

# Iowa County History

Brought to you by the Iowa County Historical Society

Volume XXXIII

No. 2

April 2008

## Potpourri

### Have You Heard?

Dinner-Dance rescheduled to

April 27, 2008

Dodge-Point Club

Serving 12 noon—1:30 p.m.

Tickets are still valid... Snow is not predicted  
Fund raiser and fun for the Floyd School move  
to Museum premises—Plan to attend  
Enjoy a Good Time with Good Friends.

## ICHS Directors

Alice Griffiths, Pres.	935-0574
Boyd Geer, VP	930-9084
John Hess, Sec.	588-7082
Marie Sersch, Treas.	935-5752
Eileen Arndt	935-2623
LeRoy Grunenwald	987-2892
Therese McCarrager	967-2232
Tom Wilsonlease	935-7707
Neil Giffey, Editor	935-5557
giffey@mhtc.net	

Call a Director Please

## In This Issue

### Jenks Family in America

Director LeRoy Grunenwald presented an interesting and at times gripping story of his Jenks ancestral line and their achievements in North America at the January 19th public meeting of the ICHS. The meeting space was provided through the courtesy of Stonefield Apartments, Dodgeville.

Do you have a story to tell? ... Call any Director.

### Times Change and ...

A Letter to the Future  
Page 2



### Tragedy on the Hill Conclusion

by Grace Mann Larson Lewis  
Page 3



### Shot Tower at Helena “American Entrepreneurs”

by Grace Green Jones  
Page 5



### Ice Cream Social

July 17, 2008 ... 4:30 - 7:30

At the Museum

Meal, Music, Pie, Ice Cream

Watch newspapers for date

Floyd School Reunion—Dedication

As we all know ... winter has bludgeoned our land of hills, crags and valleys with a record harvest of snow. Yes, it is a harvest. It will green the land and grow our crops.

**Times Change**  
**by Mabel Richardson**  
**As Published in the Wyoming Township Newsletter**

This coming June it will be 100 years since **Mabel Richardson** delivered an essay at Hillside School at the 1908 Commencement. The lengthy address recounted the history of the Wyoming Valley and concluded with these words: *"It was and is practically a temperance valley. A license for the sale of liquor has never been granted in the town, nor tolerated for any length of time. Several attempts have been made in that direction but they always resulted in complete failure. So close the early annals of the Fair Valley of Wyoming. The early sturdy fathers have set high standards for the valley, and it devolves upon the young people of today to see to it that they be maintained and try to make the annals yet to be written worthy of the past."*

Ms. Richardson probably would be pleased to know that today there are no road houses, watering holes, saloons, or taverns in the town but would be aghast to learn there are five liquor licenses, especially since state law allows only one for 500 people, and the population is only 389.

But that can be explained. In the late 1930s when the law was passed, Wyoming's population was in the 600s and qualified for two liquor licenses. Later on, specific licenses were created by special legislation for APT and Wildwood Lodge. Then in 1997, when the Tavern League sponsored legislation required municipalities to give up their unused license quotas, a provision was added to grant each municipality one more license if their population increased by one person. Wyoming went up on the next population count and qualified for its fifth and last license.

*The commentary above was by John Hess, Chairman of the Town of Wyoming. The article "Times Change" is no idle statement. It was published in a recent Wyoming Township Newsletter edited by John Hess.*

---

**A Letter to the Future**  
**by Leon Nelson**

*(This is written especially for the young generations to help them understand their early heritage in relation to today's world.)*

In the early days of our country, living as a farmer was different than it was during the twentieth century. When William Steele Richardson (*ancestor of Leon*) came with his family to the Wyoming Valley area of southern Wisconsin, he had virgin land to clear, a house to build, and barns for his stock as well as storage places for his produce to build. As they were living in their covered wagons, the first priority was to get a log home built for his family so they could have the luxury of shelter and a fireplace for warmth and a place for cooking. He couldn't drive over to the neighborhood lumberyard or hardware store for supplies as there was no such place available. Everything he needed he had to have with him, saws, axes, adz, spoke shaves, draw knives, grub hoes, and other items that we don't even know about today.

One of the first things they had to do was to get a kitchen garden planted, then they hunted for deer and other wild game in the area for food. They did not eat beef as that was a source of power on the farm.

The cast iron stove was invented before 1845, for the earl but they were very rare and expensive on the frontier. (*Some credit goes to Benjamin Franklin and friends, at an earlier time.*) Venison was roasted or boiled as was most food of the day. The pioneer wife had only her fireplace in their log cabin on which to cook, and everyone lived in one room until time allowed the building of additional rooms. So, for the first few winters the children may have slept in a loft over the main room. There were no closets for clothes, only pegs driven into the log walls - anyway, who needed a closet, most children had only a single outfit of clothes! The adults had trunks in which to put any dress up clothes that they had. But remember, they did not feel sorry for themselves. Every-

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Tragedy on the Hill

### The Memoir of Grace Mann Larson Lewis

#### Part Two      The conclusion

*This is the conclusion of the memoir of Grace Mann. Publication has been approved by her family. The date of the events described so vividly by Grace Mann was August 15, 1914, the place Taliesin on the Wisconsin River at Spring Green, Wisconsin and her writing style, gripping.*

While I was standing there, wondering what to do, a man ran past me. His clothes were burned and were wet, hanging on by the belt and seams. He ran to the back door of the farm house that was on the corner and hollered something in the screen door to the people who were at dinner. Then he started running back to the bungalow. I trotted along behind him asking what was the matter, was there a fire up there, etc.

He finally stopped running and told me it was worse than a fire. It was murder. I asked him, "Who did it?"

He said, "That black guy up there. He killed my boy. He laid there right where he hit him."

This man was a carpenter from Spring Green doing some work up there and his son was a young boy who was helping him. When I got a closer look, his skin was all burned and was peeled and hanging off over his finger nails. I persuaded him to follow me and go into the Rieders, at the farmhouse, to be taken care of. The men there got a cot and some linseed oil from the barn and we proceeded to cut Mr. Weston's clothes off. We tore up Mrs. Rieders sheets for bandages and soaked the bandages in oil. The men locked the



Grace Mann  
Larson Lewis

doors, loaded shot guns, and pulled down the shades. We thought the colored man would be after Mr. Weston after he finished killing the people up on the hill. We began wondering if we would be next.

Just about that time we could hear someone running around the house. We thought our time had come until Mr. Weston looked out and said it was the gardener. We brought him in and he was burned even worse. He was suffering terrible and just rolled in the water from the hydrants. We finally unscrewed the faucets in the wash rooms and the two faucets spurted

water like fountains. The men got another cot ready with blankets and we tore up more sheets and proceeded as we had with Mr. Weston. The gardener writhed in pain and was about out of his head. He kept asking for a drink of water, then for whiskey and we poured them down him. In those days most farmers kept whiskey in the house for medicinal purposes and the Rieders were no exception. By this time Mrs. Rieder was all upset. She kept putting her arms around me and begging to stay with her saying, "Remember, I have two small children."

The men kept up a constant call for "more water, more whiskey." The Rieder men were guarding the doors and windows with their shot guns and I was trying to make the burned men more comfortable. I had a white dress on that I didn't want to get dirty so I went into Mrs. Rieder's laundry room and found a blue hoover apron and put it on.

A short time later one of the architects who was studying under Mr. W. came. He had a broken arm from jumping out of the dining room window on the steep side of the building. Mr. Weston had telephoned the Spring Green operator to holler out of the window for help that there was a fire and murder out at Wright's. When the architect came, he telephoned Chicago to tell Mr. W. what had happened.

Before long the road was full of teams and a few cars, but nobody went up to the bungalow. Finally after a conference they started to move. One old white whiskered fellow squeaked, "Why don't they go up there and get him?" Then in after thought he said, "Guess I'll go home; my wife will be worrying about me."

Two doctors came in the crowd. One was Dr. Bossard, who helped the Rieders and Dr. Nee, who went over to the bungalow. Both of them thought I was a nurse with my white dress and light blue hoover apron and started shouting instructions at me, while Mrs. Rieder kept begging me to stay with her and the children. Finally, Dr. Bossard told me to stay right there with him. The doctor stopped a man with a team and we went up to the bungalow. Before we left Rieders, Mr. Weston told us that the help were all seated at

*(Continued on page 4)*



(Continued from page 3) **Tragedy on the Hill**

the dining table, in the dining room on the east side of the court, when the colored man cook of Mr. Wright's, threw gasoline in on the rug and lit it. He stood at the door with a hatchet so if anyone attempted coming out into the court by the door or window, he could cut them down.

Mr. Weston's boy came first and he lay just where he had been chopped down. Mr. Weston had been whacked in the back of his neck and both of them were badly burned. Mr. Weston had jumped into the creek and put the fire out. The next man out was the gardner. He was badly burned and had jumped in the creek at the foot of the hill, too, and had found his way to Rieders. When the doctor and I got there, the Weston boy was still alive. A Mr. Brunker from Ridgeway, who had been working there, sat leaning against a building with a deep cut in the top of his head and his brains sticking out. I held the instruments for the doctor while he sewed it up, and then we had the boy taken to Mrs. Porter's. We tore up Mrs. Porter's sheets



A View of Early Taliesin

and bandaged him also. I don't remember where the doctor had sent Mrs. Bossard. I rode in seven conveyances that day—autos, buggies, and wagons.

Mrs. Borthwick, a neighbor of Mr. Wright's in Oak Park, was staying at the bungalow with her two children. They had been served their dinner on the balcony overlooking the Wisconsin River. I don't remember how he had attempted killing them, but I think he killed Mrs. Borthwick first and dragged her body into the burning building. The two children were badly burned and had been taken to Mrs. Porter's before we got there so I helped Dr. Nee go and bandage one of them. The other was already bandaged.

It was four o'clock by the time we had them all taken care of and Mrs. Porter's maid knew that I hadn't had lunch yet, so she invited me to the kitchen for tea and a ham sandwich. We slipped down to the kitchen out of the crowd, but it wasn't long before Dr. Nee discovered us. He hadn't had any lunch either, so he had a sandwich. Several others found their way to the kitchen, too. There wasn't much left of Mrs. Porter's ham when all got through.

I think my folks came after me shortly after-

ward and the colored man hadn't been found yet. They found the woman that was supposed to be his wife walking down by the river with her hat and coat on, but she acted as though she hadn't known anything about it.

A guard was organized with loaded shotguns to watch for the colored man, but it was after midnight before he stuck his head out of the furnace for air. The furnace had a thick coat of asbestos on it so he didn't get hot or burned, but he had swallowed some acid that started to burn in his stomach.

He was taken to jail and died there about three days later. Mr. Brunker died the next day and the gardner died the following Wednesday. The Weston boy and the Borthwick children died that evening. The father of the Borthwick children took them back to Oak Park for burial. Mrs. Borthwick was buried in a rough box in a churchyard of the Unitarian Chapel nearby. Mr. Wright is buried there, too. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Hoyer of Waukegan and North Chicago are buried in that cemetery, too. They were the parents of Clifford, Warren and John, who attended school here. Mr. Weston didn't die but his mind wasn't quite clear afterward. There were nine in all in the tragedy and only Mr. Weston and the architects survived. The one who came over to Rieders had a broken arm from jumping out of the dining room window on the steep side of the hill. The other seemed to get out unhurt.

Mr. Wright never seemed to have enough to do all of the great things he wanted to do and was often overwhelmed with debt, but a few years ago the people of the State of Wisconsin had a big dinner at Madison in his honor and raised money to pay up his debts and help him. Someplace among my souvenirs is a picture of his Oak Park home and I may have some Chronicles saved of stories of his life. Will try to find them for you. *The end.*

---

### **“And who will grow the roses?”**

What if the memories passed from mother to daughter ... from father to son ... from grandparent to grandchild were lost? They are the roses of our lives. Granted roses have thorns too but mostly we recall the warm, happy memories of our lives in family and community. They are sure to pique the interest of new generations if planted as roses to be grown and nourished in the memory of those new generations. As this occurs you and your historical society become the beneficiaries of your own loving largess. Thanks for caring.

## The Old Shot Tower at Helena

by Grace Green Jones

*This article is for the generations that have no idea what the "shot tower" was or why it was. It was a vertical shaft drilled down through the solid limestone bluff on the southern bank of the Wisconsin River (the north border of Iowa County) near the town of Helena. The vertical shaft was where the molten lead was poured and dropped to the bottom where during the fall, it formed into shot for the muskets and Kentucky rifles of the day. It was shipped to the east for sale as you can deduct from the following article. This was just a few miles from where the Richardsons of Wyoming Valley lived. **Leon Nelson.***

*The author was a very talented writer and the wife of **J. Richard Lloyd Jones** of the Wyoming Valley "God Almighty Joneses." The Shot Tower essay was read on a summer's night on Tower Hill during the summer school operated yearly by **Jenkin Lloyd Jones**. This essay was printed in the ICHS Newsletter many years ago.*

In offering this paper (*Grace Jones circa 1907*) on Old Helena and vicinity, I would not have it assumed that it is anything more than cursory and incomplete. In my quest I was led into another land, another life, another atmosphere to describe that which would require a skill that is not mine. It is a great story



Shot Tower at Helena—1836

and should have a worthy telling.

The most prominent feature of the time was, of course, the Shot Tower, and though it did not make Helena, neither did Helena determine the location of the shot tower. They were, however, for the most part contemporary.

In 1831 Daniel Whitney, a Green Bay merchant, fur trader and river man, added to his numerous enterprises the business of shot making. At that time the Missouri towers controlled the entire output of the mining district - a territory including southwestern Wisconsin, northwestern Illinois, and eastern Iowa. All of this lead was sold at Galena and St. Louis, made into shot and shipped down the Mississippi River through the Gulf to New York and Boston.

But Daniel Whitney was from Green Bay situated at the mouth of the Fox River. His far-seeing mind saw another and cheaper method of reaching the eastern markets. In charge of his stores and trading establishment at the portage of the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers was John Metcalf, who had previously worked in the towers in Missouri. This man was expected to build and run the tower for Whitney. The excellent natural advantages afforded by the river and the big bluff determined the choice of location. When the work was begun, there had already existed for about three years the beginning of a small village on the flat near Phoebe Point - a few huts, a government building for storing lead and supplies, and a small tavern. Lot and streets were indicated by stakes, which years afterwards have been plowed up while working the fields.

This village had been laid out by General Henry Dodge and others and was expected to rival Galena, Ill. - then about two years old - since the river could be used to advantage in reaching the interior. This town was named as one of the five voting precincts of the county and was the choice of commissioners selected to locate the county seat. The first session of the county court was held there, but there was not enough population to make a jury, so the court was adjourned. The county seat was transferred to Mineral Point, center of the mining district.

The Black Hawk War in 1830 and 1832 left not a vestige of this little village which had been the first in Iowa County. The houses were torn down and made into rafts used for pursuit of the Indians. There was still, however, the blockhouse which stood a little east of Mr. Rieder's home. This was one of fifteen forts ordered by General Dodge at the beginning of the troubles, to be built at exposed places. This building stood for many years and was occupied most of the time by various families. *To be continued.*

*(Continued from page 2)* **A Letter to the Future**

one they knew lived the same way, and they owned their own land. They weren't poor, they were rich. They had land for crops, hillsides with a bountiful supply of lumber and firewood, wild game, a cozy log home with the cracks between the logs chinked against the winter, and shelter for their stock.

There was a fine creek running for drinking water and cooking, and in the winter they chopped through the ice to get at the water to water the stock and to fill the water barrel which was hauled back to the cabin on a handmade sled. They had all of the comforts of home. Everyone in Wyoming Valley lived like that in 1845 as well as in most of the frontier areas of this young country.

In the late fall and in the early winter before the weather got too severe, they would clear the land for next spring's planting. The men and horses and oxen, if they had any, would work from daylight till dark, (some said, "From see till can't see!") clearing brush and trees out of the bottom land. They used a "stone boat" pulled by a horse to clear rocks and stumps from the fields. In the spring they planted what they could on the land they had cleared and then continued with clearing the next field and building the next shed or barn.

When time was available, neighbors helped each other with building and clearing land, and there was no charge as you were expected to return the favor when the opportunity came. This friendly neighborhood helpfulness continued for over a hundred years. The early farmers in Wyoming Valley were not dairy farmers as was the case in later years. Instead they were mostly cash crop farmers who raised corn, grain and hay which was sold in the neighboring towns. Since people living in the towns and cities kept horses and some had cows to provide milk for their family, they were in need of feed and fodder for their livestock. There was no way they could market milk on a daily basis until much later when cheese factories were established in each rural neighborhood. There were only a few cheese factories in Wisconsin until after 1865 and the end of the Civil War.

For many years farmers walked behind a plow to turn the soil a real day's work for the farmer as well as for the horse. A man had to have strength to force the plow share deep enough into the soil to be effective, and a sandy loam was a lot easier to plow than a heavy clay loam! The hard work didn't seem to hurt William Steele as he lived well into his middle eighties. He lived in a log cabin from his early childhood up until he retired and moved into the hamlet of Avoca, Wisconsin. There his son-in-law had a lumber mill, and William Steele and Martha had a frame house built where he lived until his death. When his granddaughter Ella wrote her version of the family history, she said that when her brother, Jessie Tasker Richardson, (my grandfather) moved to town in 1915, he could no longer follow the plow attesting to the fact that they used the walking plow for many years.

Early farmers did not have much money, but they also didn't have a great need for a lot of money. They made most of their clothes (sewn by hand) and raised nearly all of their food. They also built their own buildings and until nails were available, they made their own on winter evenings or whittled pegs to fasten boards and timbers together.



A copper tub

There was hardly any tax collected as the school was built by the local farmers. In 1846 they paid the teacher \$6 a month and school generally lasted six months. They roomed and boarded the local teacher according to the number of children each home had to educate.

Just think, when one wanted to bathe, they would take a sponge bath from a pitcher and a basin in their room, even if the room meant a blanket strung on a line to afford privacy. Once the bath tub came into use, it was a moveable item brought into the house and returned to the shed after bathing. A pail of water was dumped into the tub and then some hot water from a kettle hanging over the fire in the fireplace was added for the weekly bath, if they had it that often!

Water was brought in from the creek and often families started the baths with the youngest child first ??? and then they would use the same water for each member of the family, from youngest to oldest! The used water in the summer was used to water the garden. Clothes that you wore were washed, hopefully once a week, and they generally were dried in front of the fireplace during the night. *To be continued.*



## Acquisitions

**Rod Yarish**, Mosinee, WI: Photo-Olson Cheese Factory, 1954. Letter re: Olson Cheese Factory & owner Orrin Gilbertson.

**Ora Kasten**, Dodgeville, WI: MS A History of Dodgeville United Methodist Church 1840-2007.

**Robert Thomas**, Dodgeville, WI: MS Wakefield School by Roy Farwell.

**Tom Adams**; Mineral Point, WI: Two documents, Cheesemaker licenses, 14 photographs relating to Ferrell and Buck Grove Cheese Factories, all lent to the Society for copying and possible use in publication. Originals returned to donor.

**Hazel Kelly**, Dodgeville, WI: Four professional photographs, two of which were taken by Letcher Studio in Dodgeville.

**George Campbell**: Stoughton, WI: MS A Short Story of the Iowa County Campbell Clan by George Campbell Jr, Chart-Descendants of Arcibal Campbell & Johanna Fredericka Helmenstine. Copied electronically.

**Norma Larson**: Dodgeville, WI: Photo-Pechan Cheese Factory to be copied and made available for publication.

*Inquire about part time volunteering at the Society, hours at your convenience. We train.*

## Newspaper Microfilm at ICHS

Arena Wis. Star, 1874-1876 and 1877-1886, becomes

Dodgeville Star in 1883-1886, becomes

Rural Eye, 1887-1887

The Eye and Star 1893-1895 becomes

The New Star, 1895-1896

Rural Eye of Arena, 1887-1888 and 1888-1889 becomes

The Eye and Star, 1890-1893

Index to Wisconsin Miscellaneous Newspapers

New Star, 1896-1897

New Star, 1898-1900

Dodgeville Chronicle, 1862 through June, 2007

Barneveld Banner, some issues missing

The Hollandale Review, some issues missing

*Think about it. The brick wall in your family research may tumble if you search ICHS microfilm.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Next Issue

**Easu Johnson**: Easu and friends test the dignity of the law in Mineral Point.

**Wakefield School Address**: Roy Farwell.

**A Letter to the Future**: Leon Nelson draws a few comparisons.

**Wisconsin Historical Society**: New archival collections' facility & **The ICHS as your archive**.

**Minerva Reese ... Pioneer Beauty Shop Operator**  
**Trials of a rural mail carrier, Virgil Fieldhouse.**

## CDs not permanent for data storage

The precious photos and family information so easily stored on compact discs may become corrupted within a few years. Keep up to date on electronic progress.

## 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

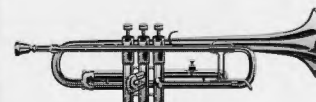
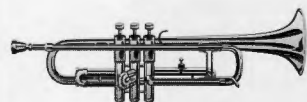
Couples-annual \$15.00    5 year \$60.00

Historian-annual    \$25.00

Master Historian-annual    \$50.00

*Membership dues and categories*

*Membership year is July 1st—June 30th*



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 XXXIII No. 2 April 2008

**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

**ICHS SERVICES -GENEALOGY-HISTORIC RESEARCH**The Society has archives for Iowa County: history-cemeteries-  
Obituaries-photographs-newspaper microfilm-artifacts**Winter Hours 1-4 weekdays****Or by appointment**

Curator Dorothy Anderson

Museum Phone 608-935-7694

Email: ichistory@mhtc.net

**Web site: [iowacountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://iowacountyhistoricalsociety.org)**

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

Address Service Requested

**Calendar of Events****Dinner-Dance****rescheduled to****April 27****Dodge-Point Country Club****Serving****12 noon -1:30 p. m.****Friends, food, fun, music****Fund raiser for Floyd School****Your tickets are still valid****Ice Cream Social**  
**Floyd School Reunion****At the Museum****Thursday July 17****4:30—7:30****Music-Food-Friends****A meal plus pie and ice cream**

Saturday night is just around the corner.

**Floyd School Student Reunion**  
**Watch for a progress report**  
**In July Newsletter**