

The Iola Historical Society's Window

Quarterly Member and Activities Newsletter

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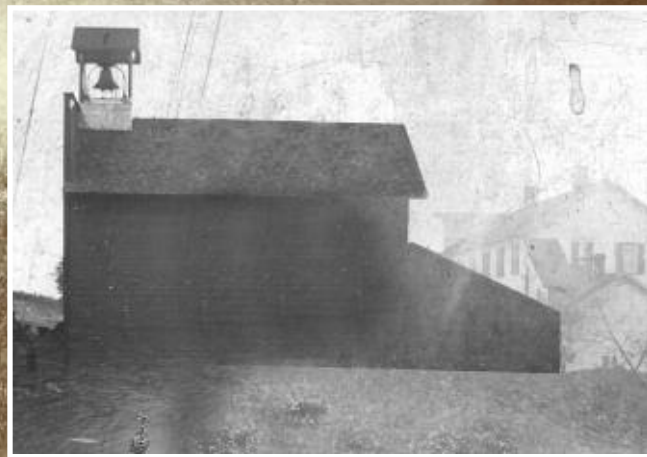
Spring 2012



Photo of "original" school.



Photo of subsequently altered school structure.



Time Worn Photo Sheds Light on Iola's History

When books recounting community history are written information verification is sought. What is published is believed accurate, but on occasion it is not possible at the time to connect all of the facts. The discovery of the photograph above (graphically enhanced lower right) has dramatically revised the record of two elements of Iola's history.

Prior to this photograph surfacing only undocumented verbal accounts attested to the existence, origins and uses of the building depicted. The existence of this photograph has also helped substantiate the dating with respect to Iola's early school and fire-house structures.

Feature article begins on page 2

Iola's Historical Heritage Enlightened by Photo Discovery

by Lyle Mork

The book *A History of Iola, Wisconsin - from Territory to Township and Village, with Neighboring Communities* was released in 1978. Two vintage photographs are reproduced on pages 74 and 75 of the volume (shown above), below which appears the statement; "Two Views of Iola's first grade school, showing improvements and alterations made in the intervening years. Building as pictured at left is the original structure and dates from the 1890s."

This school building was located in the area of the Iola High School Gymnasium, located in the 200 block of West Iola Street, built in 1956 according to the cornerstone. The two story school house was actually built in 1888 and it replaced earlier one-room schools of the 1860s and 1870s, according to the book *From the Indian Land* written by Thor Helgeson in 1915 and translated in more recent years by Malcolm Rosholt. This statement indicates that the newly discovered photograph was not

the first school house either.

In the book titled *Iola Fire Department Centennial, Iola Fire Department 1892 - 1992, 100 Years of Dedicated Service*, released in 1992, it is stated that the first Iola Fire Station was built in 1900. This building still stands today and is located at 175 East State Street. But, if you read an entry on page two of the book, you will find some clues about another earlier fire station, which is depicted in the newly discovered photograph. It is stated that at a Village of Iola board meeting held on February 19, 1895; "The Village Board appointed three men to find a building to house the Chemical Fire Engine."

In 2011 many items were donated to the Iola Historical Society from the estate of Iola's Charles Hartvig by his family. There were several old photographs, one of which turned out to be extremely significant and important. With this newly discovered photograph, history is now documented and rewritten.

The photograph on the front page of this newsletter is the only known photograph of any of the early Iola Grade School buildings. Even though the photograph is in very poor condition, it is still a very important piece of history.

The first frame school building was constructed in 1856 and was built near the area of the current United Methodist Church, located at 190 W. Iola Street, it being documented in the following references located in the *Iola Herald*.

In the February 4, 1915, edi-

Iola Historical Society
210 Depot Street
P.O. Box 412 • Iola, WI 54945

Officers

Clifford Mishler, Acting President
Robert Stamstad, Vice-President

Tom Fucik, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Greg Loescher, Stella Strand,
Doug Watson

e-mail address:

iolahistoricalsociety@tds.net
Phone: (715) 445-IOLA (4652)

tion of the *Iola Herald* a letter was printed from a former student who attended school, including the following description; "The desks were built against the wall with bench along the front. We had to swing our feet over to face our desk and back again to face the teacher."

Information has also been discovered in a June 13, 1918, *Iola Herald*, an essay by Geneva Selmer, another former student. She wrote; "It was a crude building of rough boards standing up and down with large cracks between them; and it contained very scanty furniture of the crude sort." She also reported; "The first school building was a little ways from the Methodist church; later another new one was erected right across from the church. The latter building is now a part of the home of Mr. Stromberg. Besides being used as a schoolhouse it also served as a church, with the first sermon preached by the Rev. J. J. Hatch." This again confirms the newly discovered photograph does not show the first school.

In the July 18, 1918, edition of the *Iola Herald*, Borghild Odegaard, another former student states; "The first school was a very crude building having only half-windows and the boards were built up and down instead of cross-wise as is customary."

In 1895 the frame school house, depicted in the newly discovered photo, was moved to its second location across the street from the Iola House, a rooming house located at 190 E. State Street, to be used as a fire station. This newly discovered photograph shows it was moved just across the street from the rooming house. The photograph perspective is looking west on State Street. The building was located



This photo shows the "engine house" of the Iola Fire Department (left) as built in 1900, to the right which stands the wood frame firehouse which it succeeded, originally a schoolhouse that moved to the site 1895.

just east of the future fire station and was used as the first fire station until the new brick building was completed in 1900. The school house in the newly discovered photograph was used as the first fire station for about five years from 1895 to 1900.

It is not known when this school house was constructed, or how long it was used as a school house. Where the building stood, or what it was used for from 1888 to 1895, prior to being moved to State Street remains unknown at this time. It's possible that it could have been used as a storage building, or it may be the out building visible in the background on the left side of the photograph of the "altered" two story school structure.

After the brick fire station was finished in 1900 the first school building was then moved to its final location just across the street from the United Methodist Church on the southeast corner of East Iola Street

and Grove Street. There the structure was converted into a home and still stands today. Maynard Stromberg stated that he was born in the house in 1917, at which time it was owned by his father Bert Stromberg. Maynard recalls they moved in 1921, at which time the Perrault family purchased it. In 1943, Oliver and Mabel Mork purchased the home at that location. By then the building had been expanded with four additions.

Even if this newly discovered photograph has changed history in doesn't prove how many other school houses were built between the original one of 1856 and the one used as a fire house. However, it does prove the two story building was not the first school house in Iola.

The Iola Historical Society wants to thank the family of Charles Hartvig and all the other families that have donated

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President's Corner

This year is unfolding as one of substantial change for the Iola Historical Society. I'd like to take this opportunity to present you with a brief overview of what's going on.

For starters, at our January and February meetings vice-president Bob Stamstad initiated the development of a management *responsibilities* structure for the organization. This is going to be an ongoing and evolving process. The objective is to get the membership more engaged in shouldering responsibilities for the ongoing quality and growth of our properties and activities under a structure of standing committees.

On Saturday, April 14, member Sharon Peterson has shouldered the responsibility of heading up a new fundraising activity, a *Depot Restoration Spaghetti Luncheon*. This will hopefully become an annual event, joining our July Strawberry Fest and October Taste of Norway, both of which provide beneficial community exposure and funding boosts.

The Iola Historical Society will be hosting another gathering of the *Waupaca County Historical Think Tank* on Saturday, May 19. Inaugurated in 2009, this gathering of representatives from the county's historical organizations to share ideas, accomplishments and concerns has been hosted by us on two prior occasions. We were projected to host another event last year, but had to bow out due to the crunch of other commitments.

The Iola Historical Village and Museum will open on June 2 for regularly scheduled visitation

during the summer. The hours of opening are being trimmed back to *noon to 3 p.m.*, based on our experience with traffic patterns over the past two years. The season will end on August 25 instead of running through September. To better spread the load and provide better coverage for our visitors *more volunteers are needed to serve as docents*.

And, that's just for starters. Stay tuned and become more involved. The experiences can be most rewarding.

HISTORICAL HERITAGE Continued from page 3

items over the years, for all the items now held in the Iola Historical Society archive, especially such historically significant items as this amazing photograph.

I encourage all families to consider donating items to the Iola Historical Society rather than throwing items in the trash when a loved one passes away. Some of the items the Iola Historical Society would welcome are old photographs, local advertising items, books, military uniforms, military and non-military medals and many other types of items that will help document the history of Iola and the surrounding area and could pos-

sibly even contribute to revising the community's historical heritage as this photograph has.

Iola Herald: April 18, 1912

Lester Taylor and Ted Lea returned from a fishing trip Monday evening with seventy-seven trout, the biggest catch reported this season.

All persons wishing to join the band should be at the band stand Friday evening.

Events Schedule

Monday, April 2

6:00 pm IHS Board Meeting
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Saturday, April 14

11:00 am - 2:00 pm Spaghetti Luncheon Depot Restoration Fundraiser

Monday, April 30

6:00 pm IHS Board Meeting
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Saturday, May 19

IHS Hosting Waupaca County Historical Think Tank

Tuesday, May 29

6:00 pm IHS Board Meeting
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Saturday, June 2

Noon - 3:00 pm Season Opening for Historical Village and Museum

Saturday, June 23

9:00 am - noon IHS Hosts Sons of Norway Convention Group

Sunday, June 24

11:00 am - 4:00 pm 28th Annual Strawberry Fest Fundraiser

Monday, June 25

6:00 pm IHS Board Meeting
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Donors & Loaners

January • February • March

ARCHIVAL DONATIONS: Colin R. Bruce, II, Joel Edler, Gene Knutson, Lana and Donavon Langdok, Clifford Mishler, Hyde Murray Estate, Stella Strand, Judy Watson.
DONATIONS OF CASH AND IN-KIND: First National Bank, Iola; Helen Furst, in memory of Ella (Mrs. Henry) Rowe; Jana Jones, Joan Niemiec, Joan Paulson, Shoemaker Heating/Electric, Robert Stamstad.

2012 Supporting Members

The Iola Historical Society wishes to extend special recognition and thanks to the following individuals and organizations for the extra financial support provided to our activities through their status as 2012 Supporting Memberships: Mary Bennet, Bob & Bev Ellingson, DeRonda & Patricia Engebretson, Iola & Rural Fire Fighting Service, Lee & Ruth Johnson, Thomas Martin, Phyllis Morris, Joan Niemiec, Robert Roels, David & Ruth Strand, Willard & Jacqueline Wilker