



# Seymour History Bulletin

A quarterly publication of the Seymour Community Historical Society Inc.

*Dedicated to preserving Seymour Area History*

December 2009

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

## Merry Christmas From The Seymour Community Historical Society

The Christmas season is a time to reflect and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives. The Board of Directors sincerely appreciates the contributions of many people who volunteer to assist the SCHS in numerous activities throughout the year.

This edition of the *Seymour History Bulletin* is a review of the past year's activities of your society. Your membership and generous support of the *SCHS* make it possible for the society to play a significant role in the preservation of history and the promotion of a greater appreciation of our heritage.

The *SCHS* also has a commitment to provide social and cultural events for Seymour area residents.



## December is a Busy Month

Volunteers start decorating for Christmas in November so the museum and Nagel Park are filled with holiday cheer by the first of December. The museum is decorated, lights installed, trees erected, garland strung and the Depot St. area is converted to a Winter Wonderland.

### Memory Forest

A drive down Depot St. will bring out the holiday spirit in most everyone. Nagel Park and the museum grounds are decorated with 42 trees donated by Don Hoff, DDS. For a



minimum donation of \$25.00, people can purchase a tree to trim. Signs made by Bob Coonen and Janice Eick indicate the person or persons to whom the trees are dedicated. It is

intriguing to see the variety of decorations ranging from sports equipment and the Christmas theme, to teddy bears and toy cars, trucks, and tractors. The wide variety of groups represented includes the EMT's, Veterans, Friends of the Library, Isaar Trailriders, Good Shepherd Services, Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home and HOTH. This project is a great way to recognize loved ones, celebrate the holidays, and contribute to new museum building fund.

## Bake Sale and Open House

Pies, cookies, cakes, candies, breads, and assorted goodies were on sale at the annual bake sale and open house. The sale was a huge success with many return customers and even a few new ones, stopping in to view the elegant holiday display and purchase delicious baked goods.

Marge Coonen, Lois Dalke, Janice Eick, Roberta Mory, and Lucille Miller coordinated the event, which is a gastronomical delight and a fundraiser for the society. A sincere "thank you" to everyone who purchased goods, donated money, and baked treats. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the event added close to \$1,500 to the building fund.



**Janice Eick helps Elizabeth Timmins fill her "shopping basket."**

The raffle was popular, with **Vernon Court** taking home the grand prize, a snow princess doll donated by Tillie Stueflat. Other winners include: **Sarah Skenandore** - "Peace" Velvet Stocking, donated by Joan Conradt, **Sue Hesprich** -





**Sue and Kevin Hesprich look over the variety of breads offered at the bake sale.**

Longaberger Christmas Bag, donated by Joan Conradt, **Karen Hallada** - Silver Musical Bell, donated by Lois Dalke **Lucille Miller** - Heart Quilt, donated by Mary Pat Van Schyndel, **Julie Marcks** - Fall Table Runner, donated by Mary Pat Van Schyndel, **Susan Mayer** - Christmas Table Topper, donated by Marge Coonen, and **Mary Kuhn** - Hot Pads, donated by Marge Coonen.

### Museum a Popular Place

Including all the special events, the museum was host to over 2,000 visitors during the past year. The museum board has an excellent working relationship with the Seymour Chamber of Commerce and the Home of the Hamburger. The Tuesday farm market brought more people to Depot St. and consequently more visitors to the museum. Burger Fest provides people from throughout the nation with a reason to visit Seymour. Many of these individuals are interested in the history of the hamburger and visit the display in the museum. This year 778 Burger Fest attendees toured the museum. Both organizations have been great friends of the historical society.



**Al Storm displays his sales from 1973.**

The Countryside Photography exhibition attracted 205 people who had the opportunity to interact and view the impressive display. The Al Storma Realty show encouraged 102 people to visit the museum and chat with Al and Caroline. The beautiful woodcarvings of Marv Dalke were examined by 74 people. The historical society had a booth at the Outagamie County Fair for five days. It was a busy year, and your society helped provide area residents with many social and cultural choices.

### Music in the Park

In addition to all the activities at the museum, your society, with the support of area businesses, organizations, and individuals, provided 15 evenings of entertainment with music in Nagel Park. John and Lynn Koenigs are already working on lining up musical groups for next summer. Be sure to give all these supporters a pat on the back when you see them. Last summer the concerts averaged 273 people a night. It would not be possible without the backing of the aforementioned people and organizations.

### Volunteers

It takes time and commitment from many people to maintain an active and viable organization. Last winter a number of members helped renovate the main room of the museum. Countryside Photography donated a number of large photos. The fire department assisted in replicating a 1910 photo with a modern aerial view of downtown. As of this printing over 200 people and organizations are members of your historical society. Thanks to all members who help support SCHS projects and activities. Almost half of our members have contributed toward the building fund.

### The New Museum

Thank you to all who have donated to the building fund. The total amount pledged and donated is approaching \$800,000.00. In order to build a museum and learning center that will be major attraction downtown, additional funds are needed. The goal, including an operating fund and unique, attractive exhibits, is \$1.4 million.



**Kevin Kaufman, president of the Seymour Chamber of Commerce presents a \$2,500.00 check to Lois Dalke, VP of the SCHS.**

This figure will provide us with one of the finest small town museums in the Midwest including an impressive HOTH exhibit and offices for the society and the HOTH. If you, or your organization would like to view a PowerPoint presentation of the plans for the new facility, contact society president, Bill Collar

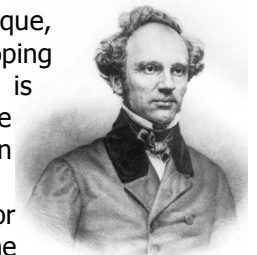


**Marge Coonen, Treasurer of the SCHS, accepts a \$15,000.00 donation from Jim Campbell, president of the HOTH.**

at 833-6064. Additional information is available on the society Web site: ([www.seymourhistory.org](http://www.seymourhistory.org)). All donations, regardless of the amount are greatly appreciated! Use the handy yellow insert to make your pledge.

### Horatio Seymour Video

Have you seen the new fund drive video featuring Horatio Seymour? It is an impressive example of the work of Balance Studios, a Green Bay based media boutique, that will be working with us in developing exhibits for the new museum. It is available on the Web site. If you have trouble accessing it, your local librarian will be happy to assist you.



Seymour was the two-term governor of New York, who invested in land in the area. When the town of Seymour was organized in 1867-68, he was the Democrat candidate for the presidency against the Civil War hero, U. S. Grant.

## Gifts to the Historical Society

A number of people have donated stock to the new museum building fund. With recent gains in the stock market this is an excellent way to get full value for your investment. Since the historical society has 501 (C) (3) tax status there is no capital gains tax responsibility. Check with your tax attorney or financial advisor for details.

In addition, keep in mind the purpose of the new building is to provide a facility to preserve the heritage of the area and provide a gathering place for residents. The educational component is a high priority and worthy of taking into consideration when doing estate planning.

## Roberta Mory Remembers

**Editor's note: One of the goals of our organization is to utilize the memories and knowledge of area residents to advance better understanding of our heritage. If you or someone you know would like to be interviewed or write an article for this publication, please contact either Marge Coonen or Bill Collar. All articles are then archived on the society Web site under "News".**

*Roberta (Blohm) Mory is a lifelong resident of Seymour, a longtime member of the historical society, and is presently serving her second three-year term on the Board of Directors. Since her Seymour roots are deep, (Blohm, Vietch, Wussow, Mory) Roberta has many area links to the past. Following are the highlights from her recollections of living in Seymour during the 1930's and 40's. Roberta was born in 1928 and remembers back to her early childhood years. In 1946, she married Robert Mory, who was a member of the fire department for 38 years and the chief for 14. They raised six children. Roberta has 11 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.*

### Elementary School Years

I started school in the first grade when I was four years old. As a result, I was younger than most students in my class. On the first day of school I wore a green dress and patent leather shoes. The school was on Robbins Street and it served all twelve grades. Miss Johnson was my first grade teacher. There were seventeen students in my class and we met in a very small room furnished with tables and chairs. We didn't have any desks. There was a blackboard on one wall where the lessons were explained. I still meet regularly with seven of my classmates. In the second grade, I had Emma Gosse for a teacher. She eventually married Roger Rusch. My third grade year was very memorable because my teacher was Edna Walch. She was very strict and it seemed like she always picked on me. I was a good student and the lessons came easy to me.

During the fifth grade I was sick with measles, mumps, and chicken pox. In the seventh grade I missed much of school with rheumatic fever. I was so weak I couldn't even hold a pencil. Mr. Axley was the principal when I was a child and Mr. Ted Hawkins followed him. I remember Mr. Axley riding his bike to school from his home on Pearl St. Students were required to attend school through the eighth grade. Transportation to school was a problem for rural students and many didn't attend high school. When I was in grade school the original three-story building was remodeled and reduced to two stories.

## High School Years

When I was in high school I went to basketball games and even took tickets at the door. The teachers were very particular about the gym floor. No one was allowed to walk on it in street shoes. The spiral fire escape was a real novelty. I never went down it, but the boys thought it was a lot of fun. It wasn't very wide and it scared me. It was removed when the school was remodeled.



**Roberta Age 14**

I was a teacher's nightmare and was always looking for ways to beat the system. For example, in science class we had a pretest in front of the workbook. The page was perforated and you could tear it out. The procedure was to take the test and then give it to the person behind you to correct. Then we were supposed to toss the answer sheet in the wastebasket. I would throw away another sheet and keep the answer sheet. We would then get together on the merry-go-round and chant the order of the letters for the answers. Everyone would get a perfect score on the test because we memorized the letters of the correct answers. The teacher couldn't figure it out, but eventually we quit taking the pretests.

I even prepared review sheets for tests and then sold them for a nickel. The teachers had many rules, but I usually found a way to get around them. In spite of all this, I got along well with the teachers and even did extra work for them. I took the usual subjects in addition to German and Latin. Today it seems like students are learning in grade school what I learned in high school. I graduated in 1945 along with 42 other students.

### Social Life

When I was a teenager, we went bowling, to school dances, wedding dances, and dance halls like the Nightingale.

My parents never had a car, so we didn't travel much. In fact, we only went to Appleton once or twice a year. Fair week was a big deal. Kids loved the rides and games. My favorite was the surrey races. Horse racers from all over the state came to



**Horseracing was a big attraction at the fair.**

Seymour. Some even stabled their horses at the fairgrounds. We didn't have much money, but I was in 4-H and always had a free pass to the fair. Seymour was a busy place during the summer months. Band concerts were held on the platform by Depot St. At first, it was Saturday night and then Friday night. Movies, usually westerns, were shown on the side of Hallada's store. People would bring blankets and sit on the ground. Seymour had very good city baseball teams during the 30's and 40's. They played at the fairgrounds and I often went to the games. The Seymour Theater was also a popular spot.



## The Depression Years

During the 1930's my father worked at the creamery where they made butter and dried milk. He worked on intake and then would hose everything down at the end of the day.

Eugene Rankin ran the creamery. His wife was Mary. They didn't have children, but during the war years they took in



***The Sevmour Creamery on Elizabeth St.***

two nephews from England. Their names were Paul and Donald Sabin. During the milk strike of 1933, my father sat in the creamery overnight with a shotgun on his lap. Farmers were protesting and dumping milk to drive the prices up. He was helping guard the milk that had been delivered to the creamery.

My father was always employed, but nobody had much money during the Depression. Social life consisted of church and family activities. The Seymour Theater offered movies for adults for fifteen cents and children were free. In the summer, farmers made sausage and put fat pork in crocks in a salt brine to preserve it. I remember driving the team and wagon to Oskey's Cheese Factory and then going home to slop the hogs. It seems there was always work to do on the farm. Usually in October or November, farmers would butcher a hog and a steer. That would guarantee meat for the winter months. I remember more than once being startled as I opened the door to the shed and saw the carcasses hanging from the beam.

## World War II

During my freshman year on the way home from church, I heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed. The next day we had an assembly at school and listened to FDR. A number of students dropped out of school to join the military after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Seymour area people supported the war effort. I helped knit hats and scarves for the soldiers.

Many goods were rationed during the war. Tires were hard to get. Sugar, coffee, meat, coal, gasoline, and numerous other items were limited. Farmers usually had gas, so it was good to be friends with farm boys. Scrap iron was collected and war bonds sold. Everyone sacrificed to support the war effort. Silk stockings became valuable and I made money mending them.

## Married Life

I met my husband at a 4-H picnic when I was about 13. I was making friendship bracelets and needed someone to hold them while I braided. Robert volunteered and we exchanged names. That winter during ice-skating my brother reintroduced me to Bob. Several years later we were married.

## Seymour Has Changed

Years ago everything you needed could be purchased in Seymour. The city had four grocery stores, two shoe stores and a number of clothing stores. Many businesses have disappeared and Seymour has become more of a bedroom community. The small country schools have vanished and the

school buildings are now located along Highway 54. The movie theater was a popular spot, not just for movies, but for traveling shows.



***The Methodist Church***

and people relying on the train for transportation.

City hall was located on the east side of Main St. in the middle of downtown. It contained the fire department, police department, jail, and the city council meeting room. The city library was located upstairs above the fire department. I remember Mrs. Joe Lotter, then Eleanor Tubbs as librarians.

## Fond Memories

I lived in Seymour all my life met my husband and raised our family here. It is a fine community with many outstanding people. I made a number of good friends while working at the canning factory, Van Camp's Locker Plant and for 25 years at Kuehne's. I did everything, including cleaning, bookkeeping, chasing hogs and laying carpeting. I've lived in the same house since 1952. It was built by Seymour merchant Frank Dean in 1904. My husband added woodwork and made a



***The city hall bell tower dominated downtown.***

number of changes, but the large walk in closets are original.

How many people remember Seymour's characters Wally Wingate, Russell Recknagel or Fritz Moselle? Lowell Vietch was my mother's brother. His father, Jim, drilled many wells in the area. Dr. Hittner help revolutionize medical procedures and everyone has heard of Dr. Groendel, but Dr. Sieb also served Seymour residents for years. I believe he practiced from 1933-1965. He delivered five of our six children.

## Membership

Please consider becoming a lifetime member of the SCHS. The enclosed yellow sheet includes a pledge form for the new museum and a membership form. A gift membership is a great way to introduce others to the society. All members receive our quarterly newsletter. A list of present members is included. If you are a member and your name has been inadvertently left off the list, please contact either Marge Coonen or Bill Collar.

***Go to ([www.seymourhistory.org](http://www.seymourhistory.org)) to access past articles and many more pictures. Click on "News".***

# Seymour's Christmas Traditions

By  
Marge Coonen

*The storm on December 9, which brought 14.2 inches of snow to Seymour and turned our world into a Winter Wonderland, makes us aware that Christmas is just around the corner. Through the years, many different Christmas traditions have been held in Seymour, and the holidays are such a wonderful time to look back and remember.*

Back in the 1860's our great-grandfathers would go out in the woods and chop down the best Christmas tree that they could find, lug it home, and then decorate it with homemade trimmings usually made from paper. The children would hang their stocking and were lucky if they found an apple or an orange in it on Christmas morning. Little girls were happy with a homemade rag doll. The first settlers in our area usually purchased their supplies in Appleton, and they were toted back to Seymour on the backs of the men who made the trip on foot.

In the 1920's John Bunkelman, a member of the American Legion Post, organized the "turkey raffle to raise funds to buy candy so that Santa Claus could come to town". It was still being done in the 50s. The Krause-Kraft Legion Post of Seymour and the Fire Department would work together by having an annual poultry fair. The fair was held in November. Its purpose was to raise money for the Children's Christmas Party. In 1952, over 900 bags and candy were handed out by Santa Claus, assisted by the Firemen and Legionnaires.

The Seymour Woman's Club in the 40's sponsored a house trimming contest, even the city water tower was decorated with a Christmas wreath. The contest came to a halt during the World War II. However, the Seymour Businessmen and the Kiwanis started it up again after the war.

The Museum's "Memory Forest" has made Depot Street the



**The Muehl-Boettcher tree is in memory of those who passed away this year.**

most decorated street in town. It was started and organized by Janice Eick in 1995. People can buy a tree and decorate it in memory or in honor of loved ones. Since the beginning of the forest, Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home has always had a tree in memory of the people from the community who died in the past year. It is decorated with wooden ornaments painted by Julie Busch. The first year there were ten trees, today there are 42. In the beginning for two years, Ken Eick donated the trees. After that, the Chamber of

Commerce purchased the trees and for the past two years, the trees have been donated by Doctor Donald Hoff.

Another wonderful Christmas tradition in Seymour was the Ecumenical Advent Tea. It was started in 1968 by Maxine Bathke, who was then President of the Methodist Woman's Group. The women from all the churches in area would look forward to the second Tuesday of Advent and to an afternoon of fellowship and music. It was a wonderful way to get into the spirit of Christmas. This continued until 2006, with the various churches taking turns hosting.

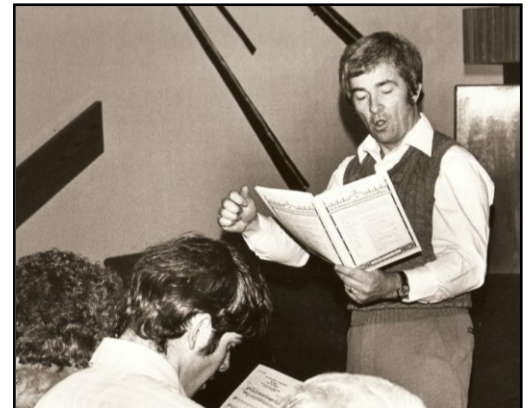
However, with so many women now working and not being able to attend the afternoon tea, in 2006 the Emmanuel Lutheran Church started "Christmas by Candlelight". It was begun by Angie Baker, Dianne Woldt, and Sarah Kneisler. Area women come together on the second Sunday evening in Advent to enjoy dessert, coffee, music and various readings pertaining to Christmas.

In 1992, the Friends of the Library, with Pam Zak & Karla McClone, as co-chairpersons, started the "Christmas Walk" to raise funds for the new library. Six area homes were selected and opened to the public to view the family's Christmas decorations. In 1999, the Seymour Woman's Club, with Dorothy Reed in charge, took over the Walk to raise money for the club's scholarship fund. The Walk continued until 2007.

In December of 1981, The Ecumenical Concert, with 6 churches, Emmanuel Lutheran, United Methodist Church of Seymour & Cicero, St John's Catholic Church, Freedom Moravian Church, and United Church of Christ in Black Creek, was held. It was organized by Colleen Sutherland and the chorus of 94 voices was directed by Jerry Solberg. The chorus was made up of the choirs from the various churches. By 1989, 160 voices were raised in song to standing room only crowds for its two performances. The churches took turns being the host for the evening of sacred Christmas Music. The proceeds went to Good Shepherd Nursing Home. The Ecumenical Concert continued until 2007.

This year the United Methodist Church held an Advent Concert. They finished their concert, by going back to a tradition that was started by the Rev. Franklin Block, when he was Pastor of their church. They dimmed the church lights, and then by candle light, the congregation sang Christmas Carols. The favorite song was "He Is Here".

Mrs. Flora Boyden wrote in 1967 in "Seymour's Early History"



**Jerry Solberg directing the choir practicing at St. John's in 1984.**

"The meaning of Christmas hasn't changed. It's the same old Santa Claus, the same deeply religious meaning, the same love, help and friendliness that makes the holiday season such a wonderful time. And from us to all of you goes our best wishes for the happiest Christmas you ever had and the best for the

5. **New Year..."**

