

# Seymour History Bulletin



A publication of the Seymour Community Historical Society – Fall and Winter 2015  
Dedicated to Preserving Seymour Area History Bill Collar, Editor - 833-6064

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

**Museum Phone: (920) 833-9835**

**If museum closed: (920) 833-6064**

**Summer hours: 1:00 – 4:00 WTFSS**

**Fall and winter: 1:00 – 4:00 Sunday**

**Closed: January, February and March**

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## Communication from Your Historical Society

The purpose of our newsletter is to keep our members informed of exhibits, activities and progress at the museum and the role of the historical society in preserving area history and providing programs for the community. Our members are our most valuable asset. We cannot play a viable role without your support.

In this issue you will be updated on society activities during the summer and have a preview of things to come including our Christmas open house on December 5th. In addition, you have the opportunity to read an excerpt of an interview with long-time member and supporter Oliver Lerum. Another history buff and society backer, Ralph Melchert, shares his interest in riding the rails and provides memories from his childhood. Some of you may remember the polio epidemic of the 1950s researched and written by Lynn Koenigs

Please note that even though you may have received previous newsletters via the Internet, this printed copy includes an envelope suitable for returning a donation to help the society meet our financial obligations. The philosophy of the Board of Directors is to have a vibrant organization with numerous activities and changing exhibits. All museum workers are volunteers and 100% of your gift is used at the local level. We appreciate your assistance.

## Highlights of the Annual Meeting



***Jessica Michna as Eleanor Roosevelt***

The annual meeting of the SCHS was held Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> in the upstairs meeting room of the museum. Following a brief business meeting Jessica Michna presented her impersonation of Eleanor Roosevelt. Members and guests of the Seymour Community Historical Society attending the event experienced a walk back in time through the outstanding performance of Mrs. Michna. In period dress, Michna, in a dynamic fifty-minute performance, took the audience on a journey from Roosevelt's childhood to her appointment by President Truman as a delegate to the United Nations in 1948. Capturing Eleanor's mannerisms and voice, Michna impressed many members of the audience who used superlatives to explain her realistic portrayal. She openly wept describing FDR's longtime affair with his personal secretary Lucy Mercer, and sadly recalled the working conditions in

the coal mines. A friend of the poor, Mrs. Roosevelt made a commitment to improve working conditions, eliminate racial bias, and led the fight for gender equality. In many ways she redefined the role of first lady expressing how she advised the President, traveled extensively, and even wrote a regular newspaper column.

Michna, a true professional, captivated the audience through vividly recalling Mrs. Roosevelt's experiences while visiting American soldiers in the Pacific and European theaters during World War II. A

consummate perfectionist, she answered questions adroitly and further enhanced her story by relating several poignant experiences.

Overall, it is a tribute to the Seymour Community Historical Society to make an entertainer of Mrs. Michna's status available for area residents. James Kenton, visiting from Ames, Iowa remarked, "The society should be commended on their selection of Eleanor Roosevelt. A person often hears about her contributions, but nothing as intimate as this." June Raether of Seymour commented, "I loved it, she actually sounded like Mrs. Roosevelt." Marge Coonen recalled seeing Mrs. Michna as Mary Todd Lincoln several years ago at the library. "She was great as Mrs. Lincoln and just excellent as Mrs. Roosevelt. You will have to get her again." Mark Vachhuber, of Wausaukee, stated, "Unbelievable, she really had her part down."

It was a fun afternoon for those in attendance. Members of the historical society served homemade pies, cookies, cakes and bars.

During the business part of the meeting, Jon Braun and Bob Bock were named to the Seymour Community Historical Society Board of Directors for three-year terms. They replaced retiring members Ellen Piehl Duffy and Lois Dalke.

## Military Mascots Impress Visitors

In June board members Mike and Sue Keyzers traveled to Madison to pick up a traveling exhibit titled 'Furs, Feathers and Fidelity.' This exhibit featuring placards illustrating animal mascots from our nation's conflicts was made possible through a loan from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and a financial grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council. The SCHS complimented the display with mannequins dressed in historical accurate military uniforms.

The exhibit was enjoyed by over 250 people including many veterans. The local historical society has plans to host future traveling exhibits sponsored by the Veterans Museum and Wisconsin Humanities Council.

## Gary Melchert's Collection

Over 200 people visited the museum during July to view Gary Melchert's vintage automobile and truck collection. Of particular interest were the 1950s and 60s automobiles and the custom designed trucks. The trucks included one with a Seymour Dairy logo and another advertising Hillshire meats. Thank you Gary for sharing your collection with museum visitors.



***Gary Melchert displayed his impressive collection of vintage model car and trucks.***

## Burgerfest 2015



Burgerfest was a huge success this year with over 1,300 visitors taking in the large burger display in the museum. Numerous positive comments were made by people from throughout the Midwest who were visiting the museum for the first time. The most popular hamburger items included the Burgertime arcade game and the "Picture Yourself as Hamburger Charlie" exhibit.

The historical society has over 1,500 hamburger related items in its collection. Of these, about 400 are on permanent display. During Burgerfest all the objects are on exhibit for the entire month of August. The 12 minute video of Larry the Cable Guy visiting Seymour is one of the most popular attractions. Over the years Seymour, as the Home of the Hamburger, has been featured on the Travel Channel, Food Channel, History Channel and several others. Film crews from Germany, South Korea and Australia have visited and produced specials. The historical society is in possession of a one-hour documentary on the history of the hamburger. You will enjoy it if you understand German!

## Everyone Enjoys Music in the Park

The summer Music in the Park program concluded on Wednesday evening, August 27, with Bernie's Polka Band and an audience close to 400. The crowd was treated to free hamburgers and fries by volunteers from the Home of the Hamburger, Inc. Rick Kraupa, president of HOTH and his crew prepared the treat. The color guard from Kraft-Krause Post 106, presented the colors.

It was another successful summer as over 3,000 people enjoyed the eleven concerts in the park. Members of the historical society extend a sincere "Thank you" to Seymour area merchants who make the music possible. It takes many volunteers to organize and produce the summer long program. A huge thank you for the members of the historical society who contributed their time, popping popcorn, filling coolers, selling concessions, distributing raffle tickets, organizing the programs, and preparing the site for the performances. Special appreciation is extended to host Mike Keyzers and John and Lynn Koenigs who lined up the music. The following merchants helped sponsor the music program and /or provided prizes for the free raffle. Be sure to thank them when you patronize their businesses.

- ✓ American Family Insurance
- ✓ Baylake Bank
- ✓ Black Creek Chiropractic
- ✓ Butters Wood Products
- ✓ Community First, Nichols
- ✓ Coonen Inc.
- ✓ Cornerstone Pizza
- ✓ Countryside Photographers
- ✓ Diedrick's Hardware
- ✓ Don's Quality Market
- ✓ Edward Jones
- ✓ Family Insurance Center
- ✓ First National Bank
- ✓ Fox Community Credit Union
- ✓ Friends of the Library
- ✓ Garrow Oil and Propane
- ✓ Good Shepherd Services
- ✓ Home of the Hamburger
- ✓ Huettl Bus, Inc.
- ✓ J J's Auto Clinic
- ✓ Kary's Restaurant
- ✓ Krabbe's Kountry Klub
- ✓ Kwik Trip
- ✓ Lubinski, Reed and Klass SC
- ✓ McDonald's
- ✓ Menn Law Firm, Ltd
- ✓ New York Life, Ken Bakula
- ✓ Nichols/Isaar Snowmobile Clubs
- ✓ Outagamie Co. Dep. Sheriff's Assoc.
- ✓ Prevea Health
- ✓ Rooster's, Nichols
- ✓ Sal's Foods, Black Creek
- ✓ Scott Marcks Construction
- ✓ Seymour DQ Grill and Chill
- ✓ Seymour Mobil
- ✓ Sissy's
- ✓ Subway
- ✓ Trakside Gas and Convenience
- ✓ Truman, Haase, Zahn Insurance
- ✓ United Ag.



*Seymour's Starwood is a regular at music in the park.*



*Residents of Good Shepherd enjoy the music.*

## Interview with Oliver Lerum



***Ollie announcing his birthday and book signing at the SCHS annual meeting.***

***Oliver (Ollie) Lerum is a lifetime member of the SCHS and an avid supporter of the museum. This year he completed his fourth book, "7 Lerum Boys and Millie". On his 90th birthday he donated a copy of the book to the museum. Reading his life story revealed a remarkable fact that Ollie and his six brothers all served in the military during World War II and the aftermath. The following is an excerpt from a discussion with him. The entire interview can be found on the SCHS Website ([seymourhistory.org](http://seymourhistory.org)).***

The original plan was I was going to go to college at Stout because I liked mechanics and woodworking, but Pearl Harbor put an end to that. In 1944 two of my brothers were missing. They were gone. My older brothers never moved with the family. The book tells about their experiences when the war started. Everybody wanted to be in the navy or air force. That ended enlistments so they could fill the manpower needs of all branches of service everything went through the draft board. That fall of 1944 I volunteered to be drafted and to change my classification from 2C (Agricultural) to 1A which meant I was eligible for the draft. They sent us to Milwaukee for physicals. Many of those who went along were rejected for one thing or another. Thinking back, that is when the government found out how great the need was for rural health care. So many had rotten teeth, or other ailments that got

them rejected. That changed a lot of things in our country.

Now we are in 1945, I went to Milwaukee for induction, and then they sent us to Fort Sheridan where we were issued our clothes. After that I was shipped to Camp Livingston in Louisiana. So I got my basic training in the swamps of Louisiana. This was a difficult time for some people. Then I signed up for officers training. Back in



***Private Oliver Lerum***

Hick's Valley I didn't get to see many people. So here I am, thrown in with a bunch of people, with a couple hundred in a company. Some of them I liked and others I didn't. The person who really impressed me was the company commander. He was really astute, intelligent and a great leader. He didn't seem to do

much, but he saw that things got done. So I thought "that's what I would like to do." My goal was to become a company commander.

So I went to officer's school in Fort Benning. Basic training was tough, but officer's school was twice as tough. But it was really good leadership training. The army had top notch instructors. Something I would use the rest of my life. It was well organized and hands on. We would sit in the bleachers and listen to a problem and then find a solution. Even in my working with farmers, first of all you need a plan and then you have to execute it. That's where most people fall down - they don't analyze it. What went right and what went wrong. I always said I had to avoid getting on a committee because I would end up as chairman. The military was actually a good experience. I learned that "no" means "no". Some people never learn that.

I graduated from officer's school as a second lieutenant. There were over 200 in the initial class, but only 89 graduated; the rest fell by the wayside. By that time the Japanese had surrendered and that is what saved me. I was relieved when President Truman dropped the bomb. Otherwise I was being trained to head to Japan. The soldiers who fought in Europe were also headed to Japan. Many had already received their orders. They had gone through hell in Europe and now were expected to fight in Japan.

Since the war was over they shipped me to California to get prepared for the occupation. We stopped in Japan and took on supplies and then ended up in Korea. When we got to Korea we came in during the night and dropped anchor in Inchon. The port there has mud flats. During high tide it looks like ocean. During low tide the ships stay in the channel and they close the locks to keep the water in. I remember seeing the mud flats and the coast of Korea. It was really a sickening sight. Korea was a different kind of country when compared to the United States. The trees never matured because they cut them for fuel. It's a

different type of country. I ended up in 31<sup>st</sup> infantry



***Mudflats in Inchon Harbor***

which was part of the 7<sup>th</sup> division. We were stationed in Seoul and basically we were the government. Japan had been

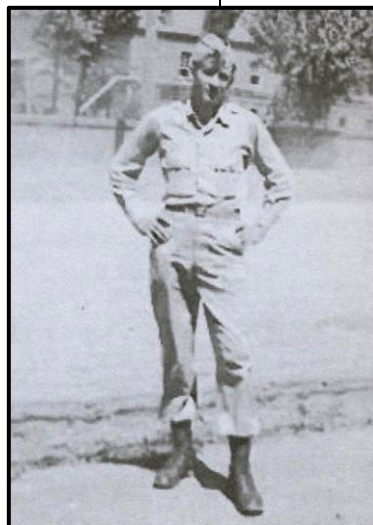
occupying Korea and now we took over. The Koreans then viewed us as the occupiers and disliked us. That is true with any country. Can you imagine an occupier coming into Seymour?

The army was reducing, they had a system set up with points and the people with the longest record of service were discharged first. The 7<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers were the ones that came through

Okinawa and you know what that was like! The Japanese looked at that as homeland and that was a tough fight. I was in company A of the 31<sup>st</sup> infantry of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division. I ended up as the company commander. We were short of officers and I was a second lieutenant and company commander. That was a good experience since you are the mother you have to see that they get clothing and something to eat and if they do something wrong you have to handle it. I was in active duty long enough to get through college at River Falls and then I joined the reserve and was inactive after I got out of active duty.

I was in the inactive reserve while I was in school. I was fortunate and just missed the Korean War. We had a regimental commander who was a friend of the adjunct general in the state and the general was a friend of Eisenhower. The commander we had was bucking for a promotion and he wanted to get us called up. The rest of us weren't enthused about it; especially me. I'd been to Korea and didn't have very good memories. It was a tough place to fight a war.

I thought Truman did the right thing when he relieved MacArthur of his command during the

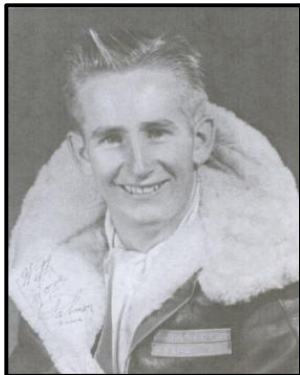


***Lieutenant Lerum in Korea 1946***

Korean War. If he would have gotten to the Yalu River the Chinese would have come in with all the power they could muster. It would have been a real blow up in my opinion. When I was in Korea We were still friends with the Chinese. How things change.

My brother Adolph was in that period when Hitler was flexing his muscles in 1939. The US was wavering on when to get into the war. So they set up the draft where a person would serve for a year and then go on inactive duty. That's when he was drafted and when Pearl Harbor was attacked he was called back to active duty. My oldest brother enlisted in the air force in 1942, his name was Harold. He piloted a B-17 and was shot down while bombing Germany. When he crashed he broke his leg. He was captured and spent some time recovering in a German military hospital.

At the same time, my brother Pete who is a year and a half older than me, enlisted in the air



**Brother Pete was shot down over Europe.**

force. He was a tail gunner on a B-24. His plane was shot down while coming back from bombing the oil fields in Romania. They parachuted out and he was almost to the ground when a German fighter pilot spotted him and shot him in

the leg. The Yugoslavian resistance fighters rescued him and took him to a hospital. Unfortunately,

there was no penicillin then and his leg got infected and he died. The village had a funeral for him. The women gathered enough cloth to make a flag for his coffin. He was buried there and after the war he was brought back to Pepin. I had to write this down in book form because those people deserve to be remembered. I'm no hero, but if anybody was, they were.

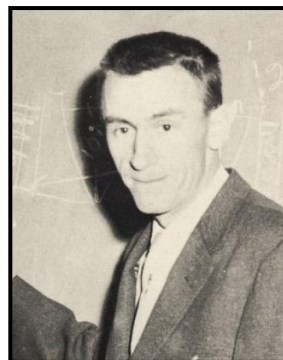
Arnie was drafted in 1942 and he was sent to the Aleutians. Most people don't realize that the Japanese occupied American soil. Well, they should have just left them there. After the fighting was over

in the Aleutians he was sent to Europe and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

When my dad died, Mart was 13 months old; he went home with my Uncle Martin and Aunt Christine who lived in Minneapolis. They didn't have any children and eventually they adopted him. He never came back home after that. He never lived with the "overall bunch." He ended up as an only child in Minneapolis. He joined the navy. I've forgiven him for that.

My youngest brother, Jim, graduated from high school in 1946 and enlisted in the army. Most people view the war as from 1941 to 1945, but it actually went longer because of the occupation of the defeated countries. The army sent him to Korea where he served for two years.

After the war, my plan was to go to school. I returned to the States in November of 1946. I remember, I went deer hunting actually I was on furlough, I didn't get discharged until the 10<sup>th</sup> of December. There was a local kid going to college at River Falls. He had an old Pontiac and came home every weekend. He said "why don't you ride with me?" At that time a grocer in town offered me a job cutting meat for \$25.00 a week. That was pretty good money back then, but I had my mind made up to go to school.



**Ollie taught at Seymour High School for 12**

I thought if I took the job I could use my training and get enough money to buy a couple beers, actually more than that, but that wasn't my kettle of fish. I had an old 1930 Chevy that was my brothers and he was in Korea so I packed up my things and headed to River Falls in his car. They signed me up and I was in class the next day.

That was the second of December. I was fortunate they were on quarters and the second quarter had just started. I actually started school before I got out of the army. I stuck with it and graduated on June 30, 1950. I started teaching the next day, July 1 in the Appleton vocational school.

I got the job through the school. I had a degree as a vocational Ag teacher and I also had a science and math degree. There was a need for better trainers for veterans who came back and wanted to farm. The school had two other instructors, but they had a waiting list and they had to get the veterans trained in four years before their

eligibility expired. I was at the Appleton Vocational school for four years. The program for veterans ended after four years and I was out of a job. It was a very successful program most of the men purchased a farm of about 80 acres. Many of the farms were worn out and not very productive. My job was to teach them to bring the farms back to life.

***In 1954 Ollie was hired to teach Agriculture at Seymour High School. He stayed at Seymour until 1967 when he went back to the vocational school in Appleton where he taught 21 more years until retirement. During his retirement years Ollie has been active on many boards and committees and has been an avid fan of Seymour sports.***

## The Eberts of Isaar

By lifetime member Duane Ebert

***Recently Duane Ebert donated a copy of his book "The Eberts of Isaar" to the museum. This excerpt describes the immigration of his ancestors from Europe to the United States. Since many area residents have roots going back to central and northern Europe, their ancestors experienced similar conditions. Members who are interested in additional information about the Eberts or Isaar, should arrange to visit the archive room of the Seymour Community Museum.***

Imagine the excitement in the small village of Poschetzau, in the Austrian province of Bohemia, as the family sold their possessions, bid farewell to family and friends and prepared to leave. It was March, 1867, and the final papers for immigration were prepared, and signed at the court district office in Elbogen by the Imperial Royal District official, dated March 28, 1867. Karl was listed on his passport as a shoemaker and farmer, of the Catholic religion, medium height, oval face, blond hair,

gray eyes, mouth and nose proportionate. Karl must have had some education, as his well-written personal signature appears on the document.

Description is also given for his wife, Anna and the three sons, Joseph, Anton, and Karl. Each were of medium height, had blond hair and brown eyes.

The departure scene is heart rendering. Relatives and friends were on hand to say a last farewell, tears flowed in profusion since all knew those leaving would never see their loved ones again.

Karl's father and Anna's mother were dead by this time and we don't know about Karl's mother or Anna's father. The records are incomplete.



***The Karl Ebert family around 1870. Most likely taken in Appleton.***

Karl was 34 years old, Anna not yet 34, Josef 8, Anton 6, and Karl (Charles) six months. The immigrants would have traveled by railroad northwesterly through the German states about 260 miles to the seaport of Bremen on the North Sea. For inlanders, as the Eberts were, seeing the sea for the first time was an awesome sight. Karl booked passage at the port of Bremen on the steamship

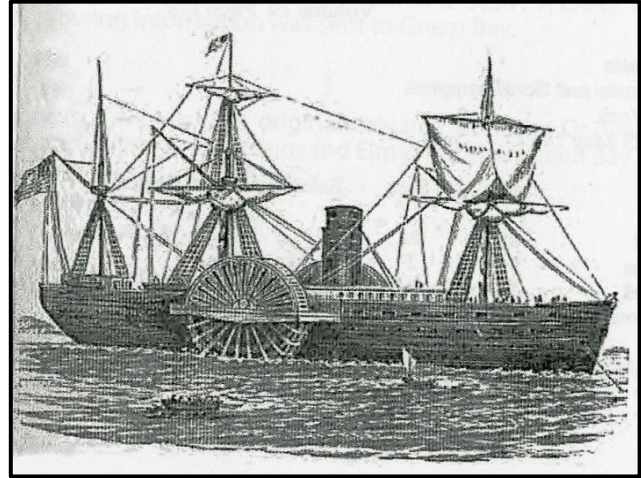
ATLANTIC. Leaving Bremen into the North Sea, the ATLANTIC sailed through the English Channel to Southampton, England, to pick up more passengers headed for the New World. Leaving Southampton, the Ebert family had their last glimpse of Europe.

The journey across the Atlantic took about three weeks. Food on board was poor. They brought some food along with a trunk containing some possessions. According to Karl Ebert's "Intent of Citizenship" paper the family landed at the port of

New York, July, 1867. Ship records at the port of New York have the ATLANTIC arriving May 23, 1867.

We hear today about immigrants landing at Ellis Island and being processed for the new country. In our ancestor's day Ellis Island was not yet established; that was not to come until 1891. We can imagine the confusion, the problems with language and the uncertainty of the new land. There may have been other German speaking people to assist the Eberts to find their way to Wisconsin. We do know Catholic charitable organizations were on hand to assist immigrants. Also Wisconsin established a Commission of Immigration, whose duty was to distribute informational pamphlets telling of Wisconsin's advantages to immigrants, as well as how to get to Milwaukee. Starting in the 1840's,

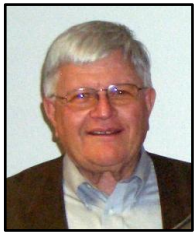
leaflets praising Wisconsin were distributed in the coastal area of Germany.



***The ATLANTIC was typical of the ocean going steamships that transported immigrants. She was 284 feet long with a beam of 46 feet.***

## Memories of Trains in the Seymour Area

By lifetime member Ralph J. Melchert



**Ralph Melchert**

Although born in Chicago, IL, I grew up on a farm about two miles east of Seymour, WI. My parents, Ray and Lucy (Vanden Heuvel) Melchert, were from the Seymour area but were living in Chicago when I was born. In 1940, when I was two years old, we moved from Chicago to the farm, which at the time was owned by my grandfather, William Vanden Heuvel. The Green Bay and Western, often referred to as the "Green Bay Route", went through a portion of the farm, but today the GB & W is gone, and people ride bicycles on the trail where trains formerly traveled.



Although this incident occurred years before I was born, I remember a neighbor who had a farm adjacent to ours, and who has long since passed away, telling me about the time when a Green Bay and Western passenger train became snowbound. (The GB & W did run passenger trains until about

1948.) Lon Chaney, a famous movie star of the silent era, along with a crew and a cast of actors were on their way to Upper Michigan to make a movie, for which they needed snow, when the train they were riding became snowbound about two miles east of Seymour. (This must have been during the 1920s because Lon Chaney passed away in 1930.) Anyway, our neighbor remembered taking food with a horse-drawn sleigh to the train, which was snowbound for two days. People came with shovels to help free the train. I'll bet the Hollywood people were surprised to see so much snow before they got to Upper Michigan!



Later I found that this incident probably occurred in 1929, because in that year Mr. Chaney made his last silent film, "Thunder", in which he was cast as a railroad engineer. Snow scene footage was shot in both Green Bay and Manitowoc, and Mr. Chaney contracted walking pneumonia during the shooting of the film. This



illness combined with his throat cancer led to his death in 1930.

When my parents took over the farm in 1940, income was pretty scarce, and factory workers were needed for the war, so during WWII my father worked at the shipyards in Chicago during the winter, since there was no field work, and we had a hired man who took care of the dairy cows. Every Friday night my dad would come home, and my mother would drive to the Chicago and Northwestern station in Green Bay to pick him up. On Sunday night we would take him back to the station for his return to Chicago. I was impressed with the streamlined passenger trains, especially the diesel engines, which may have been EMD E-2s, E-3s or E-5s, but I was too

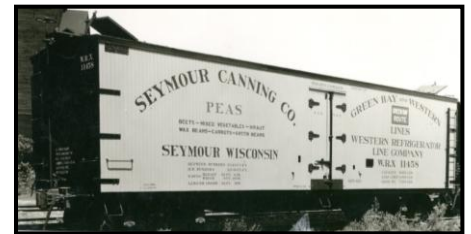


young to know. The train was either the "Peninsula 400" or "Valley 400", I believe, but we just called it the "400". At

least one time my dad's ride to Chicago was after a football game. He said he noticed empty beer bottles rolling on the floor of the car with each movement of the train. Sometimes he may have taken the Milwaukee Road's "Chippewa Hiawatha", but I remember mostly the "400". Our farm had the house and farm buildings on land on the south side of Highway 54, but the rest of the land was a little to the east and on the north side of the highway. It was on this portion of the farm that the railroad went through, leaving about forty acres on the north side of the tracks. Our cows were often pastured on this land during the day (but never at night), and we had to make sure there was no train coming when the cows were crossing the tracks. The land was fenced, of course, and we had gates on each side of the tracks. We made sure the cows were closely grouped together before allowing them to cross in order to reduce the crossing time. (There were several trains each way during those years.) However, one time when the cows were coming home for the evening milking, one cow decided to

separate herself from the others and headed east along the tracks. Just then to our shock, a westbound train appeared, and we were sure the cow would be hit and killed. We were relieved when we saw the engineer shoot steam out the side of the engine at the cow to keep her from going on the tracks. Quick thinking by the engineer saved our cow. I think the engine was a 2-8-2 Mikado, but I was too young to know at the time. Our neighbors to the west were not as fortunate. One time an unexpected train frightened the cows that were going across the tracks, causing some cows to panic and run through the barbed wire fence, resulting in severe cuts to their udders.

When I was growing up, the GB & W had a depot in Seymour with a station agent. A railroad car, which contained merchandise for the local stores, would be left on a siding daily or nearly daily. Tank cars would bring in petroleum products, and cattle would often be shipped out to stockyards in Green Bay and Milwaukee. Carloads of farm machinery would arrive for the local farm implement dealers. As a kid it was a sight to see a carload of shiny new tractors parked on the siding. Canned



vegetables were shipped from the canning factory, and grain and feed supplements for livestock would come to the local feed mills. I also remember one occasion when bales of hay from our farm and other farms as well, were loaded into boxcars headed for a drought-stricken area.

We had a relative in Kaukauna who sent a crate of eggs on a regular basis to another relative who ran a restaurant and motel just outside of Hurley, Wis. The eggs were shipped in the baggage car of the "400", so the fresh eggs arrived the same day as they were sent. A question in my mind is why the restaurant did not obtain the eggs closer to Hurley, but the relatives who could answer this question are no longer with us. In those days trains were a part of daily life for many, if not most people.

My father liked trains and preferred steam engines over diesels. He knew one of the engineers who operated a 2-8-2. As I recall, this engineer told my dad they had just overhauled the 2-8-2s (There were six of them.), but shortly thereafter the railroad converted to diesels, which my dad thought was a shame.

The first diesels on the GB & W, other than switchers, that I am aware of were the Alco FA units, which some say were the best looking diesels ever. They were streamlined and impressive. The



***The Alco FA Diesel***

hood units that later replaced them were maybe more efficient but were not as handsome.

I mentioned that our farm had forty acres on the north side of the tracks. It was really a little less than that, as I will explain. There was a two or three acre wedge-shaped parcel which bordered the south side of the railroad right of way and projected a little to the east between the right of way and the neighbor's farmland to the east. I could never understand why there was this little odd-shaped parcel that belonged to our farm. Why didn't it belong to the neighboring farm? It was fortunate that it did belong to our farm, however. The rest of our farm was all under tillage, but this little parcel was difficult to farm although ideal for planting trees, and I did just that as part of my 4-H forestry project. It wasn't until just a few years ago that I realized how this little parcel of land came to be. While looking at a plat book one day it dawned on me that this little parcel was part of the forty acres that was bisected when the railroad tracks came through, leaving it cut off from the rest of the forty. At first glance it would seem this parcel should be part of our neighbor's farm to the east, but in reality it was part of our farm's forty that the railroad cut through. Being small and odd-shaped, it was not convenient for farming, but it was an ideal little parcel for a 4-H forestry and wildlife project. In a way, I have to thank the GB & W for indirectly giving me this opportunity for a 4-H project.

Although I enjoyed riding trains, we did not use them much for pleasure travel, so to speak. It was for more utilitarian reasons, although I vaguely remember riding back with my mother on the Chicago and Northwestern from Milwaukee. I don't remember the purpose of the trip, but it was probably to visit relatives. My dad had three brothers who owned a car dealership in Seymour, Melchert Brothers, selling Hudson, (which became part of American Motors, and which in turn was purchased by Chrysler), Buick, and International trucks. On occasion, when farm work permitted, my dad and others would travel to Kenosha or Milwaukee to pick up and drive new autos back for the dealership. If there were several cars to pick up someone might take the drivers down by auto. Often though, the drivers would take the train (C & NW



***Melchert Brothers Garage - 1947***

"400") from Appleton, and if Dad were one of the drivers, he would sometimes take me along for the ride. Later, when I was able to drive, I would take the train and pick up an auto myself.

One time during vacation from college, as I recall, I took the train to Springfield, Ohio, to pick up an International truck at the IH truck factory there, but I don't recall what railroad I took from Chicago to Springfield. As I mentioned, in those days I did not ride as a rail fan for the most part. Anyway, I arrived at the plant to pick up the truck, which was to be made into a milk truck back home. Everything seemed to be in order, and the trip home seemed without problems. However, going around Chicago, not on the tollway but on US 45, I think, I suddenly heard a loud screeching noise coming from the transmission. What was I to do? Just then I noticed an International truck dealership about a block away down the road. Furthermore, it was early enough on

Saturday to arrive before noon closing. When a mechanic checked the transmission he found the oil to be very low. Apparently they did not put in the required amount at the factory, and after the

mechanic put in transmission oil, the screeching noise stopped, and I was able to reach home without incident or damage to the transmission.

***To read more about Ralph Melchert's experience traveling by train visit the society website ([seymourhistory.org](http://seymourhistory.org)) and click on "News".***

## **The Polio Epidemic of 1955**

By Lifetime Member Lynn E. Koenigs

### **Headlines from the Seymour Press**

- **August 11, 1955 - Polio Scare, Hot Weather Throw Outagamie County Fair For Loss**  
Attendance of 75% less people spelled disaster for the fair. The average attendance in former years was 40,000. This year it was 13,000. The fair was granted \$10,000 in emergency funds to make up loss. The fair was held despite the polio scare. Attendance was left to the parents' decision. The board would have called off the fair if it had known six weeks in advance that the polio scare would hit the area.
- **August 18, 1955 - All Scout Meetings Cancelled In Seymour During Polio Threat** An announcement has been made that all Girl Scout and Boy Scout meetings have been cancelled until further notice. This action was necessary because of the serious polio threat in this area.
- **August 18, 1955 - Corn Roast Postponed Due To Polio Threat**  
The annual free corn roast sponsored each year by the Seymour Businessmen's Association has been postponed because of the current polio threat in this area. No new date has been set.
- **August 25, 1955 - Opening of Schools Postponed Until September 12**  
Dr. Louis Sieb announced Tuesday morning that the Seymour Public Schools and St. John's Catholic School will open one week late because of the seriousness of the polio epidemic in Outagamie County. It is hoped that the polio situation will level off.
- **August 25, 1955 - Polio Conditions Here Unchanged**  
Polio conditions here in Seymour and in Outagamie County remain unchanged as the number of cases increase daily. Reports list that Outagamie County with 221 cases is by far one of the severest hit. The local health officials request that children remain at home, away from the general public.
- **August 25, 1955-Graduate of Seymour High Dies of Polio**  
William Clevon, 18, route 1, of Oneida, became Outagamie's sixth polio fatality of the summer when he died Friday morning at St. Vincent Hospital.



***Outagamie County was hit hard by the Polio Epidemic of 1955.***

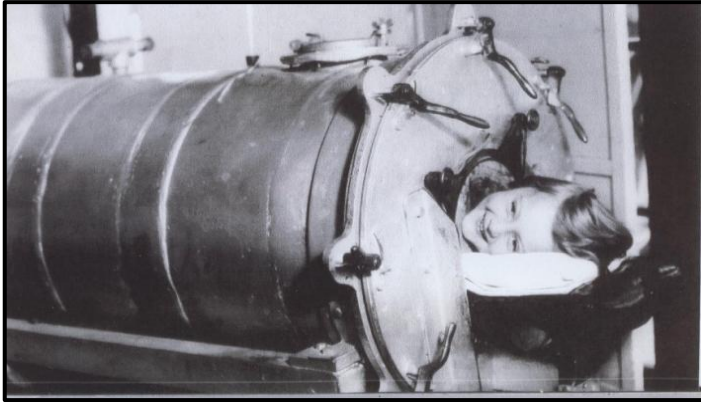
### **Interview with Joyce Ann Brick, age 12, a victim of polio in that dreaded summer of 1955.**

"It was a frightening time because there wasn't a known cure for it, and I was one of the children to contract it. It started with a sore

throat and leg movements that didn't feel quite right. Dr. Groendahl, from Seymour, drove to

our farm and I was given a penicillin shot. He later said, 'I think that is what saved you.'

I entered Saint Vincent Hospital unable to



***Polio patient in an "Iron lung."***

see, hear, work my legs, or swallow. I was very near death and not expected to pull through. My parents, Elmer and Valita Brick couldn't stay because I was in quarantine. My dad was so upset after leaving the hospital that day, he got lost driving from Green Bay to our farm near Crystal Springs Golf Course.

There were several children across the hall from my room which were using iron lungs

to help them breath. I remember that one youngster died. The concerned nurses kept asking me, 'Can you breathe without difficulty?' I could. That summer was one of slow recovery. Due to difficulty swallowing I lived on soup and Jell-O. Without physical therapy in the 50s, I was lucky enough to have a mother that helped me strengthen my limbs.

After my health improved, I spent a lot of time in Seymour ice skating, and I was enrolled in a tap dance class. I eventually regained the use of my lower limbs. Mom was a wise lady to think of ways to help me exercise in fun ways. I am very thankful for all that she did for me. However, I still feel the effects of polio today. My throat is still partially paralyzed, so I must eat carefully.

I received many cards and presents during my recovery at the hospital, but everything had to be burned. It was still unknown what caused polio and the hospital staff wasn't taking any chances. I felt badly about that."

***Those of us lucky enough to live in a time when vaccinations are readily available will never know the terror that permeated the lives of so many just a few decades ago.***

***For the curious: Google "Polio" and find out what caused it. You might be surprised. Find out about the cure and Dr. Salk. It is an interesting story.***

***Research by Lynn E. Koenigs***

## **Fourth Graders Tour the Museum**

This fall five classes of fourth graders from Rock Ledge School took guided tours of the Seymour Community Museum. After a brief orientation emphasizing the changes that have taken place during the last 100 years on Depot Street, the classes were divided into two groups of twelve for the tour.

The students learned what life was like prior to electricity and many modern conveniences. They viewed a program about the early years and through the video met Horatio Seymour, the namesake of the city. When viewing the military exhibit, the students learned how residents of Seymour and the surrounding area responded to defend our freedom from the Civil War years to present times. The Home of the Hamburger exhibit introduced the students to Hamburger Charlie and explained how the burger



***Shave and a Haircut - Two Bits***

originated in Seymour in 1885.

As a class project, Mr. Lowney had his students write a thank you letter to the museum staff who provided the guided tour. Their comments are delightful and worth sharing. "The museum is a great place to visit. I loved the early pictures of Seymour." "The mannequins were kind of scary, but I loved the old time barbershop." "The part I liked most was the hamburger video game." "One of my favorite parts was the one horse open sleigh. I can't wait to go back." "It was fun to see the old time baseball shoes and the uniforms they wore." "My favorite part was when the grandmother in the kitchen started talking."

Susan Manzke and Lynn Koenigs, who helped as tour guides, were impressed with the behavior and interest of the students. "The teachers had the students well prepared for the visit. They did a fine job listening and asked some excellent questions;" Koenigs remarked.

## New Benches for Nagel Park

The music in the park program has been extremely popular. Many people bring their lawn chairs but others rely on the seating available in Nagel Park. A number of the benches are showing their age and are becoming unstable. After several attempts to secure them, a great friend of the museum, Ron Nachtwey, came to the rescue. Ron designed a prototype sturdy six-foot bench that he said he could build at no cost to the historical society other than the cost of materials.



***Ron with his daughter Amy and granddaughter Autumn.***

The Seymour Historical Society Board of Directors met and decided to take Ron up on his offer. It was decided to charge \$150.00 for the memorial benches. The cost includes the price of all materials including a commemorative plaque. After announcing the proposal at the music program, the society took orders for 18 new benches. Ron completed all the benches by the end of October and with help from his brother Pat, delivered them to the gazebo in Nagel Park where society members sealed them and attached the plaques.

Thanks to Ron, and his craftsmanship and generosity, we now have 18 new benches and a considerable donation to the historical society by the thoughtful people who sponsored the benches.

## Thanks to Our Volunteers



***Susan Manzke serves as a docent at the museum and passes out raffle tickets on music nights.***

Visitors from coast to coast toured the museum this summer. Being open five days a week requires a dedicated group of volunteers to serve as docents. In addition to members of the Seymour Community Historical Society Board of Directors, the following people donated their time and expertise: John Cumicek, Darla Dorosz, Tom and Ann Duffey, Samantha Goeben, Lynn Koenigs, Susan Manzke and Ellen Piehl.

Often visitors inquire how the society has acquired such an impressive collection of artifacts. When they are told that everything has been donated by area residents, people are often incredulous realizing that many items are very valuable. People are also impressed that a city the size of Seymour has such an excellent facility. When informed that the

building was financed entirely by donations of money, skills and time, by people with ties to Seymour, they are further impressed. The workmanship ranging from photography to woodwork strikes the visitor as remarkable. It is with pride when the docents relate that all local artisans are responsible for the quality of the work. We appreciate everyone's continued support. We truly are a "Community" museum!

## Donations Are Always Welcome

As stated in the opening article, as more donations are received, the historical society can add to existing exhibits and create new displays. Once yearly operating expenses are met, gifts are either allocated to the sustainability fund or for museum improvement. Since the spring *Seymour History Bulletin*, the society has received a number of generous donations. A new display board has been added in the reception area of the museum to recognize the benefactors since the grand opening in 2012. Records are updated yearly to include gifts that total \$100.00 or more. For example, a \$50.00 gift in 2014 and another \$50.00 gift in 2015 would total \$100.00 and merit placement on the board. Please state if you would like your gift in memory of someone.

Another option is to contact a member of the board of directors to determine what is on the wish list for the museum. For example, recently Janice Eick donated a mobile storage cabinet to the museum in memory of her mother Tillie Stueflat.

The cabinet will be used to store clothing that has been donated to the society.



***Janice Eick donated a mobile cabinet in memory of her mother Tillie Stueflat.***

## The Haunted Store

Getting teenagers into the museum and involved with the historical society is always a challenge. This year members of the historical society decided to open the 1930s general store as a haunted store for Halloween. With the help of students from the alternative school, the store was converted into a spooky place where Seymour students could experience some Halloween fun without having to travel to Appleton or Green Bay. With the spooky store attracting over 300 people, many took advantage of the opportunity to visit the adjacent museum.

While in the museum, the youthful visitors were attracted to BurgerTime, an early arcade game, and a unique animated video game developed to teach about the history of Seymour. At a very reasonable cost of \$2.00, the haunted store didn't produce a great deal of income, but it did draw the younger generation into the museum.

## Christmas Fun at the Museum

Everyone is invited to the **"Kids' Christmas at the Museum"** on Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. The theme for the 10:00 to 3:00 program is "Charlie Brown's Christmas." The fun event will feature a live Snoopy and many of the characters from the comic strip. Look for many lighted Christmas trees and even a model skating rink on the second floor of the museum

Children will have the opportunity to win prizes and make crafts. Vintage toys, treats, and surprise gifts to unwrap (as long as they last), will be available for the first 75 in attendance. The museum will be decorated to reflect the holiday spirit. All children must be accompanied by an adult.



**Kids' Christmas**

**What:** Fun at the Museum

**When:** Sat. Dec. 5, 10:00-3:00

**Where:** Depot Street

**Why:** Celebrate the season

**How:** Crafts, toys, and treats

This is a great opportunity for parents and grandparents to spend some quality time with the children. All the trees on Depot Street will be trimmed to portray a variety of themes and commemorate loved ones.

## **Donations and Memberships from March 2015 to November 2015**

**(In the order received)**

The historical society gratefully acknowledges the following donations and new memberships.

Bob and Marge Coonen	In memory of Pat Nagel	Sustainability
Janice Eick	In memory of Pat Nagel	Sustainability
Mike and Karen Gonnering	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Janice Eick	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Bill and Holly Collar	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Gary and Mary Lou Melchert	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Family of Norman Blohm (Violet)	In memory of Norman Blohm	Sustainability
Jennifer Huettl	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Shirley Kielar	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Martha Dalke	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Joan Conradt	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Grace McCormack	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Lynn Cartier		Sustainability
Bob and Marge Coonen	In memory of Tillie Stueflat	Sustainability
Bob and Marge Coonen	In memory of Judy Severson	Sustainability
Lee Rihm		Sustainability
Thrivent Financial	Employee Giving Campaign (K. Coonen)	Sustainability
John Wurtzel		Sustainability
Lee Shaw	Fox Valley Two Cylinder Club Inc.	Sustainability
Giz and Linda Herbst (Family of Earl and Marcella Court)	In memory of Jean Vanden Heuvel	Sustainability
Pat and Mary Klass		Sustainability
Nate Grimm		Membership
Rock Ledge Intermediate School Student Council		Sustainability
Joe Kline In Memory of Marian Kline, Keith Spaude, Roger Eick, Roy Porter and Pat Nagel		Sustainability
Richard and Bonnie Buntrock		Sustainability
Duane Ebert		Sustainability
Thrivent Financial	Employee Giving Campaign (K. Coonen)	Sustainability
Bob and Sue Manzke		Building Fund
Travis Lubinski		Life Membership
Guy and Karen Smith		Life Membership
Shirley Kielar		Sustainability
Thrivent Financial	Employee Giving Campaign (K. Coonen)	Sustainability
George Howlett		Sustainability
Jean Severson		Sustainability
Vilas and Vernice Kraft		Sustainability



### **Remember the Historical Society this Holiday Season with a Donation**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ (Circle Amt.) \$10.00 \$20.00 \$30.00 \$40.00 Other \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your donation to P.O. Box 237 Seymour, WI 54165. The Seymour Community Historical Society, Inc. is a tax-exempt entity. Your donation is fully deductible as provided by law. The federal identification number is: 39-1235870.

**Thank you for your support!**

Seymour Community Historical Society  
P. O. Box 237  
Seymour, WI 54165

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## **Open House and Christmas Party at the Museum Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> 10:00 to 3:00**

**Website:** [www.seymourhistory.org](http://www.seymourhistory.org)

**E-mail:** [seymourhistory@centurylink.com](mailto:seymourhistory@centurylink.com)

**Museum Phone:** (920) 833-9835

If the museum is closed: (920) 833-6064

### **Museum Hours**

Summer:

1:00 to 4:00

Wednesday through Sunday

Fall and Winter:

1:00 to 4:00 Sunday

Closed January through March

Open by request anytime

Admission:

Suggested donation - \$2.00 Individual

- \$5.00 Family

Life Membership - \$50.00

Year Individual - \$5.00 Year Family - \$10.00

### **Please Remember**

- All past Seymour History Bulletins are available in color on the SCHS Website.
- The museum is available for meetings for non-profit organizations.
- Contact one of the board members to schedule a group tour.
- Feel free to offer suggestions or submit an article for the **Seymour History Bulletin**.
- All workers at the museum are volunteers.
- The society relies on your donations for new exhibits and programs.
- 100% of your donation stays in Seymour.