

The Iola Historical Society's WINDOW



QUARTERLY MEMBER AND ACTIVITIES NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 17, NUMBER 2 | SPRING 2024

Iola's **DR. J. C. COOK**

A Veterinarian Transitioned to Traveling Medicine Show Impresario

Driving a fancy coach pulled by a pair of mules, in this decoratively framed vintage photograph, is Iola's Dr. J. C. Cook (1851-1924). This intriguing relic (about 1914) was added to our archive last year in keeping with the wishes of the late Jeanette Phelps Felker, whose father was Dr. Cook's stepson, who often drove this team of mules.

In a conveyance note taped to the back of the framed picture, Jeanette indicated that it was the wish of she and her mother, Minnie (Rice) Phelps, that "this picture should go to the Iola museum when the family wishes to part with it." It was passed into our possession by Mark Moran, acting on behalf of Bill Felker.

Veterinarian Cook established a traveling itinerant medicine show in the late 1890's. Forming a partnership with Jim Rock, and engaging a hired "redskin," they began touring throughout Wisconsin, selling "Sioux Indian Medicine – No Cure, No Pay," to cure whatever malady had visited those drawn to the show. After the turn of the 20th century the flourishing business adopted

Indian Medicine – No Cure, No Pay," to cure whatever malady had visited those drawn to the show. After the turn of the 20th century the flourishing business adopted the identity, "Rock and Dr.

Cook's Palace and Pavilion Shows," taking on the appearance of a circus, rather than a medicine show.

The troupe disbanded in 1920, leaving the dusty itinerant roads behind, as "Professor" Cook was nearing his 70th year. Retiring to his Iola farm, Dr. Cook died in 1924 and was interred at the Riverside

Cemetery.

Wisconsin enjoys the heritage of being the "birthplace of circuses," more than 100 having had their beginnings in the state. Such was the influence of Dr. Cook and his troupe, that many other circus people over time were drawn to quartering in the Iola area during the off-season. An official state historical marker along I-90/94 near Portage broadcasts that Iola connection to the traveling public, a map thereon pinpointing the village as a more than incidental contributor to Wisconsin's circus heritage.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Diverting from form, this time out I am going to address two areas that I believe are of special importance to the membership at this time. The first relates to building greater membership engagement. The second relates to further cementing Iola's and our organization's resulting Norwegian heritage focus with a trip to Gausdal, Norway in 2025. The latter opportunity would be somewhat in keeping, so to speak, with the spirit of President Eisenhower's international 1956 "People to People" program, to foster greater understanding and appreciation of our shared cultures.

The Iola Historical Society

210 Depot Street
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TODAY!

Inserted with this issue of the *Window* is a copy of our new membership application. We are presently initiating a process that will create a single membership database, incorporating all of the pertinent information on the desires, interests and ways that individuals might contribute to the organization's growth and development. We ask that all members please complete and return this form on a timely basis, utilizing the stamped-response-envelope that is also enclosed, regardless of your membership status.

An important objective of this initiative is to increase the engagement of our membership in contributing to the growth and development of the organization's properties and programs. When most of the leadership and implementation responsibilities devolve to resting with a small core, primarily involving the board and officers, it becomes difficult to introduce new ideas and approaches. This has been largely the case since the onset of the Covid interruption where we are concerned, much as has been the case elsewhere as well.

Please take a few minutes to review and complete this form . . . **TODAY!** . . . and mail it back in the stamped-response-envelope provided. Doing so will be very much appreciated by your board and officers. Likewise . . . where your community of friends and neighbors are concerned . . . and visitors who will be able to greater gain appreciation for why Iola is known as a . . . **"Very Special Place."**

AHEAD!

In 2025, Norway will be holding a nationwide celebration of the 200th anniversary of organized emigration from Norway to North America. In conjunction with this celebration the Gausdal Historical Society, our sister organization in Norway, will be presenting a three-day event – *Emigrant Days* – on August 22 to 24. It will feature educational programs recapturing the stories of those migrants from Gausdal who ventured forth, along with a play recreating how families prepared for their mid-19th century moves.

There may be an opportunity to participate in this celebration . . . providing you with the experience of a lifetime?

Plans are for visitors to be welcomed to Gausdal on Friday, August 22, with guided tours provided to the places their ancestors called home, with the possibility that they could possibly meet family relatives. Touring would continue the following day, with visits to the churches where ancestors were baptized and married, and other historic locations, with a social gathering and vintage meal in the evening. Sunday, August 24, will be given over to the historical educational programming and the opportunity to enjoy the historic artifacts collections preserved in the society's museum.

Situated in south-east Norway, Gausdal is just a short drive from Lillehammer of Winter Olympics fame. Its administrative center is at Segalstad Bru, where the valleys Vestre Gausdal and Ostre Gausdal meet, a bit more than a two-hour drive north of Oslo. It is believed that roughly 7,000 Norwegians emigrated from Gausdal, to seek a better future in North America.

The Iola Historical Society is pursuing the possibility of organizing a group tour of members and friends for a visit Gausdal on the occasion of its **Emigrant Days** celebration. If you would like to consider joining the group, it's not too early to inquire and start planning . . . **AHEAD!** . . . you're encouraged to contact group leaders:

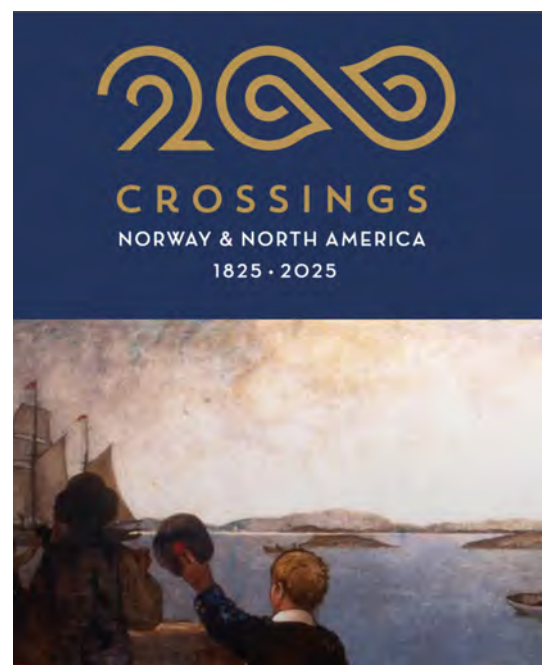
Lee Halverson

lesuhalv@wi-net.com or 715-602-2832

Bonny Pethke

kellyblazer@tds.net or 715-445-5851

they will be pleased to provide additional information and pricing as it develops and becomes available.



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- Any historic information and/or pictures
- Skilled volunteers
- Donations are always appreciated

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A Lot of Building for Its Day

Can you identify the location and function of the imposing structure, captured in the foreground, that dominates an Iola scene captured in this vintage photograph from our archive? When was it built, and when was it removed?

Judging by the eight-window configuration of the structure, it is of considerable size, appearing to be about 100-feet long, although its depth cannot be determined. It appears to boast a basement of similar configuration. As what appears to be a loading dock protrudes from the right end of the structure, it seems probable that it was a production line manufacturing building. The requisite outhouse for workmen can be seen in the lower left corner of the photo.

Can you help us fill in some pertinent historical details related to this vintage photograph? Please respond by phone: 715-445-IOLA (4652); by e-mail: IolaHistoricalSociety@gmail.com; or by postal mail: IHS, P. O. Box 412, Iola, WI 54945. Any responses will be shared in the Summer 2024 issue of the *Window* and archived in our historical database following publication.



Insights Offered on Fall and Winter Photos

Following publication of the last edition of the *Window*, a note received from longtime life member and past resident Gloria Briquet from Appleton, a past board member and officer, fills in some of the historical enigmas associated with the mystery photos presented in the Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 issues.

“Just a note to identify some of the people in the Depot picture (Fall 2023),” Gloria wrote. “Dr. Dale and his wife and child are among those on the loading platform.” Dr. George Dale is second from the left in the photo, hefting a doctor’s satchel in his right hand, his wife and daughter being the two figures on the right (enlargement featured in front page “In The Window” box). Dale’s facial features in the photo are compatible with a portrait incorporated in the historical reference *A History of Iola*, published in 1978.

Dr. Dale came to Iola in the early 1880’s from Chicago, where he had been practicing medicine for 34 years, establishing a sanitarium for the treatment of cancers and tumors that won national renown, before the practice wound down around the turn of the 20th century. He also operated a drug store on the ground floor of the building that still stands in the southeast quadrant of the State and Main streets intersection.

“That really pretty store pictured in the most recent issue (Winter 2024),” Gloria added, “must be the former Peru Store.” That structure still stands on County Hwy. Z, just west of the Portage County line, but was renovated some years ago, and serves as a residence today. Presently, we’re still seeking identifications for the people captured in the photo, their features being enlarged as a coupled offset. “Hoping this helps a bit,” Gloria noted in conclusion.



Gone, But Fondly Recalled

Lest we forget, recalled below are valued friends and members who passed recently. Please remember them with appreciation, as you reflect on their valued contributions to preserving the heritage of our community and area.

Alton D. "Hap" Forseth

Passing away on February 28, 2024, in Oconomowoc, 94-year-old Alton was born in Iola on February 11, 1930, to Erling and Julia (Norby) Forseth. His education was initially taken at the one-room Torgerson School, located at County Hwy. G and Bestul Road, but with the establishment of bus routes when he was in the fifth grade, it continued in Iola, with graduation from Iola High School. President of his freshman class and a team captain in basketball, "Hap" was a regular class reunion attendee and IHS member well into his 80s. A military veteran, where he became interested in pharmacy, he eventually joined the K-mart pharmacy, from which he retired in 1996, after a 40-year career.

Delores M. Johnson

Passing away on March 24, 2023, in Kiel, Delores Marie (Bestul) Johnson was 89, having been born in Iola to Rueben and Inga (Moen) Bestul on September 12, 1933. Active in sports and cheerleading at Iola High School, following graduation she married her high school sweetheart, Donald Johnson. They had celebrated 70 years together shortly before her passing. Enjoying their birthplace ties, they long held an IHS family membership. Their life boasted a varied mix of farm and construction business experiences from Wisconsin to Florida and back. Following retirement they enjoyed travel, including to Norway, where Dorothy was especially pleased to meet many of her relatives for the first time, and have the opportunity to visit the family homestead area.

Donors & Loaners

January – February – March

The Iola Historical Society expresses its appreciation to the following individuals and organizations for contributing donations to our archive of historical relics, and/or cash gifts, or in-kind services support benefitting its operations, during the past quarter:

Archival Donations of Historic Relics:

For the first time in many quarters there are no new archival donations to record. That's both good and bad. That has allowed Barb Kobs and Patty Mork to focus on getting our accumulated archive more organized. On the other hand, it has deprived us of adding new touches to enhance our exhibits. So . . . if you've been thinking of extending an archival donation . . . do it now!

Donations of Cash and In-Kind Services:

Sarah Abramson (program treats for Lefty Clumpner's Ogdensburg presentation), Louis & Louise Adams (cash, Iola & Northern Depot restoration), Leroy & Carolyn Borth (cash, '03 Ford Model A fundraiser), CWEC Operation Roundup (cash, Log Cabin restoration), Linda J. George (cash, endowment), Cindy Glapinski (cash, unrestricted, IMO Junior Wesley), Carol A. Hall (cash, unrestricted), Donald Johnson (cash, unrestricted, IMO Delores Johnson), Ruth C. Johnson (cash, unrestricted, IMO Alton D. Forseth), Lashua Automotive (cash, unrestricted), Gregg D. Merksamer (cash, '03 Ford Model A fundraiser), Julie A. Riemer (cash, undesignated, IMO Alton D. Forseth), Margaret C. Thompson (cash, HP office printer & ink).

2024 Supporting Members:

The Iola Historical Society wishes to express special thanks and recognition to the following individuals and organizations for their dedicated Supporting Member financial contributor status for the ongoing operational activities of the Society: Louis & Louise Adams, Scott & Karri Bestul, LeRoy & Carolyn Borth, Yvonne Gurholt, Donna Hooker, Iola & Rural Fire Service, Ruth C. Johnson, Lanna & Don Langdok, Thomas & Linda Martin, Steve & Mary Olson.

2024 EVENTS SCHEDULE

Monday, April 29, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program: Dr. Schroeder
UW Anthropologist
Dugout Canoe Insights

Monday, May 27, 2024

Noon – 2:00 2024 Annual Memorial Day
Pork Roast - Salute to Military Veterans

Tuesday, May 28, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program: Members
Share Show 'n' Tell Relics

Sunday, June 23, 2024

11:00 – 2:00 pm
2024 Annual Strawberry Fest Fundraiser
& Collectibles Appraisal Fair

Monday, June 24, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program: Local Interest

Saturday, July 27, 2024

Iola-Scandinavia Chamber's
Tastes & Tunes
Former Location Visits Include IHS

Monday, July 29, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program: Iola Herald Stores
& Stories of Past

Monday, August 26, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program

Monday, September 30, 2026

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
7:00 Program

Saturday, October 5, 2024

10:00 am – 2:00 pm
2024 Annual Taste of Norway/Lost Arts Fair
Includes Fall Gift & Craft Show

Monday, October 8, 2024

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
Last 2024 Business Meetings
2025 Board/Officer Elections
Discuss, Approve 2025 Budget
7:00 Program

Saturday, December 7, 2024

4:30 Post-Christmas Parade
Children Visit Santa Program
Hosted at IHS Machine Shed

Monday, December 16, 2024

5:30 IHS Christmas
Potluck Banquet & Program
Held at Café at the Iola Mills

Monday, January 27, 2025

5:30 IHS Board Meeting
6:30 IHS General Meeting
First 2025 Business Meetings
7:00 Program

**All Members and General Public Welcome to
Attend All Meetings and Programs
(All IHS activities held at Depot Street
complex unless otherwise indicated.)**