

The Iola Historical Society's Window

Quarterly Member and Activities Newsletter

Volume Two

Number Two

Spring 2009



Military collectibles from the Society's holdings, plus items recently received from Dave LaStofka, Gene Knutson, Jerry Harvancik, and The American Legion, Sheveland-Taylor Post 14, are cataloged prior to being organized for inclusion in the exhibit.

Military History Exhibit

The Iola Historical Society has started planning and laying out the floor plan of its new museum at 210 Depot Street. We are in the planning stages of figuring out how to build the display cases and bookcases that will hold our artifacts. The first major exhibit will be a military display. Militaria which has been received over the years, and was formerly housed in the depot, is being cataloged, as are the military items which have recently been placed on permanent loan from Dave



LaStofka.

Dave, who served in the army during World War II, has been gracious enough to allow many of the items that he brought back from Okinawa to be on display in our military exhibit. So far we have cataloged over 200 items from his collection with several more items to be donated at a later date.

David A. LaStofka enlisted in the army on March 26, 1945, in Milwaukee and was sent to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. From there he was on to Camp Rucker, Alabama, for

infantry jungle training, and then to Camp Adair, Oregon, for advanced training. He shipped out of Fort Lawton, Washington, to the 325 AAA Search Light Battalion on Okinawa. After ten months of service in Okinawa he was discharged on April 8, 1946. Re-enlisting in the Regular Army, he received \$100 and 30 day furlough. After spending a

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In The Window

Dave Lastofka is shown holding his Eisenhower jacket. The Staff Sergeant stripes, division insignia, and ribbons and medals are prominently visible.

President's Corner

As you read this newsletter you will notice some changes have been introduced. We have added a new section listing all the the new members that have joined since the last newsletter.

Beginning in this issue is the first installment of an overview written by Bob Strand covering the birth and development of the Iola Historical Society since 1953.

I personally want to thank Doug Watson and Chris Williams for helping to create a distinctive display for us at the lutefisk supper during the Iola Winter Carnival. On display was an enlarged photo of the Iola Ski Club members taken in 1912. Two enlargements were of members of the 1951 and 1952 Iola Winter Sports Club ski teams with names of those we have identified. Doug provided his personal display for our use at the festivities.

Many people stopped by to view the display and we received many positive comments about our goals of creating the museum. There were some great contacts with people who told us they would be willing to donate items for the new museum.

Currently we are trying to determine how many lineal feet of book-cases are required for the reference library which includes the Village of Iola assessment records dating back to 1895, Helvetia Township records dating back to 1861, Harrison Township records, individual family genealogy records, books by local

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Members of the Iola Historical Society gathered for a portrait in 1960, they are from left to right: Clarence Paulson, Oscar Amundson, Ernest Lutz, Mrs. Clarence Cleaves, Mrs. Clarence Paulson, Cora Krause, Mrs. Albert Weinmann, Mrs. Ernest Lutz, Sadie Edwards, Minnie Taylor, Florence Oligney.

Our Society Over The Years

by Robert Strand

Part One

This article is intended to provide an overview of an Iola organization that has grown, since it was founded on October 28, 1953, to a most impressive size of over 120 members 56 years later. This article is intended to remind us all of the untold work and unselfish dedication contributed by past and present members to cause it to grow into the prideful historic unit that is has become today.

Charter members of the Iola Historical Society included such historic names as; Mrs. F. C. Wipf, Mrs. Albert Weinmann, Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Cleaves, Mr. and Mrs. E. Lutz, Mr. and Mrs. M. Erickson, Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Oligney and Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Willet. These individuals were responsible for establishing the charter and goals of the society.

Initially, the monthly meetings were alternated between their homes, with lunch usually being served at the close of the meetings, as they lacked a historic property in which to convene. One of their main goals in the beginning was to gather information on Iola's early settlers and to write up quite detailed stories of many of the families that settled and developed the Iola area. Membership dues were 50-cents per year initially.

When a development group that called itself Lake Iola Estates was formed and purchased most of the properties that surround the then Iola Mill Pond, which was renamed Lake Iola, it was divided into lots to be sold and the pond was drained and cleared of stumps, debris and mud. Among the properties that became available for sale was the old Wipf Mill, which included one of the two outlets for the waters of the South Branch of the Little Wolf River. At that time Stella and I sort of fell in love with that piece or property, deciding to acquire in 1968 and build a new home next to the lake. A major part of our plan was to create a museum in and around the old mill building. That, in turn, prompted us to join the Iola Historical Society and get involved

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

Officers:

Lyle Mork, President
Stella Strand, Vice-President
Tom Fucik, Treasurer

Board of Directors

Cliff Mishler, Robert Stamsted, Doug Watson
e-mail address: iolahistoricalsociety@tds.net
Phone: (715) 445-IOLA (4652)

SOCIETY'S HISTORY

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with their projects.

A few years later, in 1979, the old Iola & Northern Railroad depot, dating from 1894, became available from the Iola Cooperative, along with the adjoining property. The old depot had served as the



The old Iola Northern depot as it looked in 1947 when it was being used as a warehouse by the Iola Cooperative to store fertilizer.

Cooperative's fertilizer storage warehouse for 21 years, but they were interested in disposing of it because the business was in the process of being closed down. The society became interested in purchasing the building and adjoining land to serve as a museum and office property. Although the society had very little money at the time, the officers determined to approach the membership and local citizens for donations to fund the purchase.

Membership had grown somewhat by that time and with the purchase of the depot property more area people joined as we proceeded to clean up the property and display items of historic value in and around the building. Among the newly involved members were George and Lila Aanstad, along with the Strands. They and many other members became major contributors to the property purchase, they including Mrs. Carl Krause, Mrs. Sadie Edwards, Mr. & Mrs. A.O. Lee, Mrs. Harry Roe, Lillie Leppen, Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Kjer, Mr. and Mrs. Milo Olson, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Jenson, Mr. and Mrs. Lenwich Hoyord, Mr. and Mrs. Arlie Knutson, and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Paulson.

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MILITARY DISPLAY

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month at home, Dave received orders to return to Okinawa at which time his rank was Staff Sergeant (S/Sgt) in Supply. His Theatre of Operations included Okinawa, Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, and Japan. He was discharged on May 12, 1947.

Some of the items Dave brought to the historical society to display are drawings he did while stationed on Okinawa and sent home with his letters to his girl friend, Irene Larson, who later became his wife. The amazing thing is she not only saved all of his letters, but also kept all of his drawings, some of which will be featured in our exhibit. Other items include Dave's World War II Eisenhower jacket, one of the uniforms he wore, a bracelet, a full days K-Rations consisting of breakfast, dinner and supper, a small bottle of water purification tablets, a commando knife, numerous photographs and military documents.

Also included in the collection is one of his army belt buckles and a bracelet that were hand engraved (by the old fashion scratching method) by one of the Japanese POWs that was held at the base in Okinawa. Another POW also painted a beautiful picture of cranes. Dave has also loaned the historical society a Japanese "Good Luck" flag, Japanese hand grenade, will be bringing in a Japanese Arisaka rifle complete with bayonet that has the Japanese soldier's name on the stock. A Japanese Samurai sword, along with many more interesting and important items as they become available, will be added.

An item of special interest, and historic value, that will be on exhibit is a copy of Lee Nelson's log of the 31 combat missions he flew as a B17 bomber pilot. Lee was assigned to the 533rd Bombardment Squadron, 381st Bombardment Group in the

Army Air Corps. He had over 244 hours of bombing missions starting May 1, 1944, completing his bombing runs on July 24, 1944. Lee was the only pilot from his original group, who survived all 31 missions.

In addition to the aforementioned donors, we have also been working with the The American Legion, Sheveland-Taylor Post 14 of Iola, and some of their memorabilia will also be on display.

Other items recently acquired include an original WWII Red Cross Poster (22" x 28") from Doug



Watson; a group of medals and uniform insignias from Harry Zawacki; an original large (31" x 51") framed poster of a 40mm field artillery gun built by Pontiac for the army was donated by Chet Krause; helmet, mess kit, and Marine uniform from Jerry Harvancik; a 1942 war atlas, uniform insignias, Civil War journal about Charles Christian Gilbert (great grandfather of Lyle Mork), Good Conduct medals donated by Lyle Mork.

Anyone interested in donating items, or placing them on permanent loan, with the Iola Historical Society should contact Lyle Mork at 715-445-5795, or the Iola Historical Society (see information on page 2).

SOCIETY'S HISTORY

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Special recognition certificates, created by Doug Watson, were prepared and presented to donors who participated in accumulating the money required, not only for the purchase of the building, but to realize our plans to purchase a caboose and short length of track to add to the site. An old caboose that had been used in the Minnesota Iron Range by the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway became available from a group of rail enthusiasts in Waupaca. My memory tells me that we paid \$1,000 for the caboose, with the track being located and acquired by Bing Oligney, Milton Aasen and Lester Larson. We managed to get the track laid and the caboose moved in thanks to services provided by rural Iola resident Roger Miller.

To Be Continued

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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authors, and books on local history. As also available for research are bound editions of *The Iola Herald* dating back to 1899.

We need to raise between \$10,000 and \$15,000 for materials to construct the library shelving and display cases. Other projects include replacing the front door to make the entry more appealing for visitors, and repairing a roof leak.

A new software program called PastPerfect at a cost of \$700 has been ordered. This is a data base to help historical organizations to efficiently organize their artifacts.

Thanks to everyone who donated money and items in the past.

Just a reminder, mark you calendars for June 28 so you don't forget to visit our annual Strawberry Fest and What's It day activity. Last year we had a great turn out!

I know all members join me in thanking Chris Ross for all her hard work in the past as a volunteer, fund raiser, financial donor, treasurer, and so much more. Chris recently left the Society and we want her to know she will be missed by all.

Events Schedule

Monday, April 20

6:00 pm, Hosting Cub Scout Pack 3631, 210 Depot Street and tour of IHS Complex.

.Saturday, April 25

10:00 am, Hosting 2009 Historical Think Tank for Waupaca County historical organizations, 210 Depot Street and tour of IHS Complex.

Monday, April 27

7:00 pm, IHS General Meeting, 210 Depot Street.

Saturday, May 2, 9, 16, 23

10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Open House at Iola Historical Society.

Monday, May 25

Memorial Day

Monday, May 26

7:00 pm, IHS Board Meeting, 210 Depot Street.

Saturday, May 30

10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Open House at Iola Historical Society.

Saturday, June 6, 13

10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Open House at Iola Historical Society.

Saturday, June 13

3:00 pm, Hosting Waupaca Area Genealogical Society (WAGS) and tour of IHS Complex.

Saturday, June 20, 27

10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Open House at Iola Historical Society

Sunday, June 28

Strawberry Fest – What's It and Open House at Iola Historical Society.

Receive *Window* Free

Become a member of the Iola Historical Society and receive a copy of this quarterly newsletter as part of your membership.

Send your \$10 today to:

Iola Historical Society
P.O. Box 412, Iola, WI 54945

New Members

January-February-March

Regular Membership

Joe Ambacher
Collin Bruce II
George Cuhaj
Karen Forseth
David LaStofka
Kathleen Lehman
Glenn Moen
Charlie Thompson

Supporting Membership

Iola Fire Department



Important Furniture Donated to Society

Thanks to Chet Krause an important piece of history from Iola's and Wisconsin's past has been added to the Iola Historical Society's collection. The items consist of a desk and chair used by Jacob Wipf when he was an Assemblyman in the Wisconsin State Assembly from 1889-1893. During this time he was a member on the standing committee on Lumber and Mining.

Donors & Loaners

January, February, March

DONATIONS: Richard Anderson, Dennis Bickford, Collin Bruce II, Harold Buchholz, Ivar Dalland, Joel Edler, Jerry Havarncik, Iola and Rural Fire Department, Iola Public Library, Iola Winter Sports Club, Shirley Johnson, Eugene Knutson, Chet Krause, George Kriewaldt, Art and Carole Krueger, Martin Langdok Estate, Robert & Carol Lashua, Dave LaStofka, Clifford Mishler, Julian Mork, Lyle Mork, Roger Nassen, Robert and Stella Strand, Dave LaStofka, Charlie Thompson, Dennis Trzebiatowski, Eugene Voie, Roger Voie, Vernon Wasrud, Doug Watson, Bob Wilhite, Harry Zawacki,

CASH DONATIONS and PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: The American Legion, Sheveland-Taylor Post 14, Iola & Rural Fire Department, George Kriewaldt, Martin Langdok Family, MJ Auto Body, Town and Country Drywall, Charlie Wasrud, Bob Wilhite.

Please let us know if we missed anyone. We apologize for any oversights.