

The Iola Historical Society's Window

Quarterly Member and Activities Newsletter



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The west side of North Main Street's 100 block is captured in this circa 1895 photo.

Photograph Recorded Iola's 1890s History

Taking photographs today is a very informal process, with film and chemical printing having widely given way to digital cameras and instant sharing and transmission. Utilizing a range of digital recording devices, we make record of new born babies, children, birthdays, weddings, vacations and myriad special occasions, recording the experiences of our lives by the scores and hundreds.

It was certainly not always so. In the late 1800s and early 1900s most photos were taken by professionals,

*by Lyle Mork
IHS Historian*

with the process being formal, laborious and relatively expensive. The equipment used by local and traveling professional photographers were large box cameras used to

expose sensitized large glass plates. They prepared limited exposures of the main streets, businesses, homes and people of small towns and cities to sell to local citizens, or to be sold to visitors as postcards.

Those photographs of Iola from that era that have survived serve to document the community's history. One such photograph is the one that

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President's Corner

The past three months have been interesting and rewarding times for the Iola Historical Society. Much of what has been happening has been behind the scenes and not particularly visible to many members and our visitors but, the developments bode well for our future growth and wellbeing.

Speaking of visitors, by the way, this year we witnessed a significant softening of our Saturday visitation numbers, while by the same token participations at our *Spaghetti Luncheon* and *Strawberry Fest & Appraisal Fair* were solid, the latter result having been significantly stronger than we might possibly have anticipated, as previously reported.

So, what of the interesting and rewarding developments that have unfolded?

Well, for starters, in early August we received the latest visit and a generous donation earmarked for "Historical Society projects" from Maynard Stromberg, our 96 year old honorary life member from South Milwaukee, who was born and raised in Iola. Maynard has recognized and greatly appreciated what we have done in building the *Stromberg Heritage Exhibit* in tribute to the commitment and talent of

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Iola Historical Society

210 Depot Street

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This tree shaded house stood on the northwest corner of Main and State Streets prior to 1907, when it was displaced by a commercial structure which became known as the "Graystone." That building was destroyed by Iola's 1999 Father's Day Fire.

PHOTOGRAPH

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accompanies this article, taken by Iola's own professional photographer W. R. Parks, which was focused on the west side of North Main Street, with the Iola Mills and Wipf residence in the background. Research of old *Iola Herald* newspapers, abstracts, historical studies of Iola and other documents have established that this particular photograph was taken circa 1895.

This exposure was focused on the west side of the one hundred block of North Main Street looking north. The first building shown was the H. Johnson & Son General Store. Johnson ran the business for fifteen years, selling it to Louis Krom of Antigo, Wis., in April, 1906. The store windows are shaded by the first pair of awnings.

To the left of this first building, the overhang of a large tree is visible. It shaded a property on the northwest corner of Main and State streets, occupied by a house at that time. The house was purchased and moved in 1906 by the Gullikson Brothers, who had a hardware store on the northeast corner of Main and Water streets. It is believed that house today stands just north of town on the southwest corner of the

Highway 49 and Johnson Road intersection.

After the house was removed, the property was sold to J. C. Lang on March 27, 1907, for the building of a block structure. This building was to be known as the *Graystone* throughout the 20th century because of the color of its sculpted concrete block walls. The blocks were manufactured here in Iola at the concrete block factory operated by Morton Lovdahl, who also constructed the building.

The next store was the Thompson Hardware Store, the awning of which is imprinted "Building Materials." Upstairs over the hardware store was the office of a young attorney, Herman J. Severson, who later became Circuit Judge of Wisconsin's Seventh Judicial Court, comprised of Portage, Wood, Waushara and Waupaca counties.

Imprinted on the front of the awning of the next business is "Singer Sewing Machine." The side of the awning carries the name "B. Williams" -- Boie "Buck" Williams -- who operated a harness shop and sold sewing machines. Buck Williams later became Postmaster of the Iola Post Office. Dr. T. W. Freeman's dentist office was located upstairs.

The first of four wood frame buildings was occupied by the Melby & Torbenson general store, operated by Oscar Melby and Oscar Torbenson at the time the photograph was taken. This building and those previously mentioned were all lost in Iola's 1999 Father's Day Fire.

Occupancy of the smallest building has not been identified. The awning on the third frame building is imprinted "Barber Shop." The letters "WS" can be discerned on the side panel of the awning. Research has determined this was the barber shop operated by *Frank C. Andrews*.

The last two buildings were built by brothers, A. E. Hagna and Tom Hagna. A. E. Hagna built the wood frame building and ran a clothing store in it for several years. The brick building on the corner was built by his brother Tom.

The north half of the brick building at street level was built as a tavern. It is still operating as a tavern today (JD's Corner Bar). Tom had received a loan from the Pabst Brewing Company to open the tavern. Research up to this time has not determined what business occupied the south half of this building at street level. There was a dental office upstairs over the tavern, with the practitioner also presently being unknown.

The clarity achieved with the large glass plate exposure that recorded this slice of Iola history, as prepared circa 1895 by W. R. Parks of Iola, was such that it was possible to enlarge it into an eight-foot wide wall mural recently installed to greet visitors to the Iola Historical Society museum at 210 Depot Street. Visitors attending the Society's fourth annual *Taste of Norway and Lost Arts Fair* on Saturday, October 5, 2013, will have the opportunity to view and marvel at the details captured.

Come and take a look. See what you might find that could surprise you. There are many interesting details to be observed and absorbed. See how long it takes you to discover the *doggie in the window!*



The Iola Depot station agent's bay window reconstruction was engineered by Charlie Wasrud (lower left) and installed with the assistance of his son, Ben Wasrud (on ladder), over this past summer.

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his late father, Engebret J. "Bert" Stromberg, as Iola's constable and passionate violin aficionado and craftsman.

One of the first projects to benefit from Stromberg's donation will be *Robert R. & Stella Strand Resource Center*. This project will also benefit from a grant extended to the Society by the Waupaca Area Community Foundation which will be received when that organization holds its 2013 Celebration of Community Giving social reception and presentation ceremony in October. The building of this acclimatized archival area for the improved preservation of our paper and fabric records and small relics will get underway late this fall and be completed over the winter.

Located in the northwest corner of the former Lashua Excavating shop area of our 210 Depot Street building, this archival storage area will occupy roughly 700 square feet of floor space. Over this past summer the disorganized storage that had overtaken that area over the past several years was removed to the *Machine Shed* exhibition building (formerly the 222 Building) for display or the riverside storage building to the north. A generous donation of rigid steel racking received from Faldet Farms will provide the shelving required for effi-

cient utilization of the area.

In conjunction with development of the archival storage area, planning is also underway for additional exhibit display area development to be undertaken in the museum/office area of the former Lashua building. While objectively it would be desirable to have this project completed prior to the 2014 museum season, realistically that may not work out.

This year, by the way, more positive progress has been made on restoration of the historic *1894 Iola & Northern Railroad Depot*. While work had been initiated a couple years ago, with removal of much of what had become a cobbled interior, with the objective of returning it to its original configuration and finish, visible activity had slowed to a crawl. This summer the station agent's track-side bay window was rebuilt.

Also, the underpinnings of the depot were reset and the sagging structure leveled in 2012, with the original timber pedestals being removed and replaced with concrete blocks. The debris accumulated by that process and years of indiscriminate dumping was removed from the crawl space in early September. The labors for that undertaking were provided Iola Boy Scout Troop 631 as a community service project, those participating being P. J. Hayes, Tim Hayes, Cory Kitzman, D.J. Ode, Brayden Piscitello and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Sebastian Roe, under the direction of scout master Phil Hayes and assistant scout master Daniel Ode.

The next orders of business for the depot are to treat the remaining exposed under floor timbers with a powder post beetles abatement spraying to prevent ongoing deterioration of the structure and install ventilated skirting to improve the exterior aesthetics. In 2014 it is planned that restoration of the exterior wall surfaces, windows and doors will get underway, with restoration of the interior to its vintage state to follow.

While the interior of the depot is skeletal at the present time, for the first time in two years we are going to have it open for visitors, during the fourth annual *Taste of Norway & Lost Arts Fair* this October. The display cases have been dusted off, the floor swept and the interior contents made otherwise presentable by historian Lyle Mork, with many of the railroad and transportation related artifacts arranged for viewing. There'll even be a picture or two displayed showing what the interior is expected to look like when restoration is finished.

Out on the tracks several things are happening. Efforts are underway to stabilize the roof of the

caboose as the initial step in preserving its' interior and exterior, which will be refurbished in the style of a Green Bay & Western caboose at the turn of the 20th century. The Society's track maintenance "speeder" has been removed from its storage "garage," which has been stripped preparatory to being re-sided with see-through windowing to facilitate viewing when it is returned.

Over in the *Machine Shed* (former 222 Building), as previously announced, over the winter we will be working on developing the *R.I. Anderson Machine Shop* display. It will feature the 4-1/2 tons of lathes, presses and related equipment and tools employed in Anderson's East State Street shop. Donated to the Society this past June by grandson David Anderson, with the agreement of other surviving descendants, this display will complement the R.I. Anderson "spanner wrench" exhibit mounted in the Iola Fire House structure.

This year the Society has instituted, with the interest and drive of member Lee Halverson showing the way, ongoing historical education programming in conjunction with its monthly meetings. The run commenced in May with member Lana Langdok detailing the family background that enabled her to seek and

gain DAR recognition. This was followed by member Leonard Haroldson sharing historical reflections of the Iola Ski Club, IHS historian Lyle Mork providing an overview of the significance of the *Ray Elmer Towne Native American Artifacts Collection*, and out-of-town member Joan Paulson presenting a program on the rural schools of Waupaca most recently.

Similar programs are being planned for the fall and winter meetings, beginning with a member participation program in September — *Trips Down Memory Lane* — with Lee moderating membership interaction remembrances of the businesses they most fondly remember from their youth. Building on the experience of this year's monthly meeting programs, planning has also been initiated for introducing a series of Saturday programs in 2014 as well.

Obviously, the Iola Historical Society has some serious and demanding challenges in the offing. To achieve these goals and objectives, the unstinting support of the membership as volunteers based on individual capabilities and availabilities will be required. The board is looking forward to the organization's inherent capacities blossoming to full flower as winter turns to spring and summer in 2014.

Donors & Loaners

July • August • September

ARCHIVAL DONATIONS: Craig Anderson, David Anderson, Helmer "Andy" Anderson, Ann Church, Enid Cleaves, Steve & Dottie Fleckenstein, Chester Krause, Ronald Netzler, Len Place, Stella Strand, Maynard Stromberg, Wayne Towne.

DONATIONS FOR CASH AND IN-KIND: Craig Anderson, Community Insurance, Faldet Farms, Jim Jenson, Lori Johns, Lee & Ruth Johnson, Chester Krause, Lashua Excavating, Robert Stamstad, Maynard Stromberg, Charles Wasrud, Tyrone Yonash.

2013 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 ongoing status as Supporting Members: Doris Beier, Mary Bennet, Scott & Karri Bestul, LeRoy and Carolyn Borth, Central Wisconsin Electric Cooperative (Mark Forseth), Donald & Carol Dineen, Mary Beth Egner, Bob & Bev Ellingson, DeRonda & Patricia Engebretson, Patricia Hagen, Leonard & Irene Haroldson, Iola & Rural Fire Department, Lee & Ruth Johnson, Duane & Darlene Louison, Thomas & Linda Martin, Phyllis Morris, Joan & Richard Niemiec, Barbara Egner-Pelmar, Susan Shambeau, David & Ruth Strand, Forrest & Virginia Torgerson, Roger Voie, William & Jacqueline Wilker.

Events Schedule

Monday, September 30

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting

6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Saturday, October 5

10:00-3:00 4th Annual Taste of Norway, Lost Arts Fair & Crafts

Monday, October 28

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting

6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

Annual Board & Officers Election
Last Business Meeting for 2013

Monday, December 9

5:30 pm IHS Annual Christmas

Potluck Banquet at The Millstone

Monday, January 27, 2014

5:45 pm IHS Board Meeting

6:30 pm IHS General Meeting

First Business Meeting for 2014

(All IHS activities held at 210 Depot St. unless otherwise indicated.)