



Seymour History Newsletter

A publication of the Seymour Community Historical Society Inc.

Dedicated to preserving Seymour Area History

May 2008

Bill Collar, editor

Marge Coonen, co-editor

Newsletter

The ***Seymour History Newsletter*** is the official publication of the Seymour Community Historical Society. The purpose of the periodical is to keep interested parties informed about the activities of the society and events promoted by the organization. It emphasizes the value of historical preservation and encourages appreciation of the contributions of our ancestors.

Look for the newsletter in your mailbox three to four times a year. We plan to include a variety of topics with an emphasis on local history. If you have something appropriate to offer, please contact either Bill Collar (833-6064) or Marge Coonen (833-2656).

A Message from the President

Bill Collar

It is an honor and a challenge to succeed long-time president Rita Gosse as the leader of the Seymour Community Historical Society. Actually, this is my second term, first serving in the early 1980's. The success of any organization depends on the commitment and contributions of its members. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to have the assistance of a great Board of Directors and numerous volunteers.

As we prepare for another summer of "Music in the Park," a huge "Thank You" to John and Lynn Koenigs. They have lined up exciting entertainment for Wednesday evenings. Board members have been busy cleaning and preparing new exhibits for the summer season. Watch the front window for creative displays courtesy of Janice Eick and Lois Dalke.

We will continue to display collections of local people. These will be on exhibit for several weeks. If you have a collection for temporary display, please contact either Janice (833-6184) or Lois (833-2855). The museum will open on Memorial Day featuring an assortment of Fisher-Price toys courtesy of Holly Collar.

Please take a few minutes to complete and return the enclosed survey regarding the proposed building project. It is explained in more detail later in the newsletter.



The Museum will open on Memorial Day featuring Holly Collar's collection of Fisher-Price toys. Do you remember Buddy Bullfrog or Big Bill Pelican?

SCHS Board Members

The Seymour Community Historical Society has a maximum of 12 board members, each elected for a three-year term. The present board includes:

Bill Collar - president, Lois Dalke - vice president, Janice Eick - secretary, Marge Coonen - treasurer, Dan Beilfuss, June Boettcher, Bob Coonen, Mike Keyzers, T.J. Landwehr, Lucille Miller, Roberta Mory, and Dan Brice/Curt Jefson.

Each Bulletin will include a brief sketch of several board members. Bob and Marge Coonen, Seymour's Outstanding Citizens for 2008, have been active in the historical society for many years. They have been married over 50 years and have six children and seven grandchildren. Marge serves as treasurer, and has been instrumental in cataloging items, while Bob headed up the memory forest project and is a general handyman. Here is how they responded to the SCHS questionnaire.



Marge and Bob on one of their many trips

Your favorite exhibit in the museum?

Bob: The country store. Marge: The dolls and toys.

Greatest reward being on the museum board?

Marge: Preserving local history for kids and grandkids. Seeing people enjoy Music in the Park.

Bob: Working with Maggie!

Your favorite historical site in Wisconsin?

Marge: The Streets of old Milwaukee in the Milwaukee museum.

Bob: The Milwaukee Zoo.

The United States?

Marge: Mount Vernon, it has everything.

Bob: Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon.

The World?

Marge: St. Peter's in Rome, it is so awesome.

Bob: I loved the beautiful views in Germany.

Hobbies?

Marge: Quilting, reading, traveling.

Bob: Photography, woodworking, laying pavers.

Have you read any good books lately?

Marge: "Water for Elephants" was excellent.

Bob: I enjoyed the 1953 Seymour High School "Ripper."

Favorite Movies?

Marge: "The Passion of Christ" was thought provoking. "Gone with the Wind" is another favorite.

Lois Dalke

Lois is a charter member (1975) of the Museum Board and presently serves as vice-president. She and her husband Marvin were instrumental in remodeling the old depot and building exhibits. Marv, an accomplished woodworker, donated a number of carvings and creations to the museum.

Active with the 4-H, Salvation Army, Retired Teachers, musical groups, and church choir, Lois also enjoys participating in Red Hat programs. Lois and Marv have four children.

Your favorite exhibit in the museum?

Lois: All of it.

Greatest reward being on the museum board?

Lois: Watching it grow.

Your favorite historical site in Wisconsin?

Lois: Many favorites, especially the jail in Kewanee.

The United States?

Lois: Anything associated with Will Rogers. He was a Cherokee and saved many Native American artifacts.

The World?

Lois: The Tower of London. The Crown Jewels and the lives it took to keep them. Trinity College – Dublin, The Celtic paintings on velum are still colorful.

Hobbies?

Lois: Reading, writing, singing, quilting, and collecting bells.

Your favorite books or authors?

Lois: J. B. Robb, Nora Roberts, Fern Michaels, Patricia Cornwell, and the "Harry Potter" books.

Favorite Movies?

Lois: Harry Potter Series, Rosemary & Thyme, Sherlock Holmes, Star Wars, and Lord of the Rings

Other Activities?

Lois: Delivering Meals on Wheels, reading to Head Start, mentoring M.S. students, and singing with Chaminade, Chantelles, and the WI Friendship Chorus.



Lois Dalke, Pam Rucinski, Bill Collar, and first president, Tom Duffey, with a cigar store Indian carved by Marvin Dalke. (1975)

Society History

On October 11, 1975, the Seymour Community Historical Society was incorporated by the State of Wisconsin as a 501 C-3 tax-exempt organization. The Articles of Incorporation describe the purpose of the corporation to be "exclusively educational and specifically shall be to collect and preserve records and physical objects relating to the history of the city of Seymour and surrounding area. To this end said

corporation may establish and operate a local history museum, a history library, and one or more historical sites...."

The SCHS is registered with the State Historical Society and operates within the guidelines mandated by the parent organization. The State Historical Society provides advice and offers many services to members.

The idea for a local historical society originated with Tom Duffey, who was the first president. Other officers who signed the original articles included Rita Gosse and Bill Collar.

Since the railroad was closing the depot, it was obtained to be used as a museum. Numerous local artifacts were donated by area residents. Early displays included household items and appliances, toys, clothing, early agricultural, and railroad items.

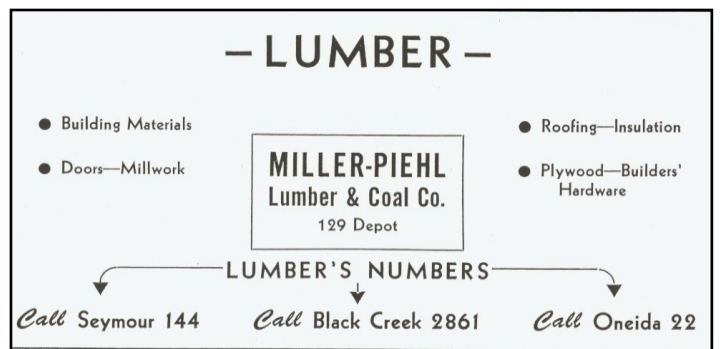
Many people pitched in to prepare the museum for opening. Some of the most notable were Gladys Stern, Chuck Kimball, Edna Sherman, Pearl Kramer, Joe and Vivian Trembl.

A youthful Randy Peterson, spent hours enlarging turn of the century pictures from glass plate negatives. Meetings were held at the Municipal Building where residents were encouraged to bring pictures and identify buildings and people. Eventually the museum outgrew the depot and the former office of the Miller-Piehl Lumber Company was donated to serve as a new home.

The Miller-Piehl Building, constructed in 1893-94, is one of the oldest commercial buildings in Seymour. At one time Depot St. was a busy commercial hub with as many as eight trains a day going through the city. Many of them carried supplies to and from the lumber and coal company that occupied the entire north side of Depot St. from Main to Mill St.



In the early 1900's Depot St. was a busy place. Notice the present museum with the distinctive contrasting brickwork. Few business buildings from prior to 1900 remain.



Miller-Piehl had three locations in the area.

National History Day

National History Day is an exciting academic enrichment program that helps students learn about historical issues, ideas, people, and events. This academic adventure provides teachers with an innovative teaching tool and fosters students' enthusiasm for learning.

This year, five teams from Seymour H. S. qualified for state competition. Under the leadership of junior history teacher, Dan Brice, one team will be moving on to the nation finals in Washington, D. C. and another received honorable mention.

The national finalists, Katie Lubinski, and Alex Moeller, created a huge replica of a hamburger with various layers representing the debate over the origin of the burger. Their colossal creation will be on display at the museum following the national competition. They are one of two national finalists from Wisconsin. Congratulations girls!

John VandenHeuvel, Tyler Friestrom, and Dennis Schneider earned honorable mention with their documentary about German Prisoners of War in Wisconsin.



Katie Lubinski and Alex Moeller at Madison with their display proclaiming Seymour as the birthplace of the burger. The Travel Channel will air a hamburger special, filmed last summer in Seymour, at 10:00 PM on May 21.

Bandits Raid Seymour State Bank; Get \$6,000 In Cash and Securities

AUGUST 19, 1936

Two Men Force Bank Employees, Customers Into Vault ESCAPE IN AUTO Police, Sheriff's Officers Spread Net For Robbers

The Seymour State bank was robbed of approximately \$6,000 in cash and securities by two armed men at 1:20 this afternoon.

Four bank employees and three customers were in the bank when the two bandits entered and ordered them all to lie down on the floor of a rear room.

After scooping money from cash drawers in the tellers' cages, the robbers ordered Charles Prosser, president of the bank to open the vault. The vault was unlocked, but Prosser was forced to pull open the door.

When money and securities had been gathered from the vault, the

bank employees and customers were ordered inside and the door closed. One of the bandits went outside to summon a third man, waiting nearby with an automobile while his companion remained on guard, and the trio escaped.

Apparently no one outside the building knew the bank was robbed until after the bandits had fled.

Prosser, the president, A. E. Nickodem, Mrs. Marvin Babbitt and Earl Fenn, bank employees, and three customers were in the building. Prosser was standing at front desk, talking with Harold Olson, Seymour, a customer, when the robbers entered the door.

Mrs. Ida Hussong, Seymour, also was in the building and Henry Alberts, a third customer, entered while the robbery was in progress. Alberts, an elderly man, was forced to lie down with the others in the rear room.

The taller of the two robbers entered the bank first and carried two revolvers. His companion had a sawed off shotgun. Neither used abusive language to the bank employees or customers but the taller one apparently became enraged when his companion failed to respond immediately to an order to go notify the driver of the car outside.

Ray Steffen, Seymour, said he believed he saw a large green Cadillac with a trunk on the rear, driven by a man about 40 or 45 years old. The driver, he said, wore a sun visor, and the first three numbers of a Wisconsin license on the car

were 402. It was also reported that a strange maroon car was seen in Seymour, described as either a Cadillac or a Chevrolet.

Sheriff Martin Verhagen notified all police departments in the Appleton area to watch for the men and gave their descriptions and that of the machine they were believed to be driving. Undersheriff Joseph W. Verstegen and Deputies Robert Moore and Jack Zuelzke are investigating the robbery.

An alarm was broadcast over the Oshkosh and Green Bay radio police systems, giving descriptions of the three men and the automobile.

Both bandits were described as well dressed and about 25 or 26 years old. One was about 5 feet 10 inches tall, weighed 160 pounds and wore a dark double breasted suit and a gray hat. The other was about 5 feet 7 inches tall and wore a blue suit and gray hat.

John Dillinger was killed two years prior to this incident, but he still had his imitators. The Great Depression years put a financial burden on many people and some resorted to armed robbery.

The article, taken from the August 19, 1936 Appleton Post-Crescent, indicates that even Seymour, Wisconsin was a target of robbers in search of a quick buck.

Read the article and notice the similarity to the methods used by Dillinger.

A New Museum Building

For several years, much discussion has taken place regarding an addition to the museum building. A recent study indicates the building is structurally sound, but would require a considerable investment to bring it up to present building code. Keeping that in mind, the Museum Board has been investigating the possibility of constructing a new building. The plan is to build between the present museum and the gazebo.

A flyer accompanying this newsletter addresses many of the frequently asked questions about the building project. Schuh Construction has designed a building that will serve our community for many generations. The new museum will include a multi-purpose room in the lower level that will be suitable for school and community use. It provides display, storage, and office space for Home of the Hamburger in addition to office and storage area for the historical society.

Thanks to many generous people and the hard work of our members, the building fund is nearing \$200,000.00. The support of a large donor and several other contributors, places the total pledged in the area of \$600,000 to \$700,000.00. In order to construct a building with sufficient storage space and exhibits utilizing modern display methods, additional resources are required.

The building will be administered by the Seymour Community Historical Society, but in order to be open most days during the summer, **much volunteer help is required.** The purpose of the survey is to determine the degree of support people in the community have for this project. **Please take a few minutes to complete the survey on the blue sheet and return it in the red envelope provided.** This will supply the committee with considerable feedback on how people in the community feel about this project. You are receiving this mailing because you have supported the museum or museum activities in the past.

The museum will be open from 1:00 to 5:00 Memorial Day and Sundays all summer.

Membership

Thank you for your past membership in the SCHS and your support of the society and museum. We are looking forward to another exciting summer. Please complete the form at the bottom of the page and mail it along with your dues. You may use the enclosed envelop and include the completed survey.

Your dues help sustain museum activities. With Rita's passing, we have had some reorganization, and the membership will be from June 1, 2008 to June 1, 2009. Please note that our annual dues remain very reasonable. We encourage you to consider a lifetime membership. It will eliminate your need to renew every year.

Music in the Park

For your convenience, this mailing contains a large and small schedule for the summer music program. Please review the list of sponsors and businesses that donate prizes. Be sure to mention to the merchants how much you appreciate their support of the music program. It is our sponsors who make the Wednesday evening entertainment possible.

Also, take time to reflect that the gazebo and music program was a dream of Rita Gosse. She had the foresight to realize the value and benefit of the gazebo on Depot St. The generosity of the Lee and Pat Nagel family and the donation of Nagel Park made it all possible.

Occasionally someone will comment about the type of music. John and Lynn Koenig remind us that they do their best to provide a wide variety. Most of the groups perform for a fee much lower than their customary compensation. Take time to thank the Koenigs and the performers for their bigheartedness. The proceeds from the raffle are deposited in the museum building fund. If you haven't won yet --- **This could be the year!**

Clip here

Seymour Community Historical Society Membership Form

June 1, 2008 to June 1, 2009

Name: _____

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____ Business: _____

Membership - annual dues: Check your class of membership.

_____ Individual (\$5.00)
One person

_____ Family (\$10.00)
Immediate family

_____ Business (\$20.00)
Your business will be listed as a member

_____ Sustaining (\$25.00)
Includes indiv. or family and a gift

_____ Lifetime (\$50.00)
Individual or family

_____ Lifetime (\$100.00)
Business

Complete this form and mail it with your payment in the enclosed envelope to: PO Box 237 Seymour, WI 54165.