

# The Iola Historical Society's Window

Quarterly Member and Activities Newsletter



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## Stromberg Heritage Exhibit Dedication

by Lyle Mork, IHS Historian

The Iola Historical Society on June 1, 2013, formally dedicated the Stromberg Heritage Exhibit, a tribute to the late Engebret J. "Bert" Stromberg (born Jan. 22, 1879, in Overliengaard, Ringebu, Norway; died Dec. 22, 1966, in Iola), who served as village constable for nearly 20 years more than half a century ago, during which time he also exercised a long possessed passion for making violins. The three case exhibit, inaugurated during the 2012 visitor season, recounts the story of Bert's service to the community and his sideline passion.

The dedication featured an appearance by 95 year old Maynard Stromberg of South Milwaukee, the son of then Iola residents Bert and Sophia Anna (Colden) Stromberg, who was born and raised in Iola and shared recollections of his father's violin passions with those in attendance. Among the 40 or so attendees were eight others with Stromberg family ties; Anne (Stromberg) and Don Church of Wheaton, Ill., Sharon (Stromberg) and Wayne Hatton from Rural, Barbara and Don Wood of Phoenix, Ariz., Jerry Stromberg from Chicago, and Catherine (Cate) Hatton from Fort Dodge, Iowa.

The genesis for the development of

this exhibit was provided by Jerry Stromberg, one of Bert's grandsons, when he stopped by the office of board member Clifford Mishler in 2008 and inquired as to the Society's possible interest in receiving as a donation the "Police" badge Bert wore as Iola's village constable.



Subsequently, on August 21, 2009, the Iola Historical Society received an amazing two trunk donation from Maynard (Jerry's uncle) containing a residue selection of the handcrafted parts and hand tools used by Bert in creating some 50 violins over more

than three decades of pursuing his passion.

It is necessary to step back in time to convey a full appreciation of the uniqueness of the Stromberg Heritage Exhibit to Iola.

On Tuesday evening, April 14, 1942, the Iola village board appointed

Bert as Iola's constable, a position he held into the late 1950s. Incorporated in the display developed by members Doug Watson and Bob Stamstad is Bert's badge, his police revolver, the special clock carried in making his rounds checking on the security of the business district, and several of the key boxes used to stamp the graphed paper roll contained in the clock with the times and locations checked.

But, the bigger story here is Bert's passion for making violins. Between his rounds as constable Bert would retire to the Iola Fire House, located at 175 East State Street, where he would work on carving out string pegs and necks for his violins. Bert

also had a work shop in the back yard at his home where he executed the final crafting and assembly of the violins.

Maynard possesses fond memories of Iola and is very proud of the violins

*Continued on page 4*

## President's Corner

There's been a good bit of activity at the Iola Historical Society over the past three months.

While it seems like it happened much longer ago, it was actually less than three months ago, on Saturday, April 13, that the second *Spaghetti Luncheon* fundraiser was held to benefit the historic Iola & Northern Railroad depot restoration project. While the participation numbers declined a bit from the event of the previous spring, we did quite well financially. Thinking and planning for a third annual event in 2014 is already underway.

In the meantime, however, I would like to formally recognize the members who volunteered their time and talents to make the event a success; Martha Cook, Elaine Crase, Lola May Dalland, Lee and Sue Halverson, Betty and Roger Nassen, Sharon Peterson, Joanna Rheingans, Bob Stamstad, Stella Strand, Eugene Voie and Doug Watson. Hopefully I didn't overlook anyone; my apologies if I did.

While thereafter through month of May things were relatively quiet, aside from our monthly meetings for April and May, the groundwork was being laid for new things to come in the days, months and years to come. Significantly, in addition to shouldering base responsibility for satis-



*This machinists lathe is just one of seven major pieces of equipment formerly employed by R. I. Anderson in his Iola machine shop, donated by his grandson David Anderson of St. Cloud, Minn., that will be set up in an R. I. Anderson Machine Shop display that will be developed in the IHS Machine Shed exhibit building.*

fyng our painting needs, Lee Halverson volunteered to assume the task of lining up programs for our monthly meetings and a sprinkling of Saturday museum season programs as well going forward.

The first of the monthly meeting programs was delivered by member Lana (Smith) Langdok at the Tuesday, May 28 meeting, exploring the background and process of her having recently achieved *Daughter of the American Revolution* recognition. Lana is a direct descendant of Luke Guyant, her great-great-great-great grandfather, who served part of his time in George Washington's personal guard unit. There were around 40 members and guests in attendance.

Four days later, on Saturday, June 1, the Iola Historic Village & Museum opened for the summer season, this year with a special program at one o'clock. The program formally dedicated the *Stromberg Heritage Exhibit*, a display featuring Bert Stromberg's violin making craftsmanship, along with a residue selection of the parts and tools he used. Bert created many of his violins while serving as Iola's village constable. His son, a very spry and alert 95 year old Maynard Stromberg participated, sharing reminisces of his father, his time in Iola and as a soldier in World War II with the 40 or so attendees.

Among those in attendance were several Stromberg family members. They included Ann (Stromberg) and Don Church of Wheaton, Ill., who spend their summers in Rural. There was also Sharon (Stromberg) and Wayne Hatton from Rural, along with their granddaughter Catherine (Cate) Hatton from Fort Dodge, Iowa. Also in attendance were Iola area summer residents Barbara (Stromberg) and Don Wood of Phoenix, Arizona. Then, there was Jerry Stromberg from Chicago, a sometimes Iola resident, whose interest in perpetuating the Stromberg heritage in Iola was the motivating force behind establishment of the exhibit.

The Stromberg Heritage Exhibit was developed and mounted over the past couple of years through the financial support of Maynard Stromberg and the Waupaca Area Community Foundation. We owe special acknowledgment and thanks as well to member volunteers James Jenson, Lyle G. Mork, Roger E. Olson, Robert Stamstad and Doug Watson for their planning and execution contributions.

Our Wednesday, June 12, work-day morning found a team of volunteers from the Iola-Scandinavia High School football team, led by coach Scott Erickson, lending their shoulders to the task of moving and sorting properties from the over-

### Iola Historical Society

210 Depot Street

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#### Officers

Clifford Mishler, President  
Robert Stamstad, Vice-President  
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loaded and disorganized Lashua Excavating shop area of our 210 Depot Street building under the direction of Bob Stamstad and Doug Watson. Much of the farm and manufacturing machinery and related tools earmarked for permanent display were removed to the recently named *Machine Shed* exhibition building (formerly the 222 Building), with the balance being shifted to the riverside storage building to the north. The football team volunteers were Hunter Gruenwald, Jake Hansen, Isaac Lashua and Matt Matheny.

The removal of these properties opens up a space in the northwest corner of the former shop area for development into the Robert R. & Stella Strand Resource Center. The board discussed and recommended to the membership at its March meeting that the Society commit to constructing a permanent controlled environment storage area for organizing our stored small artifacts and archival materials subject to climatic deterioration in that area. The building of this area will get underway later this summer, with the cost of the required materials falling in the \$10,000 to \$12,000 range and member volunteers being called upon to provide the required labors. It will provide roughly 11,500 cubic feet of space for shelved storage.

The following Tuesday found me joining up with members Donald Faldet and Charles Thompson for a run out to St. Cloud, Minn., the objective of which was to retrieve and return to Iola an array of machine tools long employed by machinist Rhinard Anderson at his shop at the alley behind Main Street on State Street across from Iola's old fire station. With Don providing the equipment and driving, and Charlie providing the engineering, while I essentially rode shotgun, we put in an 18-hours-plus day. The round trip was about 670 miles, with 4-1/2 tons of lathes, presses and related equipment and tools being loaded out of the hobby shop of Rhinard's grandson, David, which are to be mounted as the *R.I. Anderson Machine Shop* display in the *Machine Shed* over the coming off-season.



*Loading the lathe onto a heavy duty trailer for transport back to Iola found Donald Faldet (center) operating a skid-steer forklift and Charles Thompson (right) directing the loading. When fully loaded the trailer scaled out at 9,020 pounds of cast iron equipment and tools, which arrived back in Iola on Wednesday, June 19.*

Then, the following Sunday, June 23, found all hands on board from our *29th annual Strawberry Fest and Appraisal Fair*. It was unquestionably a record breaking affair, with the attendee count having certainly been well beyond the 300 mark, one that contributed nicely to our fund raising objectives. While the curtain was not pulled on the event until three o'clock when free raffle prize drawing tickets were pulled, traffic was solid from eleven to two, not only in the Strawberry Fest serving area, but also at the appraisal fair tables, the lost arts demonstrations and through the *Iola Historic Village and Museum* complex.

Once again, as had been the case in 2012, despite having substantially increased supply of strawberries laid in for the event, we ran out by around two o'clock . . . everyone involved resolving to not allow that to happen again in 2014. Thus, it has been duly noted in the event record that the available supply the next time out should again be increased, this time by 20-percent . . . and we should be so fortunate as to run short again!

At our Monday, June 24, meeting a program of *Iola Ski Club Reflections*, an informative and entertaining presentation, was provided by member Leonard Haroldson, who drew upon his bank

of memories and vintage 8mm motion picture film records of the winter skiing activities involving the club from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, when he was actively involved. An attendance in the range of 40 included a number of ski club members from the past and present.

Greeting the members and guest arriving for the annual Fest and June meeting and program was a foyer for the museum area which had been developed and installed during the month by members Lee Halverson, Jim Jenson, Lyle Mork, Roger Olson and Doug Watson. As visitors now open the door to the museum/office structure they are greeted by a bold floor to ceiling 1902 view of North Main Street, looking north from the State and Main intersection. This improved welcoming will be further enhanced in the near future with the installation of a inviting windowed and wood-grained door in replacement of the present gray industrial unit.

And, in closing, I want to also formally acknowledge on behalf of the membership its' appreciation of the several docent volunteers who have reliably donated their time, through the first third of the 2013 season, to host our visitors on Saturday's and other occasions.



*Violinist Rebecca Wierzchowski provided a couple complementing musical interludes at the dedication.*

## STROMBERG

*Continued from page 1*

his father crafted over the years. Having inherited some of that passion, he worked on and repaired violins for many years himself. The Iola Historical Society is certainly thankful for Maynard's graciousness in donating this residual collection of violins, violin parts and crafting tools that Bert worked on and with during his lifetime.

This priceless collection was picked up by Lyle and Nellie Mork on August 21, 2009, when they drove down to visit with Maynard in South Milwaukee, picking up two large and heavy wood trunks which were stored in Maynard's basement. Most of the

collection was comprised of partially completed violins and parts, enabling the Society to develop a display drawn from the collection that unfolds the sequence of how the violins were created and assembled.

In addition to the parts and tools employed by Bert in crafting his violins, the collection includes templates and jigs used for crafting the parts and assembling the violins. The hand tools include scrapers, chisels, mini-saws, a mini-plane and other small tools. Many of the tools were themselves crafted by Bert to meet his special needs. Included in the exhibit is a vintage book that Bert had used to learn how to make violins.

Maynard has stated it took his father about 400 hours to make a single violin, which he sold for \$35. That works out to about 9-cents an hour, not considering the cost of the materials and tools. Obviously, it was Bert's passion to create these violins.

The Iola Historical Society also currently has a Bert violin, crafted in 1933, that is on loan from Eugene Engebretson that belonged to his father. The origin and year of this violin is confirmed by looking through the "f" holes, the curved slots on the front of the violin. Inside on the back panel one finds the inscription; "E. J. Stromberg, Iola, Wis. 1933."

The cabinets installed for the display of this exhibit were made possible by a pair of donations received by

the Iola Historical Society. One was a \$2,000 grant received from the Waupaca Area Community Foundation. As this was \$3,600 short of the cost of the materials required for the building of the display cabinets, Maynard subsequently extended a donation in that amount. The Society is also indebted to Jim Jenson and Roger Olson who volunteered their time and talents to build and light the cabinets.

In addition to his Stromberg Heritage Exhibit donations, Maynard has provided for additional monetary and historical artifact donations to the Iola Historical Society. One of the artifacts is his World War II uniform, consisting of the jacket, shirt and trousers. This relates to a news item that appeared in the June 1, 1944, edition of the Iola Herald, showing Major General Geoffrey Keyes, a Fifth Army formation Commander, congratulating Staff Sergeant Maynard O. Stromberg on receiving a Bronze Star for meritorious service in Italy. Maynard was an Army surgical medical technician working in the 11th Medical Field Hospital Unit.

While Maynard Stromberg is deserving of the sincere gratitude of the Iola Historical Society for his wonderful violin gift, a true treasure that will benefit future generations of Iola residents, we also owe him deep appreciation for his ongoing support of our activities. These generositys will be greatly appreciated by the Society, future visitors and generations of Iola residents. The Stromberg Heritage Exhibit will accord future generations the opportunity to appreciate the work and passion that Bert imparted in creating his handcrafted violin masterpieces.

## Donors & Loaners

April • May • June

**ARCHIVAL DONATIONS:** Randy Aanstad, Trudy Carson, Paula Curry, Steve & Dottie Fleckenstein, Brent Frankenhoff, Norman & Marilyn Mortenson, Joan Paulson, Wayne Towne.

**DONATIONS FOR CASH AND IN-KIND:** Doris Beier, Georgia Bestul, Fred Borgmann, Ruth Buchholz, Howard Cleaves, Community Eyecare Center, Crystal Cafe, Depot Street Station, Barbara Egner-Pelmar, Donald Faldet, First National Bank - Iola, David & Joan Groenier, Bob "Buzz Saw" Halverson, Homestead Realty, Iola Dental Clinic, Iola Old Car Show, Delores Johnson, Leland and Ruth Johnson, Kielblock Sawmill, Chester Krause, Jerry Kopecky, Kurt & Kathy Krueger, Little Norway, Greg Loescher, Susan Loken, Mildred Mathieson, Bruce J. Meagher, Dorothy Miller, Clifford & Sally Mishler, Phyllis Morris, Ronald Netzler, Elise D. Ostrom, Joan Paulson, Premier Community Bank - Iola, Lin Seaman, Silver Lake Lanes, Bob Stamstad, David & Ruth Strand, Sweet Medicine - Prescriptions Plus, Charles Thompson, Too-Dar's Diner, Forrest & Virginia Torgerson, Keith Williams.

## Events Schedule

### Monday, July 29

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting  
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

### Monday, August 26

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting  
6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

### Saturday, August 31

Noon - 3:00 pm End of Season  
Historical Village and Museum

### Monday, September 30

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting  
6:00 pm IHS General Meeting