griffiths
Jeanette Wilson
James & Vicki McCaulley
Douglas W. Theobald
Ann M. Covert
Anne M. Giffey
Melvin & Shirley Hendrickson
Ralph E. & Lois Jane Davies
John D. Weier
Marliss McGuinness
Mary E. King
James E. Arkebauer
Mary M. Nelson
Lillian Clinger

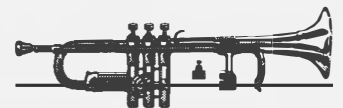
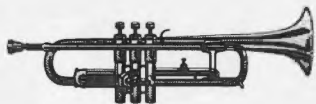
Francis & Carolyn Portwine
Lois Holland
Don & Carolyn Meuer
Norman & Carol Rule
Helen Radtke
Neil & Jan Giffey
Justine Pedley
Irene Harris
Lois Powell
Clarice Brewer
Lawrence & Joyce Mueller
Eleanor M. Williams *in honor of her 90th birthday*
Helen Radtke *in honor of Eleanor Williams birthday*
Rely Endres
Delbert & Karyn Schwantes
Tom Collins
Roger Schambow
Boyd W. & Marcia K. Geer
Marie Sersch
Joseph & Avis Lawinger
Rachel L. Jordan
Anonymous
Dorothy Bourret
Carol Thomas
LaVerne & Joyce Draves
Advantage Copying

*Many have donated twice
Many thanks*

Membership Application

Iowa County Historical Society

Please see page 8 for membership levels



Name _____ Street _____ P. O. Box _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Membership Period _____ Amount enclosed _____

I am interested in making a tax deductible gift to the ICHS. Please contact me at the above address.

Signed _____

Volume XXX No. 4 October 2005

Iowa County Historical Society

1301 N. Bequette St., P. O. Box 44
Dodgeville, WI 53533-0044

MEMBERSHIPS

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

Membership year is July 1st-June 30th

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

Address Service Requested

ICHS SERVICES ... GENEALOGY HISTORIC RESEARCH

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

Open May-September

Monday-Friday

10 am-Noon and 1 pm-4 pm

All year by appointment

Phone us 24/7: 608-935-7694.

email: ichistory@mhtc.net

Web site: iowacountyhistoricalsociety.org

To Our Friends ... Please remember the Society building program.

Now is the time to help. Thank You

Annual Meeting ICHS

7:30 p.m. Tue. Oct 25

Dodgeville City Hall

Doug Cieslak, Director:

Driftless Area Land Conservancy

*"Preserving Our Material
and Cultural Heritage"*

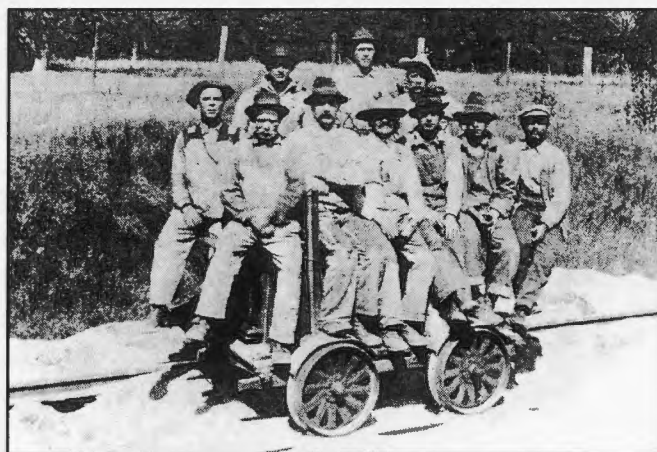
January Public Meeting

Dodgeville City Hall

A Saturday afternoon in

January 2006

Watch newspapers for time & date



Gandy Dancers
Ridgeway Section Crew
Can you identify them?
Contact the Editor