



BAY VIEW Historian



VOLUME 2017, NO. 4

DECEMBER 2017



Join us for "Traditions to Remember" on Saturday, Dec. 9th from 2-6PM at the Bay View Historical Society

2 pm Father Christmas stories by Paul Akert w/photo opportunities
3 pm Jean-Andrew storyteller

4 pm Gnorman the Gnome singalong

5 pm Hanukah songs with Jim Winston

Book signing of "KINNICKINNICK AVENUE, The Heart of Bay View" by Lisa Ann Jacobsen

Many gifts available for purchase: historic posters, post cards, tote bags, walking tours, books, hats and more!!

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, Children and Families welcome! Refreshments served.

An Old Fashioned Christmas

BY KAREN GERSONDE

Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year. I was always a big Santa Claus junkie and could never get enough of the jolly guy when I was growing up in the 1950's and 1960's. Christmas decorations, the smell of a fresh balsam fir tree in the house complete with all of the glittering tinsel made for great memories of Christmas's long ago. Now with artificial Christmas trees, web mail Christmas cards, LED lights and Christmas decorations hitting the stores in October, well let's just say the magic somehow has lost its way into the season. I miss all of my relatives who always made my Christmas's so special, especially my mom and dad and my grandparents. Family is what the holidays were always about.

As I reminisced about Christmas's past, I dug through some old family photos and stumbled upon one special photo that gave me a glimpse of something I thought I would never see. My Aunt Betty (Elizabeth Decesari... married name Diem) was decorating a real Christmas tree at her house, the home of my Italian grandparents, who lived at 2463 S. Superior Street in Bay View. I estimate the photo was taken sometime in the 1943. She was not yet married and thus lived at home. You see, I have no memories of my grandparents ever having a Christmas tree in their home. My grandfather, Augusto Decesari, passed away in 1954, the year before I was born. By then, all of his kids (my aunts and uncles) were married and moved out of the house. This left grandma, Amelia Decesari, to live there along with my one uncle, Uncle Joe, who never married and lived there to take care of her. After grandpa died, I think the holiday magic left the house, never to return.

Yes, we still gathered there to celebrate the holidays, but there were never any decorations, trees, or anything of the sort to be found. Lots of love, but no signs of Christmas.

This photo gave me a glimpse of the past that I never experienced at that house. It was nice to know that during those impoverished years, and years of war, the Christmas spirit did live there and grandpa did the best he could with what little they had. I could picture in my mind exactly where that tree was standing and only wish I could have went back in time to help decorate that little tree.

The Christmas open house at the Beulah Brinton house is the next best thing to an old fashioned Christmas. The real Christmas tree that is on display and its fresh fragrance conjures up memories of Christmas past. Father Christmas tells stories to the children, the kitchen table is filled with home baked holiday goods, and children are dressed in their best for photos with Santa, waiting to tell him all their secrets. Bay View Historical Society members and guests busily hustle about the house, filling it with laughter, storytelling and memories. I may not have known a true Christmas at 2463 S. Superior Street, but Christmas at Beulah's house is as close as it gets. And somehow, I get the feeling that grandma and grandpa are watching down from heaven, very proud of what they see. And I am certain that is the way Beulah Brinton would have wanted it.



Become a New or Renewing Member

All yearly membership terms run from January 1 thru December 31. Any new memberships will be current through the end of the calendar year (one year plus pro-rated months).

Members receive our newsletter, The Historian, with interesting articles and the latest information on all our events as well as discounts at a variety of Bay View merchants. Thanks for supporting the programs of the Bay View Historical Society!

- ☐ New Member
☐ Renewing Member

Membership Dues:

- ☐ Individual \$20
☐ Household \$30
☐ Senior (65 or older) \$17
☐ Senior Household \$25
☐ Nonprofit/Small Business \$30
☐ Corporate \$55
☐ Also enclosed is a tax deductible contribution of \$ _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____

Please make checks payable to:
Bay View Historical Society

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

- ☐ Please contact me! I'd like to volunteer for a project or committee.
☐ Please save a tree and send The Historian to the email address above.

Send your Membership application to:

The Bay View Historical Society
Attn: Membership
2590 S. Superior Street
Bay View, WI 53207

President's Message Become a Member/Renew your Membership

Hello BVHS Friends!

I hope you are having a great fall season. Please be sure to check out the Historian for all of our upcoming events.

The Bay View Historical Society has had a substantial growth in interest through our Facebook group, website, and other Bay View organizations. It's very exciting to see more community engagement with the Society and the Beulah Brinton house. With all of this exceptional interest, we'd also like to encourage membership to the Bay View Historical Society.

Become a member. Renew your membership. Get involved.

The Bay View Historical Society relies on your membership to carry out its mission to encourage a sense of community by conserving, celebrating and sharing Bay View's rich heritage. We offer a variety of special events, community education programs, and maintain the wonderful Beulah Brinton house for all to enjoy. Membership benefits include a subscription of The Historian newsletter, discounts to a variety of Bay View businesses and the knowledge that you're supporting a vital, active organization in Bay View.

Your new or renewed membership provides vital, sustaining revenue for the organization to carry out its mission and vision.

In order to make membership easy for new and renewing members, the BVHS board made a few changes to membership renewals.

- All yearly membership terms will run from January 1 thru December.
- Any new memberships will be current through the end of the calendar year (one year plus pro-rated months).
- BVHS begin requesting renewals for the following year in October.

When can I become a member?

You can join anytime! Your next renewal request will be in October of the following year.

How do I know if I need to renew?

If it's October or later, and you haven't renewed yet this year, it's time to renew for next year. If you don't remember if you've renewed this year, please contact us at membership@bayviewhistoricalsociety.org.

Happy Holidays!

Kevin Petajan





Passing, Seen

BILL O'BRIEN

One of the neighborhood's new murals was not painted by artists, but stained by woodworkers, who replaced weathered clapboards covering old store windows at 2521 S. Howell Ave. with an eye-catching design. Thirty flush horizontal boards, stained in two shades of gray and two of brown, now cover the inset ground floor wall and frame its windows and doors.

The original first floor cornice remains, supported by three ornate brackets with small mosaic panels at their bases. In each panel, white tiles form the ground for an elaborate green S and flanking triangle patterns of small green tiles.



The initial recalls the Frank Schuster family, the original occupants of what was built in 1910 as 243-245 Howell. Frank and his wife, Amanda, had before then lived and worked a decade on the street, lodging to the north and running a grocery to the south. After the new building's completion, the couple and their children lived upstairs (today's 2517) from 1911 until just before their ground floor grocery and butcher shop closed in 1956.

The Schusters and the store were followed by a succession of tenants; the building has been entirely residential since the late 1960s. In its last year, Schuster & Sons split the storefronts with Plennes Contractors. The store space was then used for a decade by Wisconsin Bookkeeping Service, Kelly Accountants, and Federal Acceptance Company.



Four of the new long level boards are symmetrically ornamented with triangles of one color that are framed by raking pieces of another color. The craftsmen may have meant these variations as simple decoration; I read them as a panorama of gables, echoing and paying tribute to the peaked and pointed buildings of Howell and nearby streets.

The 2517-2521 renumbering of 243-245 Howell was part of the city's 1930 regularization of street names and numbers (the South Side's Sixth Avenue became South 11th Street to match North 11th Street, with which it aligned).



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Membership

\$20 Individual/\$17 Seniors (Age 65+)
\$30 Household/\$25 Senior Household
\$30 Non-Profit/Small Business
\$55 Corporate

Bay View Historical Society
2590 S. Superior Street, Bay View, WI 53207
www.bayviewhistoricalsociety.org

Bay View Historical Society is a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 status operating for educational purposes.

The Bay View Historian is published four times a year by The Bay View Historical Society.



Mary Fisher



Susan Ballje

Thanks to our Retiring Board Members

Two board members of the historical society have recently fulfilled their two three-year terms and have retired. Susan Ballje has been a stalwart board member, leader, and volunteer of the Bay View Historical Society for many years. Her many contributions are widely known in the Bay View community through her past leadership as president as well as her involvement in the many community education projects that she spearheaded. Susan's coordination of the BVHS landmark mural was one of these memorable and long-lasting contributions. Thank you Susan!

Mary Fisher helped the Bay View Historical Society in many ways. Mary's reliable and delicious hospitality coordination has helped to make our events welcoming and plentiful over the last 6+ years. Mary also graciously handled the position of secretary during her tenure. In addition, Mary also helped with the Annual Dinner auctions, raffles, and decorations. Thank you for your thoughtful dedication to the Bay View Historical Society.

Annual Membership Meeting Summary

BY JOHN SARGENT

The Bay View Historical Society held its annual membership meeting on October 7. The meeting was called to order by board president, Kevin Petajan. Petajan summarized the past year's Society's activities, including the archive committee's efforts to create online exhibits, Education's Immigration Program with neighborhood schools, the creation of the Bay View mural, membership programs, the Landmark dedication of the Cream City Realty building and the Bay View walks led by Ron Winkler.

Petajan thanked Susan Ballje and Mary Fisher for their years of service on the board. Also recognized was Nancy Tawney, house committee, for improvements made to the house and grounds, including the gazebo, handicapped entrance, and maintaining the garden. In addition, Petajan mentioned the communications committee's upgrades to the newsletter, the musical programs and the work-in-progress on the website with Robert Lenz.

John Fisher, treasurer, presented a summary of the Society's assets and expenditures. Income for the year 2017 is \$13,291.84 and expenses for

the year have been \$18,983.63. Fisher noted that the year was not yet complete and that the Society receives approximately \$5000-\$7000 during the end-of-year BVHS Annual Appeal. This amount typically balances out the Society's assets and expenditures for the year. The balance in the BVHS checking account was \$3102.44 and the balance in our capital campaign Fund was \$183,635.47.

Laura Hickman reported on the use of new software, Pastperfect, for keeping track of the society's archives database and membership.

After the presentations by the board, the slate of board nominees was presented: Jim and Jane Winston, Joseph Sliker, Cherylann Kelly, John Sargent and Jane Taugher. Ron Winkler made a motion to accept the board nominees. The motion was seconded by Keith Kempinski. The motion was approved by membership. Petajan welcomed the new board members.

The main program of the night, "Lighthouses on the Great Lakes," was presented by Phillip Block. Phillip's many years of research and photo documentation of Great Lakes lighthouses provided a captivating look into the history of the Great Lakes. Thanks to all who attended the meeting.



What to Keep? Part One

BY JOSEPH M. SLIKER

As a new member of the BVHS Board, I share an interest in preserving the history of our community with the rest of the members of the Society. To me, the value of history is to understand how things come to be, not just to be entertained by the story but also to instruct us in the process of how accomplishments (and mistakes) have been made in the past and to help inspire and help us adapt to the future. We are reminded of the often-quoted statement,

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

— George Santayana

Very often, the study of history is aided by such things as the objects, buildings, documents, and other things left to us by others. Spoiler alert: You will not find your own answer to the title question "What to keep?" in this series. This is a collection of thoughts and reflections based on this writer's experience. If you find any of these to be useful for yourself, then very well. If not, just as well. These are things we must all decide for ourselves.

Some years ago, while my wife and I were attending an estate sale, I noticed boxes of documents and loose papers piled in the front yard. I spent a few minutes looking through these and saw that many of them were the sort of things that most of us keep or have kept throughout our lives. They were things like engraved diplomas, certificates, deeds, report cards, personal letters, doodles. There were so many items among the several boxes and bundles it was clear that these were from

many members of the family. Given the age and qualities of printing, handwriting, and paper, these were probably from several generations in the past. If one could have taken the time to sort, organize, and read all of these they would have undoubtedly formed the basis of a rather interesting and complete history for that family. As this was not my family, it was not difficult for me to pass this over and continue on to the contents of the house and garage, looking for things of practical (or even monetary) value; things that fit with my own personal interests and needs. However, at the time – and even now – I felt that the most likely fate of these papers (ending up in a dumpster once the sale ended) was tragic.

My family and I have amassed our own far-too-large morass of documents and possessions. From time to time the sheer mass of these many things feels like an impossible burden that interferes with accomplishing other goals in life. When I take it upon myself to unburden my life of so much of what appears to be unnecessary or obsolete, the very act of picking up each object, each potential piece of "junk", determining what it is, how and why it was acquired has the paradoxical effect of making it interesting again. Even when I have decided the object is of no real consequence to me, I must also consider the rest of the family. Does it still mean something to any of them? Do I have permission to dispose of it? Does it have value in spite of our disinterest (Donate it? EBay it? Recycle it?) The task of making any real progress in disposing of any significant amount of excess that clutters our lives becomes insurmountable.

There are times that I think that "Other People" do not have this problem: I think that most of their lives are clutter-free. But then I also think about a phenomenon that has been growing for the past 40 or 50 years; the appearance of self-storage facilities in communities all over the country: acres and acres of rental garages in which thousands or even millions of individuals and families are parking countless tons of their stuff, which is apparently unnecessary for them to live with every day, but somehow too valuable to permanently part with. For a monthly fee these people can create the illusion that they have dealt with their clutter, but the truth is this reckoning has only been postponed.

We are now members of an age in which technology is able to produce durable goods in incredible volumes and at fantastic rates. Technology is also allowing us to record, catalog, preserve, and convey events, ideas, and creations far beyond the limits of any individual to digest everything that might be of interest to him or her. The question becomes, for any community: "What is important to preserve and display or make available to the current and future members of the community"?

In the next installment, I will attempt to tabulate the responses to a question I posted on a Facebook group last month: "What Comes to Your Mind When You Think of Bay View?" The question generated hundreds of responses from the Facebook users who saw it. What did they see as being some of the "important" things about Bay View?

Where in (Historical) Bay View?

BY RON WINKLER

Do you recognize this Bay View landmark? Look for the answer in the next issue of The Historian.

Answer to last issue: Looking south on Logan Avenue toward the triangle defined by Kinnickinnic, Russell and Logan. The Bay View Village Hall is on the left and the Bay View Baptist Church is on the right.





Yesterday and Today

BY RON WINKLER

South Shore Park Pavilion

One of Bay View's original pioneers was Elijah Estes. Beginning in 1909, part of his farm was developed into South Shore Park. The original South Shore Park pavilion was built in 1912 of rusticated concrete block for \$11,405. At the time, Rusk Avenue extended into the park and ended at the pavilion.

The current pavilion, 2900 S. Shore Drive, was built in 1933-34 during the Depression as a Works Progress Administration project. The architects were Clas & Clas, one of who was from the team of Ferry & Clas, designers of the Milwaukee Central Library and the Cudahy Tower. The pavilion's design is Mediterranean Revival with terra cotta ornamentation and a red tile roof. The building features buff-colored brick, arched windows and doors, wrought iron fixtures and terra cotta ornamentation.

In November 2008, it was named as a Milwaukee County Landmark and a Bay View Historical Society Landmark. It has housed one of Milwaukee County Park's beer gardens for the past two years.



Puddler's Hall

Puddler's Hall, 2461-63 S. St. Claire Avenue is the oldest union building in Wisconsin and possibly in the Midwest. It was erected in 1873 for \$4500 by the Sons of Vulcan and Badger State Lodge Number 2, with assistance from the Milwaukee Iron Company. The building was also used by the Masons, Odd Fellows, Hibernians, and Good Templars, whose offices were on the second floor. In the early days, as the only gathering place in Bay View, the first floor served as a community center for lectures, debates, plays, and concerts.

In the photo from the early twentieth century, the building on the right is the old fire station, which became the Beulah Brinton Center in 1923, after the fire station was decommissioned. It was razed as part of the old Lake Freeway project that was eventually curtailed.

Puddler's Hall was dedicated as a Bay View Historical Society landmark on May 3, 1986 and is also on the National Register of Historic Places.



1919





BVHS February Program: Meet and Greet Time Traveler Cordelia Packard Sacia

Have you ever wondered what life was like for the early settlers of Milwaukee County in the mid-1830s? Come hear a firsthand account by Cordelia Packard Sacia (b.1826--d.1907), who will time-travel to the Bay View Historical Society at the Beulah Brinton House at 2590 S. Superior Street on Monday, February 5, 2018.

Hear Cordelia (Anna Passante incognito) relate stories about her family leaving a comfortable life in western New York to travel to the wild frontier of the Wisconsin Territory in 1836. Her father, Zebedee, and her seven siblings came to start a new life. Hear about the need to build a structure, clear the land, deal with the Indians, and the everyday struggles to survive in this wild land.

Cordelia will also talk about Anna Passante's new book, *From Nojoshing to St. Francis, "From Settlement to City, Part 2: the Early Settlers of St. Francis, Wisconsin 1836-1900"*. Books will be available for sale.



Our historic Beulah Brinton House is a wonderful place to gather family and friends. With the new gazebo and landscaping, the yard also offers a lovely outdoor setting!

If you'd like more information about private rentals (consider family reunion, showers, wedding, anniversary, meeting, conference)

please contact

Susan Ballje - susan.ballje@yahoo.com

or 414.333.5414.



*"We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give"*

— Winston Churchill

The Bay View Historical Society depends on generosity now, and in the future, to continue to exist and serve. The simplest way you can make a future gift to the Bay View Historical Society is through your will. Planning to make a gift this way allows you to make a difference in the Society's future — even after your are gone.

Please consider remembering the Bay View Historical Society in this way...thank you.

*For more information, contact Nancy Tawney at (414) 744-5674
or ntawney@aol.com*



Bay View Historical Society
2590 SOUTH SUPERIOR STREET
BAY VIEW, WI 53207

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Return Service Requested

Programs & Events @ Beulah Brinton House

Sunday, December 3

House Concert featuring "Bittersweet
Christmas Band
4pm Donations welcome.

Saturday, December 9

"Traditions to Remember" featuring Santa Paul,
Jean-Andrew, Gnorman the Gnome, and Hanukah
songs by Jim Winston. Bring kids
and family for great photos!!
2-6PM

Saturday, January 6

House Concert featuring Bryan Bowers
on autoharp
6:30PM RSVP beulahbrintonhouseconcerts@gmail.
com / 414.702.6053.

Saturday, January 13

House Concert featuring David Wakes Quintet, De
La Buena
7:30PM
RSVP beulahbrintonhouseconcerts@gmail.com /
414.702.6053.

Monday, February 5

Program featuring Anna Passante, speaking on
her book "*From Nojoshing to St. Francis, From
Settlement to City, Part 2: Early Settlers of
St. Francis, Wisconsin 1836-1900*".

Saturday, March 3

House Concert featuring Robin Pluer
7:30PM Reservations required
beulahbrintonhouseconcerts@gmail.com or
Cherylann Kelly 262.951.1915

Monday, April 2

Program featuring Lisa Ann Jacobsen,
speaking on her book "*Kinnickinnic
Avenue, Heart of Bay View, WI*"

Board Meetings @ Beulah Brinton House

Wednesday, December 13

6:30PM

Wednesday, January 10

6:30PM

Wednesday, February 14

6:30PM

