

# Seymour History Bulletin



A publication of the Seymour Community Historical Society – Fall and Winter 2017  
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**

## Board of Directors

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Jon Braun

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Janice Eick

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John Koenigs

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## A Message from the Board of Directors

It takes many volunteers, generous people and city support to keep operating our first class museum. The most rewarding aspect of volunteering is hearing the many positive comments from visitors who are impressed with the "big city museum" in Seymour. We were pleased to add several new exhibits this year and will continue to utilize the latest technology to help tell our story.

In addition to preserving area history and making it available to the public the Seymour Community Historical Society strives to continue to build our oral history and pictorial archive. In this issue of the Seymour History Bulletin you will enjoy a brief early history of the canning factory, a colorful description of a one room school, a childhood adventure, and an interview with long time Seymour residents Clayton and Audrey Ebert.

The purpose of our newsletter is to keep our members informed of exhibits, activities and progress at the museum and the vital role the historical society fills in the community. Our members are our most valuable asset. We cannot play a viable role without your support. Please use the form at the end of this publication to make a donation to the society this holiday season.

## Christmas Open House December 2nd



Be sure to visit the museum between 10:00 and 1:30 on Saturday, December 2nd for the Christmas open house. This year's theme a "*Magical Kids Christmas*" features popular cartoon characters in a holiday setting. Janice Eick and her sisters Jean and Joan, have done an outstanding job decorating the museum for Christmas.

The second floor has been turned into a winter wonderland with numerous decorated trees and winter scenes reflecting popular books and cartoons Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus will be on hand to greet visitors and distribute holiday cheer. *The first 100 children will receive a free gift to unwrap courtesy of a generous donor.*

Consistent with the theme, children have the opportunity to play with the Santa train and participate in making holiday crafts. Hot chocolate and Christmas cookies add to the holiday cheer. This is an excellent opportunity to treat the children or grandchildren and tour the festive museum.

## Volunteers Make it Happen

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. All donations should be sent to PO Box 237, Seymour, WI 54167.

## Highlights of the Annual Meeting



***Janice Eick pictured with speaker Holly De Ruyter.***

The annual meeting of the SCHS was held Saturday, May 13 in the upstairs meeting room of the museum. Following a brief business meeting, Holly De Ruyter, the Director, Editor, and Producer of "Old Fashioned: The Story of Wisconsin Supper Clubs" presented her documentary. The 51 minute documentary film received rave reviews from the 62 people who also enjoyed a variety of supper club hors d'oeuvres presented by society board member Janice Eick. Janice along with her husband Roger, were the former owners of the Coachlite a popular Seymour dining establishment.

People attending the program enjoyed a nostalgic look at a Midwestern institution where fruit garnished drinks, plentiful comfort food, and family atmosphere reigned supreme. De Ruyter visited forty Wisconsin supper clubs and focused on Krabbe's Kountry Klub as the

best example of the family owned and operated business.

The historical society extends a special "Thank You" to all who helped make the event a real success. Don's Quality Market provided the hors d'oeuvres and Seymour Beverage donated the old fashioned drinks. Steve Krabbe was present to answer questions and gave a presentation on how the supper club business has changed over the years. Perhaps Karen Kuske summed it up best when she commented, "With the food, drinks and decorations, it was just like being in a real supper club."

During the business part of the meeting society members approved the budget and reelected the board members for another term.



***Members were treated to a variety of hors d'oeuvres.***

## High School Student Art Show

High school seniors, under the direction of teacher Tina Harpold, displayed their creations at the museum during the last week of April and early May. The exhibition was attended by 55 people. The students were present for the grand opening and visitors enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the artists. It was a great opportunity for the students to share their works with the community.

Members of the historical society served snacks and refreshments. Plans are to make the senior art show at the museum an annual event. A special "Thank You" to board member Karen Coonen and high school art teacher Tina Harpold for coordinating the program and to the event sponsor Thrivent Financial.



*Senior art students and teacher holding shirts provided by exhibit sponsor Thrivent Financial. Front row: Tina Harpold, teacher, Cierrah Huntington and Emily Hanson Back row: Taylor Besaw, Morgan Estrada and Chris Gourd.*



## Vietnam Veterans Tribute Exhibit at the Museum

Throughout the month of June, the Seymour Community Museum displayed a tribute to Vietnam veterans. The exhibit, ***Wisconsin Remembers: A Face for Every Name***, was on loan from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The program displayed a photo for each of the 1,161 Wisconsinites officially listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The exhibit also included additional photos for names that are listed on ***The Highground Vietnam Veterans Memorial*** in Neillsville, WI.



*Navy veteran Greg Goetz of Seymour poses with the uniform he wore while serving on the U.S.S. Vancouver in Vietnam.*

The photos were collected by volunteers from throughout Wisconsin over the past eight years. Friends and family of those who were killed in Vietnam submitted photos, but so did students, teachers and others who simply wanted to put a face to the names listed on the Wall in Washington, D.C. The images they found help tell the story of the men and women who are listed on the Wall as part of a new education center on the National Mall. Wisconsin was just the fifth state in the nation to find a photo for every resident listed on the Wall.

Native of Seymour and lifetime member of the historical society, Mitch Miller loaned his collection of authentic Vietnam War era items to the museum to complement the display. The exhibit was viewed by 317 people.

## Colonel Jim Van Straten at the Seymour Museum

A capacity crowd of close to 100 people filled the upstairs meeting room of the Seymour Community Museum on Saturday, June 17. Seymour area native James G. Van Straten gave a well-received presentation about his experiences in Vietnam that he described in the recently published book: ***A Different Face of War***. He related many personal stories about his interaction with the civilian and military population. The pictures from the book added to the clarity and poignancy of his narrative.



Author Colonel Van Straten was born in Appleton, WI. He is the oldest of seven children born to Glen and Caroline Van Straten of Black Creek, WI. Presently a resident of Texas Van Straten was pleased to see many relatives and classmates at the program.

After graduating from Seymour High School in 1951 he attended and graduated from St Norbert College with a B.S. degree in biology in 1955. He was also designated a Distinguished Military Graduate of the ROTC program and offered a commission in the Regular Army. He entered the Army Medical Department in 1955 and served over 30 years, achieving the grade of colonel in the Medical Service Corps.

### **Vietnam Experience**

Colonel Van Straten's military career included positions of responsibility in allied health education and administration. During the period from July 1966 to July 1967 he served as the Senior Medical Advisor to the South Vietnamese Army in the First Corps Tactical Zone of South Vietnam. In this capacity, he advised the Vietnamese Corps Surgeon on all administrative and logistical aspects of providing medical support to the South Vietnamese Army. He also served in a liaison capacity, coordinating actions between South Vietnamese medical units and American medical units operating in the First Corps Tactical Zone.



Following the program Colonel Van Straten signed books and renewed acquaintances with many friends in attendance. Overall it was a delightful program. The historical society thanks Colonel Van Straten for donating his time and expertise.

## **Cheesehead Movie Includes Seymour**



***Mitchell with Chester Marcol***

An audience of 57 people at the Seymour Community Museum enjoyed listening to producer/director John Mitchell describe making the documentary about unique places to visit in Wisconsin. The Seymour Museum is included in the movie along with the Hamburger Charlie Statue



and a brief history of the origin of the burger in Seymour. Mitchell commented that it took about five years to film, narrate and finalize the two hour program.

Green Bay Packer Hall of Fame member Chester Marcol accompanied Mitchell. He signed autographs and had his book for sale. Marcol, the kicker for the Packers from 1972 to 1980,

answered questions and described his touchdown return of a blocked field goal to win the season opener against the Bears in 1980. Overall it was a fun evening full of Wisconsin travel tips and Packer football.

## Burgerfest 2017



**Board member Karen Coonen greeted Burger Fest guests along with the French Fry Guy**

Burgerfest was a huge success this year with over 1,400 visitors taking in the large burger display in the museum. The entire collection of over 1,500 burger related items was on display for the month of August. Numerous positive comments were made by people from throughout the Midwest who were visiting the museum for the first time

During the festival the museum was open from Noon until 5:00 PM. A crew of twelve volunteers helped supervise the museum and old time general store. It is refreshing to hear many people praise the museum and its contents. Often out of town visitors return to the museum at a later date and bring friends. The SCHS appreciates the relationship it has with HOTH and looks forward to working together in 2018 as Seymour celebrates its sesquicentennial.

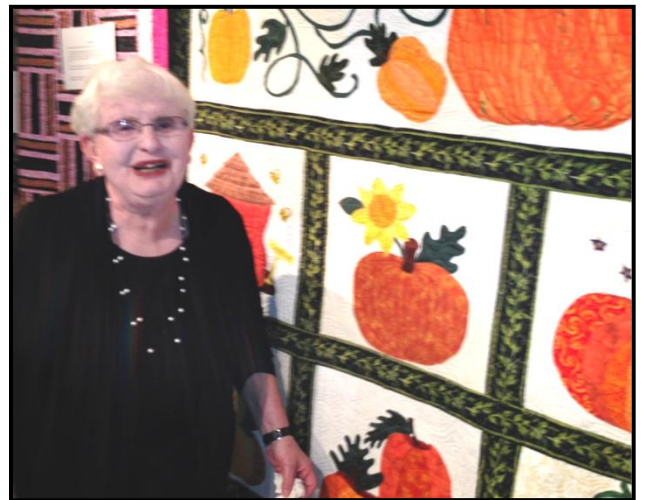
## The Quilts of Marge Coonen and the Photography of Rick Cohler

The annual fall art show at the museum was a huge success. One hundred and forty nine visitors enjoyed the quilts of Seymour resident Marge Coonen and the photography of former editor of the Advertiser/Community News Rick Cohler. Their impressive work was on display for two weeks with a special "Meet the Artist Night" on Saturday, September 9 from 5:00 to 8:00 PM.

The SCHS is always in search of local talent for



**Rick's impressive photography display included numerous photos from his trips to Italy.**



**Marge pictured with one of her favorite quilts.**

the September art show and this year were pleased to display the works of Marge and Rick. Marge is a longtime member of the historical society and was instrumental in indexing the archive materials. She also served as treasurer for many years including keeping all the books during the building of the new museum.

After retiring in 1999 Marge took a class from Lois Wolfe in Green Bay and eventually made over 100 quilts. She has many favorites, but is particularly proud of her pumpkin quilt with a variety of pumpkins representing the holidays.



***SCHS members enjoying the art exhibit.***

As editor of the local paper Rick Cohler was a great friend of the museum. He included many articles about Seymour area history and was always available for a photo shoot for a special exhibit. Rick says he has two goals in his photography; one is to give the viewer a feeling of "being there" and the second to try to create an image which could also be a life-like painting of the scene. Marge, Rick and the Board of Directors of the SCHS were thrilled to see such an excellent turnout. A special "Thank You" to Don's Quality market for donating the wine and snacks.

## **Music in the Park Continues to be a Big Hit**

The summer Music in the Park program concluded on Wednesday evening, August 30, with Chad Przybylski's Polka Rhythms and an audience of over 300. Threatening skies were a concern, but the popular Polka Rhythms still attracted an impressive crowd. The color guard from Kraft-Krause-Mueller Post 106, presented the colors and Lynn Koenigs and Diana Malcheski led the crowd in singing the National Anthem.

It was another successful summer as over 2,500 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 and provided raffle prizes. 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.

Susan Manzke handled the free raffle while Diane Malcheski and Lynn Koenigs excelled at the 50-50. 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
- ✓ BMO Harris Bank
- ✓ Birling's Bovines
- ✓ Butters Wood Products
- ✓ Community First Credit Union
- ✓ Coonen, Inc.
- ✓ Countryside Photographers
- ✓ Don's Quality Market
- ✓ Edward Jones
- ✓ Family Insurance Center
- ✓ Friends of the Library
- ✓ Garrow Oil and Propane
- ✓ Good Shepherd Services
- ✓ Gustman Chevrolet, Buick, GMC
- ✓ Home of the Hamburger
- ✓ Hotel Seymour/Jackson Point
- ✓ Huettl Bus, Inc.
- ✓ J J's Auto Clinic
- ✓ Krabbe's Kountry Klub
- ✓ Kwik Trip
- ✓ Lubinski, Reed and Klass SC
- ✓ Menn Law Firm, Ltd
- ✓ Nichols/Isaar Snowmobile Clubs
- ✓ Nicolet Bank
- ✓ Outagamie County Sheriff's Assoc.
- ✓ Performance Pallet Corp.
- ✓ Prevea Health
- ✓ Ralph's Hardwood Floors
- ✓ Rooster's, Nichols
- ✓ Scott Marcks Construction
- ✓ Seymour Chiropratic
- ✓ Seymour DQ Grill and Chill
- ✓ Seymour Dentistry
- ✓ Sha-Bock Farm B & B
- ✓ Sissy's Treats and Treasures
- ✓ T & T Storage
- ✓ Truman, Haase, Zahn Insurance
- ✓ United Agriculture
- ✓ Witt Family Ford



*Post 106 assisted in honoring all veterans.*



*There was an Elvis sighting courtesy of Tom's Tunes.*

## Fourth Graders Tour The Museum

This fall six 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 10 to 12 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 a 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 originated in Seymour in 1885.

Lynn Koenigs, who served as tour guide, was impressed with the behavior and interest of the youngsters. "The students were curious and asked many questions. It was a fun experience to show them around the museum. Their teachers had them well-prepared."

## Remembering Crystal Springs School

By Gay Kollath



*Gay as a 7th Grader*

***Recently Gay Kollath contacted SCHS Board member Ellen Piehl and shared her experiences at Crystal Springs School. With her permission it is reproduced here.***

My older brothers, Lynn & Nolan, and I have the distinction of having attended a one-room country school from grades one through eight, something

very few people alive can say today. Crystal Springs School was located near Seymour, Wisconsin, and we attended this school during the 1940's-50's. There were about 25 students in our school, with three of them in my grade who stayed with me throughout my eight years. My younger sister, Lana, also attended the school through grade six, when the school was

closed and the kids were bussed into the nearby town of Seymour.

We began first grade at age six. There were no preschools or kindergartens back then. I remember loving school a lot. I loved learning and I loved having other kids to play with besides my siblings. I had several teachers during my first four grades, but my favorite teacher was Miss Colleen Marsh. Miss Marsh was an excellent teacher and fortunately she taught my class from fifth through eighth grades. She had been a student of my mother's (Violet Kollath) who also taught at one-room schools, so Miss Marsh was like part of our family.

She encouraged my love of learning by allowing me to rush through my required work, and then letting me help the younger kids with their reading, spelling, or math. With eight grades to teach, she could use all the help she could get, and often called on the older kids to assist with the younger. This mentoring system was common in country schools. Of course, when an older student had to explain something to a younger student, the older student generally learned the material more deeply as well. I often tell people that I learned to be a teacher in elementary school.

Miss Marsh made special trips to the Appleton Public Library and brought back boxes full of books to supplement our own meager library. Sometimes if I finished my work early, she allowed me to just sit and read, which is one of my passions still to this day.

Here is how a typical school day unfolded. My brothers and I would have breakfast, get dressed, brush our teeth, comb our hair, grab our lunch pails, and either walk or ride our bikes the quarter mile to our school. School would begin with early morning duties. The teacher and many of the students would arrive early to carry out various tasks to keep the school building running. There were no custodians, so the teacher and students were entirely responsible for the upkeep of the school.

Students were assigned duties such as putting coal in the furnace, taking out the "clinkers", erasing and washing the chalkboards, cleaning the erasers, sweeping the floor, putting up the flag, and bringing in the mail. Some of these tasks were performed in the morning and some at the end of the school day. It was an honor to be selected to perform these tasks. Some tasks required that a student be older to



*Crystal Springs Grade School 1952 - Back row left to right: Nolan Kollath, Shirley Diedrick, Lamont Limberg. Ralph Zibell, Merlin Diedrick, Marjorie Zibell, Donna Mueller, Donna Wadel, Roger Zibell, Terry Limberg, Mildred Werner Middle row: Charlene Foate, Marlene Zibell, Carl Prelipp, Byron Wendt, Dennis Muehl, Jane Brick, Judy Werner, Carol Miller, Joyce Brick. Front row: Norma Miller, David Werner, Charlotte Foate, Carol Prelipp, Carol Werner, Tommy Diedrick, Teacher Betty Bryce.*



perform them, such as burning the trash. I remember erasing the chalkboards, cleaning the erasers, putting up the flag, and sweeping the floor. My favorite assignment was to pass out the chocolate flavored goiter pills (iodine to combat thyroid problems), and I often snuck a few extra for myself because I loved their chocolate taste.

The final school bell would ring at 9:00 am, and in good weather we would gather around the flag pole and watch two older students raise the flag. One was in charge of the rope, and one made sure that the flag didn't touch the ground. We would then say the Pledge of Allegiance and sing "America." On bitter cold mornings, we would say the pledge and sing "America" inside the school building, while two older students braved the cold and put the flag up outside. I remember as an older student being in charge of the flag, and running out to lower it during rain and wind storms. I also learned the correct way to fold a flag.

After these opening exercises, classes would begin. Classes were called one by one to



*Crystal Spring School*  
 Row 1 Janice Boehler, Ralph Ziebell  
 , Edna Mueller, Harold Pingel, Marjorie Ziebell  
 Row 2- Miller, Kollath , Mueller, Abel , Donna Mueller,  
 Row 3 Don Abel , Marcella Prellip, Collen Mueller, Shirley Werner, Carol Miahm,  
 Row 4 Margaret Abel, Yvonne Miahm, Gordon Mueller, ---- Reed.

the front of the room to sit with the teacher and recite. The number of classes depended on the number of students in the school, and whether there were students in each grade. Most of the time the classes were small, with one to four students per grade. My class had four students including myself, Carol Werner, Marlene Ziebell, and Carl Prellip. If students were doing exceptionally well in a subject, they might be allowed to sit in with the next highest class.

Likewise, if a student was having difficulty with a subject, he or she might sit with a lower class. I was usually with my class, and I noticed as I reviewed my report cards that my grades improved from first grade onward, until by sixth, seventh and eighth grade I was earning almost all A's.

Usually the day began with first grade reading, followed by second grade reading, etc. Classes in arithmetic, spelling, language, geography, history, art, music, science and social studies followed. There was a fifteen minute recess in mid-morning and mid-afternoon, and a full hour at noon for lunch and outdoor activities.

When not in class at the front of the room, we sat at our desks and did assigned work. Of course, everyone in the room could overhear what was happening as each class was conducted at the front of the room. Sometimes this was distracting, but often I found that if I listened in on the older kids' classes I learned a lot of material beyond my grade. We had the advantage of reviewing what we had learned in previous grades, and being introduced to what we were going to learn next.

Lunch time was special. We carried our lunches in pails, and a typical lunch consisted of a sandwich, a cookie, perhaps an apple (oranges and bananas were rare in the Midwest at this time) and a thermos of milk. In the winter we might have a thermos of warm soup or chili. Some children had very little in



their lunch pails and some sharing took place. Of course, children often traded for food items that looked more tempting than their own. We often ate quickly so we had time to play before the noon hour was up.

During noon hour and recess we played outside. This was true even on the coldest winter days, when we bundled up and went out anyway. We only stayed indoors during blizzard conditions, when often school would be dismissed early, and children who usually walked

to and from school were picked up by their parents. Not all parents were this accommodating, however, and I have memories of my dad, Kenneth Kollath, waiting outside of school on cold, stormy days, and of our little red Studebaker being packed with kids to whom he would give rides home.



On our playground we had a wooden teeter-totter, a merry-go-round, swings, and a softball field. We also played games such as dodge ball, drop the handkerchief, farmer in the dell, London bridge, hide and seek, pom-pom pull away, red light/green light, and Annie Annie over. Miss Marsh would sometimes join in our games, and I have memories of her playing softball with us in her suit and high heels. I enjoyed all of the games with the exception of softball, at which I was terrible. I remember how humiliating it was to always be the last name called when we were forming teams, and how my team members would yell and duck when I threw the bat in my excitement at finally getting a hit. Usually I struck out, and when playing in the outfield would miss catching any ball that came my way.

I have vivid memories of my eighth grade graduation in May of 1957, because it was the first time I ate in a "fancy" restaurant. Miss Marsh took our class of four to a restaurant in Appleton and treated us to dinner as a graduation present. What a great teacher she was!

### **Seymour Union High School**

I began high school in the fall of 1957. I remember feeling very intimidated by the "big city" school with an enrollment of approximately 600 students, 143 of whom were in my class. After our country school of 25, this seemed overwhelming to me. There was a definite feeling that we "country kids" were looked down upon by the kids who lived in the big city of Seymour (population 2,000!) and I felt I had to prove myself in order to be accepted.

I was convinced that I would be way behind the other students academically, and this motivated me to study and work hard. It didn't take long to realize, however, that not only could I keep up with the other students, but I was excelling in all of my classes. My one-room country school education had prepared me better than I realized. Thank you Miss Marsh for preparing me so well for school and for life. It's because of your influence that I became a college professor, and had a successful teaching career for over 30 years.

## **Seymour Canning and Cold Storage Company**

***Chuck Miller, a lifetime member of the historical society, stopped in the museum with a book published in 1950 that included an early history of the canning factory business in Wisconsin. The following article is taken from that book "The Canner".***

The first news item regarding this project was in "The Canner" of October 26, 1899. "A Seymour, Wisconsin correspondent states that the Seymour Canning Factory is now assured, \$12,000.00 having been subscribed to put the wheels in motion. F. L. Forward and William Michelstetter have been mainly instrumental in

bringing about this result. This factory will probably be located on the west side of the city near the railway track. The building is to be erected by January 1, 1900, and the machinery in and ready to run by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Contracts are already being let to furnish crops for the factory."

Apparently problems were encountered since no mention was made of the Seymour project until March 27, 1902 when "The Canner" reported, "The stock for the new canning factory has all be subscribed. The new company will be incorporated at once and will be known as the Seymour Canning and Cold storage Company."

The following officers and directors have been elected: R. Holman, president; George Falck, vice president; Charles Ploeger, treasurer; Charles Baker, secretary and manager, and Julius S. Edwards, processor.

The fledgling company experience more



***The Seymour Canning Company in 1907.***

setbacks with the "complete failure" of the tomato crop and the "small yield" of corn. In spite of this investor confidence was high as Mr. Edwards was considered to be "one of the most experienced processors and factory superintendents in the country."

It seems the company needed more than Mr. Edwards expertise as an article from "The Canner" of October 12, 1905 stated, "A report from Seymour, Wisconsin says that the canning factory there is experiencing financial problems. It was erected and equipped at a cost of approximately \$10,000.00 has been sold to C. F. Ploeger for \$2,500.00."

Because of low prices and trying weather conditions the canning factory continued to struggle and in 1914 it was taken over by local investors, Dr. James Hittner and Neil Kyle. Within a few months it was sold to a group of businessmen from Milwaukee for \$3,500.00. At this time the factory was primarily canning corn and sauerkraut.

The company experienced a rebirth when Green Bay businessman Henry J. Selmer purchased the plant in 1925.

His financial security and business acumen led to a building and expansion program. Selmer, who was a building contractor for many years, insisted on well-built buildings. He replaced the old barn like structure with a brick warehouse and added



a brick canning plant with modern machinery said to be equal of any in the state. Selmer build many other canning plants in the state modeled after his Seymour operation. Under Selmer's direction the plant increased production from 50,000 cans in 1925 to 250,000 by 1940. In the early 40's Henry Selmer retired and turned the operation of the factory over to his son, Norman, and his treasurer and plant manager, G. T. Farley.

## **Clayton and Audrey Ebert: Recalling The Early Years**



***The Seymour Community Historical Society continues to archive pictures and interviews with Seymour area people. Recently, long time residents Clayton and Audrey Ebert shared some memories of***

***their early years. Clayton became a cheese maker, served in Japan in the post World War Two era, spent time in the theater business, worked as a banker, and started a very successful insurance agency.***

***Audrey fondly recalls attending a rural one room school, enjoying the commercial classes at Seymour High, working in the insurance business, influencing Clayton to come to Seymour, and enjoying life as a mother and homemaker.***

***Clayton and Audrey are lifetime members of the Seymour Community Historical Society and avid supporters of the Seymour Museum.***

*(Clayton)* "I was born in 1927, Jan 19, in Lena, Wisconsin. My father was a cheese maker one mile east of Lena and three miles north. I

arrived in a blinding snowstorm, but the doctor managed to make it to the house. At age five my parents moved to a cheese factory outside of Oconto Falls. The factory in Lena was called Sunnybrook factory, in Oconto Falls it was called Golden Corners even though my father said it never was golden. I went to grade school in a one room school called North Morgan, about a mile from the cheese factory, and graduated from Oconto Falls High School in 1944.

### **The Merchant Marine**

After I completed high school I wasn't sure what I was going to do. A friend of mine said, 'With this war on let's join the merchant marine.' I was 17 when I graduated and turned 18 in January. We were worried about being drafted and my friend worked on the freighters as a cook while he was going to high school. He made good money and felt we could do the same in the merchant marine. We took a train down to Milwaukee and passed our physicals. The merchant marine said, 'we will call you.' We waited, but they never called. My friend decided he wouldn't wait any longer and decided to enlist in the navy. That wasn't for me because I realized if a torpedo hit a ship you were a goner. Then in 1945 I got drafted into the army."

(Audrey) "I was born in the town of Osborn in April 2, 1928. My mother had all the intentions of going to the hospital but the doctor ended up coming to the house. I went to a one room school house about two miles from our home. As far as one room schoolhouses go, it was large, had its own library, and a beautiful stage for our productions. We walked to school every day. In the winter when it got very cold with lots of snow, the neighbor had a bobsled that he built a box on and used bales of straw for all the children to sit on. He had a team of horses that he hooked up to the sleigh and he would take us those two miles to school. It varied between six and eight kids in the sled. We had blanket to cover up with along with fur pelts. We thought it was great fun!

### **One Room School**

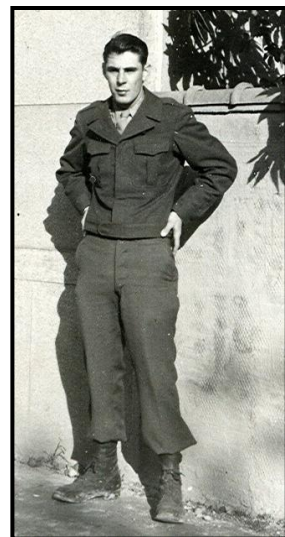
Amazingly our teacher always got to school. Seldom was it ever cancelled. I attended the one room school for the first eight grades. My parents were farmers and my dad was on the school board. The potential teachers

would come to our house to apply for the position and be interviewed. We were always out of the room. but it was exciting to see who the teacher might be. We had one teacher for all eight grades. It was a large school, we must have had about 35 students. We had some wonderful teachers. I used to sit at my desk and hurry to get my work done so I could listen to the lessons for the classes above me. I enjoyed all the subjects, but math was probably the most difficult for me.

We always carried our lunch to school and on the cold days in the winter by the time we got to school it would freeze. We had two cloak rooms, One for the girls and one for the boys, and of course those rooms weren't heated like the classroom. You would think the lunch would thaw out by noon, but no, many a day we had frozen sandwiches. I went to the high school on Robbins Street in Seymour. By that time they had busses to transport the rural kids. I loved school and really enjoyed my high school years. I liked the commercial area and classes like bookkeeping. I graduated in 1946.

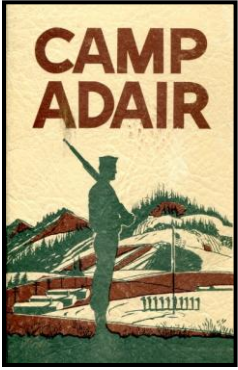
### **In the Army**

(Clayton) I was drafted in the army at age 18 and had 26 weeks of training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Then I came home for seven or eight days. The war was on and when I was home I got orders to report to Fort Sheridan, Illinois near Chicago. I took a train there and then was sent on a troop train to Adair, Oregon. I was stationed there for four to five weeks



with the 3rd Engineer Combat Battalion. We were preparing for the invasion of Japan. Their homeland was heavily defended and it was estimated it would cost 250,000 to 300,000 American lives. The war was still on and then President Truman ordered the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and a week or so later dropped the second on Nagasaki. Shortly after that Japan surrendered on the battleship Missouri.

## Preparing to Invade Japan



At that time I was still in Camp Adair so I said, 'That's great, I'm going home,' but that didn't happen, instead I boarded a troop ship along with about 3,000 other soldiers and we headed to Japan. We were on a 420 foot liberty ship called the *Fairchild*. I had been on the water many times fishing on Lake Michigan and I never got seasick, but for the first two days on the *Fairchild* I was sick and so was everyone else. That was quite a



mess. It took us 26 days and we came into Tokyo, Japan. One night we were in a raging storm and I mean a raging storm where the waves were coming over the ship. The captain announced over the loudspeaker that we were 800 miles due north of the Hawaiian Islands. Nobody could go above, we had to stay below the deck. I thought if this thing sinks there is not enough lifeboats to take care of everybody and we wouldn't have much of a chance in the storm anyway.

## Life in Japan

When we came into Tokyo Bay, we could see that the B-29s had done quite a number on that city. We then went down to Yokohama and that city was pretty much destroyed also. Then I got on a train and traveled to Sasebo, Japan and that is where I was stationed for about a year. That was when I realized how strong the Japanese defense was. Both sides of the harbor were lined with large artillery ready for an invasion. I had a cushy job so to speak. I had learned typing and I ended up being a company clerk. I was in an office and my captain's name was Pierce and my master sergeant was Norman Bush. My job was to take roll call to make sure everyone reported and to keep company records.

I didn't have a lot of problems, and because of my duties I didn't have to stand revelry and all that.

## Travel to Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Of course the captain had a jeep and my master sergeant and I took off one day and went to Hiroshima, it was devastating, the heat from the atomic bomb melted all the glass in the buildings and with the sun shining everything just glistened. The only building still



standing was a concrete structure. Sometime later we traveled to Nagasaki. There the destruction was different. It took layers out of the buildings and the roof would collapse. I was extremely fortunate, there were Japanese who didn't want to admit the war was over and they tried to attack American soldiers, but I never had to deal with that. After about a year, I was able to ship back home. My captain called me in one day and said, 'Ebert, I have enough points to go home, (the points were allocated on the amount of time you were in service), and so does your master sergeant. If you reenlist for another four years I will make you a master sergeant.'

## Going Home

At that time I was a TEC4 (Technician Fourth Grade) which wasn't a bad rank. But to go from a TEC4 to a master sergeant was a great promotion. I went back to the barracks and thought it over and eventually I went back to Captain Pierce and told him that I was looking forward to going home and I decided not to enlist. It was fortunate that I made that decision because about four years later the Korean War broke out. Of course I was single and would have been on the front line and very likely wouldn't be talking to you today.

When I got back to Seymour a number of my friends belonged to the Army Reserves and they encouraged me to join. At that time the pay was \$15.00 a month. I went to a couple meetings and thought it over and decided that I just wasn't interested in that kind of life anymore. When the Korean War did break out they were the first to go. A number of my

friends were single and they were sent to the front lines."

### Audrey in the Insurance Business

(Audrey ) "I graduated from high school and intended to go to Madison to college, but after a couple days the secretary at a local insurance company called



and asked if I would be interested in working in the office for the summer months. I took the job with the intent of going to school in the fall. The next day I started working for what at time was called Hartland-Cicero and Cicero Mutual Fire Insurance, two companies. By the time school started I was enjoying getting a paycheck and being independent and I decided not to go to school. I stayed and worked for Hartland-Cicero for about fifteen years. When I started working the office was in Emil Gosse's home on Washington Street. He was the head of the operation. The office moved from his home to the lobby of the hotel and then to the old Seymour State Bank building on Main Street. That is when I decided to stay at home with our two girls. Shortly after I left they moved their office to the old Maass Motors Garage on Highway 54. They completely remodeled the building."

### The Seymour Theater

(Clayton) "When I got home from Japan



my uncle and aunt owned the theater in Seymour. They had three daughters and my parents had three sons and the two brothers and

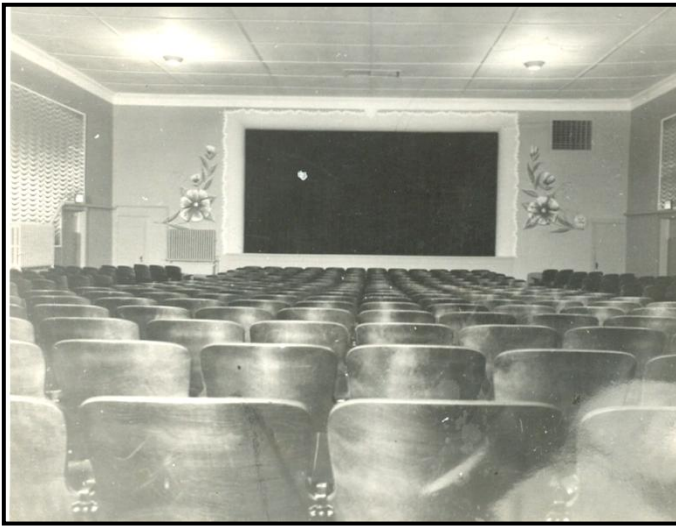
two sisters were married on the same day. So throughout the years they were extremely close. After I was home a few weeks I visited Seymour to see my Uncle Frank Ebert and Aunt Mildred and spend some time with my cousins. After I returned home Uncle Frank called me and said he is looking for someone to work in the theater. My father talked to me about working in the cheese factory, but I told him I wasn't interested in working seven days a week. So at age twenty I came to Seymour and worked for Uncle Frank as a movie projectionist. I did that for about two years.

Uncle Frank had purchased the theater from Arvin Otto in 1944. He remodeled it inside and it was absolutely gorgeous.

The theater had movies every night and on Sunday afternoons they had a matinee. Two nights a week the theater had double features and that was extremely popular. When **Gone With The Wind** was released Uncle Frank and I previewed it at the old Bay Theater in Green Bay. Because of the demand for the movie Uncle Frank couldn't book it right away, it was too expensive. All the theaters that had a lot of money wanted it. Eventually we booked it for several days and it was very popular. After seeing it a number of times I noticed that the burning of Atlanta looked fake. Other than that it was a great movie.

The theater capacity was about 250 to 300 people. On a double feature night Uncle Frank would open up the south balcony even though there wasn't a good fire exit and it wasn't supposed to be used. But Uncle Frank would open it up for a large crowd. The western double features with stars like Roy Rogers and Gene Autry were most popular. The north balcony was where the young couples would go. If they got too friendly Uncle Frank would shine a flashlight in their face. Since Uncle Frank was





considerably overweight, he didn't like to go up the stairs to the north balcony so that is where the kids would congregate. Even though he was a big man, he could really dance! He was so light on his feet it was amazing, but he didn't want to go tromping up those steps. So the young couples took advantage of that."

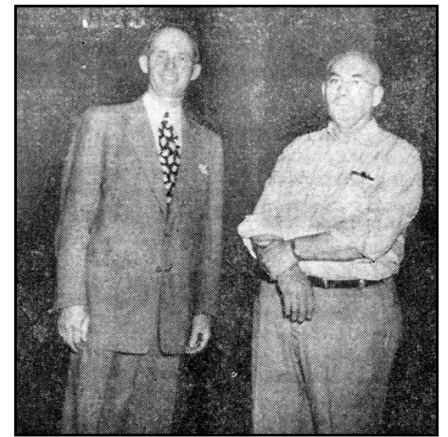
(Audrey) "The theater was the place to go when we were little kids. We would beg mother and dad whenever a good western was coming. My favorite was Gene Autry." (For more information about the Seemore Theater go to: [seymourhistory.org](http://seymourhistory.org) and click on **REMINISCES OF THE SEE-MORE THEATER By DUANE F. EBERT**).

### **Working for Uncle Frank**

(Clayton) "I got out of the cheese making business because I didn't want to work seven days a week. Then I came to Seymour and started working seven nights a week for Uncle Frank. Being a young man I wanted more freedom and eventually Uncle Frank gave me a night off. The movies came in on the train and one of my jobs was to go to the depot and pick up the film. The movies came in odd shaped tin containers, usually two or three per movie, but ***Gone With The Wind*** had four. The theater had two projectors and a cue would come up at the end of the first reel and part of my job was to start the second projector on time. The projectors had carbon arc rods and I had to watch so they were about a quarter inch apart and that they threw proper light on to the screen."

One reel would usually last about 20 minutes and a little round circle would appear on

the upper right hand corner of the screen. When I saw that I would start the other projector. When the second circle appeared I would shut off the first projector and the second projector would take over. And then of course I



**Frank Ebert (Right) sold the theater to Otto Settele.**

had to change the reels. Periodically the film would break or a splice would come apart and we had a splicing machine that I would use to put the film together. Uncle Frank would get upset when that happened because the people wanted to watch the movie. It did give them the opportunity to go out in the lobby and buy popcorn or candy. And believe me, popcorn was a big profit item. So Uncle Frank made big money on the concessions. In the early 1950s Uncle Frank had an opportunity to sell the theater to Otto and Sophie Settele. They didn't have a family and so they bought the theater."

### **Clayton and Audrey Meet**

(Audrey) "I met Clayton when I went to a basketball game out of town and I came home with a group of friends. We stopped at what used to be McBain's restaurant. After Clayton was finished at the theater he came in the restaurant to get something to eat. He came over to where I was sitting and asked, 'Who won the game?' That started it all and now we have been married for 66 years."

### **Moving On**

(Clayton) "After about a year at the theater I spoke with Uncle Frank and said, 'Something has to change here. By the time I'm finished working there aren't any girls around and that is not a good situation.' Then he gave me either Friday or Saturday night off. After another year I talked with him about a raise in pay. At the time I was making twenty dollars a week including room and board. I was staying with Uncle Frank and Aunt Mildred. He wasn't receptive to my request so I quit the job and went back home. I didn't know exactly what I

was going to do, but I was a licensed cheese maker and I thought maybe I will go into that business.

### **Seymour State Bank**

It wasn't long after that and I got a call from Audrey, and she said they are looking to hire a man at the Seymour State Bank. I thought, 'I don't know anything about banking, but I will go down and interview.' Ted Nicodem interviewed me and then said, 'You have to talk with Harvey Muehl,' he was the president of the bank. He hired me primarily because I knew how to type. So I became a bank teller. Compared to working at the theater the job was pretty cushy. I didn't have to report in until about 9:00 AM, and if my window balanced I could leave by 4:00 PM or so. I had quite a bit of free time so I worked at the gas station on weekends to make extra money and I even did some painting.

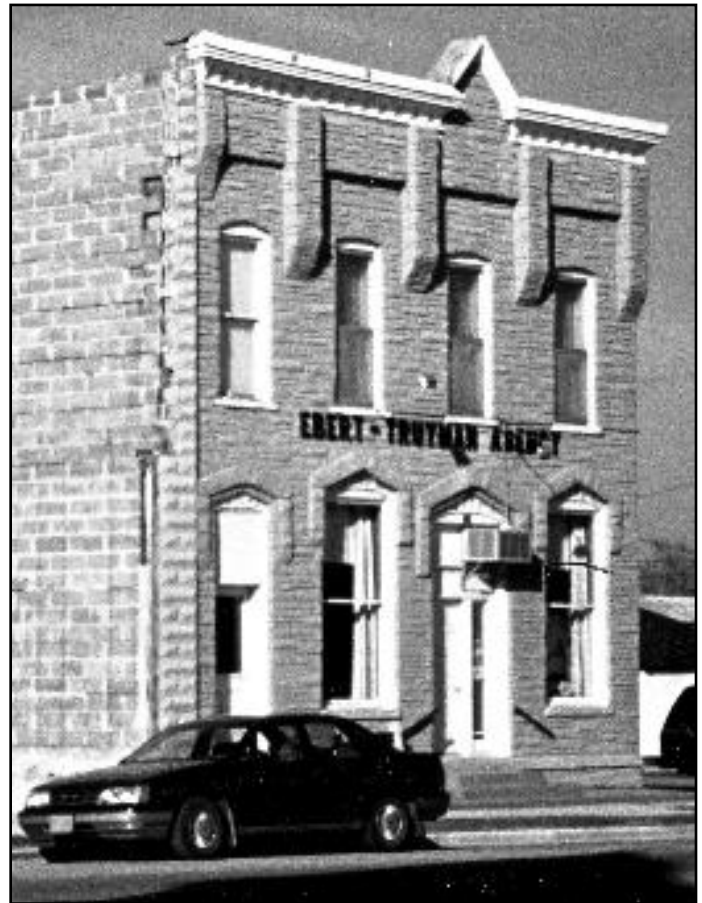
### **Looking into the Insurance Business**

Audrey and I were dating and she got me interested in the insurance business. She would go with me and we would write some insurance. Back then the companies were separate, Hartland Cicero would write the extended coverage that was windstorm, hail and that type thing. Cicero Mutual wrote fire and lightning. At that time I believe I received a \$3.00 fee for every policy. So Audrey actually got me into the insurance business.

### **Time for a Change**

I continued working at the bank and one day two fellows came in. They were dressed extremely well and they talked to Smiley Nicodem who was the assistant cashier. They waited until I balanced my window and then they approached me and said they were from the Old Line Life Insurance Company. Years ago my father had purchased a life insurance policy for me from Old Line Life. Audrey and I had recently gotten married and they asked if I had changed the beneficiary and of course I had. Then they went on to say that they were looking for an agent in Seymour. So I started writing Old Line Life Insurance. Then people would ask, 'Do you write automobile insurance?' Forest Huth had a general insurance agency in Seymour and I asked him if I could write automobile insurance through his agency. He said, 'I'm not

interested in that, but I am looking for someone to buy my business. I would like to retire.' So as of April 1, 1958 I was full time in the insurance business. Then I wrote all lines of



insurance. I worked at the bank seven or eight years. On February 1, 1967 I purchased the old Seymour State Bank Building for my insurance agency. It was the same building I worked in a number of years ago.

### **Unusual Clients**

I wrote a wide variety of insurance including some policies that were quite unusual. I insured some seeing eye dogs, not for natural death, but for fire, theft, vandalism, etc. One time I got a call from a client in Green Bay who had a daughter who wanted me to write insurance for twelve black panthers. She had married a circus performer and she performed in the ring with her husband. Then she mentioned that she purchased a tractor and trailer to transport the animals to different circus performances and she wanted insurance for that also. The trailer was outfitted with 12 cages and a cooler for raw meat. I had 23 insurance companies that I utilized including some that were excess line agencies and I did find one to



insure the animals. They were my clients for about two years and then they established permanent residency in Florida and I lost them. Overall I was in the insurance business for 33 years.

### **Ebert-Truymen Insurance**

Ebert-Truymen Insurance came about as a result of me buying up small insurance agencies. Years ago the local banks sold insurance and it was difficult to compete with them so when Ted Nicodem retired, I purchased his insurance agency. The business got so large that I couldn't handle it all so I took in Ben Truymen and then eventually his son Mark joined us."

### **Family Life**

(Audrey) "When the two girls came along (Nancy and Sherry) I felt they needed me and I decided to be a full time mother and housewife. I didn't help him with the business. We felt if I was working with him it would not be as good for our family life. Clayton appreciated talking things over with me and he knew that there was always stability at home. If we were both working in the business it wouldn't have been that way."

### **Formula for Success**

(Clayton) "In responding to your question why I was successful in the insurance business I can attribute it to three reasons. First of all, for at least ten years I worked 55 to 60 hours a week. Secondly, I always did my best to be friendly. I felt my customers were always very important and I cared about them. The third reason is, I had some great office help and established many excellent relationships throughout the years. I had three full time office help and three part time. They were all outstanding. We developed many friendships over the years and enjoyed being in business and raising our family in Seymour.

***On May 8, 2014 Clayton, accompanied by his daughter Nancy, participated in an honor flight to the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. commemorating the end of WWII in Europe on May 8, 1945. He had the honor of carrying one of the wreaths representing all branches of service and place it in front of the memorial. Susan Eisenhower, President Eisenhower's granddaughter shook his hand and thanked him for his service. he remembers it as, "One of the most outstanding events in my life."***

## **The Secret Revealed**

By Lynn E. Koenigs

***Interviewing the elderly has proved to be informative and interesting. Many clues to life in days gone by become clearer and give us a better understanding for the wars being fought, the Great Depression, and general home life.***



***Doris in 2009***

***So, I was surprised when Doris (Uecke) Dickson said she had a story but under no circumstances would she share it. No amount of cajoling or coaxing on my part could get her to***

***reveal her tale. She had never told anyone what had happened to her in her youth and at ninety years of age she did not want to get into***

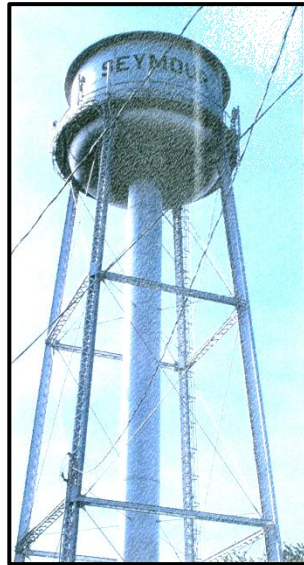
***trouble over it now. She was afraid that she would have to pay a fine or perhaps even go to jail. I tried to convince her that none of that was going to happen. After all, it was over 75 years ago. My curiosity was running rampant and I just had to know. I even promised her that I wouldn't print the story if it was too revealing. No, she would not relent. Her secret had never been shared with another, not even her parents.***

***You can imagine my surprise when a few days later I received a letter from her telling of that fateful Seymour day. She was going to tell all no matter the cost and I was given permission to publically print it.***

***This is her story:***

"It was 1934 and school vacation was in full force. I had finished my freshman year and my friend, Lila Muehl, and I were at our farm on Highway 54. We lived only one block west of Main Street in Seymour. What could two bored teenagers do on such a nice summer day? We decided to ride our bikes into town and see if anything was happening that would take away some of our boredom.

As we entered town, Lila had a brainstorm. We would climb the newly built Seymour water tower. Now, that was an exciting idea. No one was around and it was a pleasant day for our adventure. We parked our bikes and up the ladder we went. We walked around the platform and admired the scenery. We were even brave enough to take another ladder attached to the side of the tower and climb to the very top of the structure. Yes, we touched the gold ball that was the highest point on the tower. What a story we could tell to all of our friends. I wondered if they would even believe us. This was truly a daring feat, and we were girls attempting it.



When we tired of this, we began to contemplate our descent. Suddenly, our once brilliant idea didn't seem so clever. My hands became sweaty and my knees felt rubbery. It is then that we noticed that there was no protective cage on the ladder. What if we fell? There was no one that could help us with the silly decision that we once thought of as so brilliant. There was no choice...we had to get down the ladder on our own.

I was scared to death. What foolish thing had we done? What was I to do? I did the only thing that I could think of... I uttered a prayer. I promised God that if He would get us down safely, I would never do that again. Even so that first step from



***Doris in 1935***

such a height was a real "doozie!"

I don't know about Lila, but until now I have never told anyone of our adventure. And for your information, I never did anything like that again.

I finally have this secret off my chest and I can laugh about it now. What ideas teenagers get...it is wonder we survive youth."

***(Doris (Uecke) Dickson has passed away and can now rest in peace. The secret is out!)***

## **Donations and Memberships from March 2017 to November 2017**

### **(In the order received)**

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

Ann Marie Karweick	Seymour, WI	Thrivent Financial Employee Giving Campaign	Sustainability
Judith A. Bush	Downer's Grove, IL		Flowers
Bill and Holly Collar	Seymour, WI	In memory of Don Reed and John Banker	Sustainability
Steve Melchert	Seymour, WI	In memory of Robert and Marian Melchert	Sustainability
Terry and Patti Lardnois	Seymour, WI		Sustainability
Rock Ledge Intermediate Sch.	Seymour WI		Sustainability
Sally Barclay, Gail Radicki and Diane Allbritton	Seymour, WI	In memory of Mildred A. Moeller	Sustainability
Nate Grimm	Menomonee Falls WI		Membership
Sue and Harvey Shuler	Oneida, WI		Sustainability
John Wurtzel	Payson, AZ		Sustainability
Mary Gosse	Annandale, VA		Sustainability
Laurene Ferge	Nichols, WI		Life Membership
June Raether	Seymour, WI		Sustainability

Herb Pintsch	Janesville, WI	Life Membership
Stephen and Betty Hunt	American Falls, Idaho	Sustainability
Dan and Sally Natchek	Muskego, WI	Sustainability
Karen Coonen	Thrivent Financial Employee Giving Campaign	Sustainability
Charles Stellmacher	Thrivent Financial Employee Giving Campaign	Sustainability
Gary and Betsy Moeller	Seymour, WI 54165	Sustainability
Keith Krull	Navarino	Sustainability
Seymour Firefighters	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Steve and Darla Dorosz	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Clayton and Audrey Ebert	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Gerald Vander Zanden	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Steve and Darla Dorosz (2)	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Bill and Holly Collar	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Don's Quality Market	Seymour, WI	Wine and Food
Hone of the Hamburger	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Doloris Kuehne	Seymour, WI	Sustainability
Jon C Schaumberg	Seymour, WI    Thrivent Financial Employee Giving Campaign	Sustainability
Judith Murphy	Neenah, WI    In memory of Gerald Schaumberg	Sustainability

## The Memory Forest

Christmas is only five weeks away and the Seymour Community Historical Society is accepting sponsors to purchase trees in the memory forest that will brighten up Depot Street again this year. Anyone who desires to purchase a tree should contact Janice Eick at Northeastern Roofing (833-6184). The trees are a minimum of \$35.00. Please decorate your tree as you wish. If you only want lights on the tree, that is fine. This is a great way to remember a loved one while donating to the historical society.

Forty trees are available this year. They will be sold on a first come, first served basis. Once again, name plaques in front of the trees will identify the sponsors. The trees are lighted the entire month of December. Sponsors are responsible for decorating and removing decorations from the trees. Please have all decorations in place by December 1<sup>st</sup> and remove them after the holiday season

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### Help Sustain the Historical Society and Museum 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 Kids' Christmas Party at the Museum Saturday, December 2nd 10:00 AM to 1:30 PM**

**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

### **Your Historical Society Programs During the Past Year**

April - High School Senior Art Show

May - Annual Meeting Featuring WI Supper Clubs

May - Vietnam Veterans Tribute

May - Memorial Day Slide Show

June - Col. Jim VanStratten Presentation

July - Cheesehead Movie

Summer - Music in the Park

August - Home of the Hamburger Exhibit

September - Coonen and Cohler Art Show

October - Fourth Grade Tour

November - Memory Forest

December - Kids' Christmas and Open House